



ACP-EU JOINT PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY

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Press release by the Mission of the ACP-EU JPA to Monrovia (Liberia)

31 May 2013

The Bureau of the Joint Parliamentary Assembly (JPA) decided in November 2012 to send a fact-finding mission to Monrovia to contribute to the political dialogue with Liberia in accordance with Article 8 of the Cotonou Partnership Agreement. The mission follows the launching of formal EU-Liberia political dialogue in June 2012.

The fact-finding mission aimed at having exchanges of views with the national authorities, political parties and other stakeholders on the various aspects of the dialogue and to obtain appreciation of progress made by Liberia in these issues. In this way, it could assist to mobilize international support to continue the reconstruction of the country and the strengthening of democratic institutions, as well as the promotion of peace, stability, human rights, consolidation of the rule of law, good governance, sustainable development and poverty eradication.

The Mission was led jointly by Ms Nita K. R. Deerpalsing, Member of Parliament from Mauritius, acting Co-President of the ACP-EU JPA and Mr Louis MICHEL, Member of the European Parliament, Co-president of the ACP-EU JPA. It also comprised the following members, Mr Derek Vaughan, Member of the European Parliament, Vice-President of the JPA, Mr Niccolò Rinaldi, Member of the European Parliament, Member of the JPA, Mr Edwin Banda, Member of Parliament from Malawi, Vice-President of the JPA, and Mr Fitz Jackson, Member of Parliament from Jamaica, Member of the JPA.

From 29 to 31 May 2013, the Mission met, among others, the Vice-President of the Republic, H.E. Joseph Nyumah Boakai, the Speaker of the National Assembly, Mr Alex J. Tyler, the President Pro Tempore of the Senate, Mr Gbehzohngar M. Findley, the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, Mr Francis Korkpor, high level representatives of relevant ministries, the National Elections Commission, the Constitutional Review Committee, the Governance Commission, as well as different political parties and the civil society. Further the mission met Ms Karin Landgren, the Special Representative to the Secretary General (SRSG), Head of the UN Mission in Liberia (UNMIL).

The various stakeholders that the mission met spoke openly and frankly about the challenges and development prospects of their country. The meetings confirmed the need to address governance, constitutional review, electoral reform, management of land and natural resources, the security situation in the country and the region. The mission believes that there is an urgent need for human capital development through enhanced focus on health and education. The mission welcomes the progress made but calls for accelerating the pace of reforms and broad based development.

The mission's preliminary observations are that Liberia is faced with enormous developmental challenges and institutional constraints which need the requisite political will among all the state and non-state stakeholders to overcome.

The mission commends the Government for the progress made on many economical indicators, as well as in the areas of basic health and education which are attributable to the political stability of the country since 2005. It also acknowledges the fact that Liberia is still in a post-conflict reconstruction.

The mission applauds the Government for launching the process of Constitutional review, and it hopes that this process will lead to a stable, more democratic and accountable system of governance and common national identity. The mission believes that electoral reform is indispensable to the process of transformation of Liberian society, governance and legislative process. Electoral reform must aim at inspiring the confidence of the population in the conduct and management of elections. The body responsible for the preparation and execution of elections must be seen and perceived to be neutral, impartial and transparent.

An efficient and accessible judicial system is indispensable to the proper functioning of democracy, accountability and transparency and the fight against corruption. The mission encourages efforts to improve the legal framework, the administration of justice, to include capacity building in policing, forensic investigation and prosecution. This must be accompanied by appropriate sensitisation programmes to educate the public about their legal rights and the judicial process.

Liberia is endowed with rich land, natural resources and biodiversity. A judicious management of these resources, taking into account the importance of environmental protection as well as the needs of local communities, is essential to contribute to sustainable development, lifting people out of poverty and the consolidation of peace.

The mission is concerned about the planned reduction of UNMIL forces during the period 2013-2015 given security threats in the region, and the prospect of highly competitive Presidential elections in 2017.

A full report of the mission's observations will be made to the ACP-EU JPA, which will recommend appropriate accompanying measures and follow-up actions to support the on-going reform and development processes in the country. This report will also be sent to the EU and ACP Institutions.

The Mission takes this opportunity to express its gratitude to the House of Representatives, Government and people of Liberia and the Delegation of the European Union for their generous hospitality and the excellent conditions provided for the smooth functioning of the mission. The mission also thanks the various stakeholders for agreeing to meet with the mission and their frank and open submissions.