



## TELLING THE NAYMOTE'S STORY IN ADVANCING DEMOCRACY AND GOVERNANCE

(June 7, 2021) Eddie D. Jarwolo, a Liberian civil society leader and a social activist has completed a week-long engagement visit to Sierra Leone seeking collaboration and partnership on sustaining the democratic values the region and the continent is enjoying. The visit reflects a firm commitment by a regional citizen's urge for stronger democratic values and increased citizen participation in the governance of the region and the continent.



Mr. Jarwolo admonished Sierra Leoneans to be steadfast to development, peacebuilding, and social cohesion because that country has the potential of becoming a leading democratic nation within the Mano River Union Region. This is a symbol of hope for many young people if the country can further improve on democratic governance, sustain the fight on corruption as it has started, protect human rights, uphold the rule of law, fully allow freedom of speech, and increase citizens' participation in decision making processes – a potential hub for learning and regional exchanges.

In a similar observation, he believes that by reducing the ethno-regional divides within the country, there is a huge hope that leaders of that country can consolidate the peace process with a patriotic symbol of an *“exalted nation, and a true realm of the free”* – holding onto the first line of Sierra Leone's National Anthem.

From all indications, this is reflective of Liberia as the Mano River Union Countries have many common interests, share common history and many citizens from all of these countries have shared ancestry in some way. By comparison, whatever affect one of these countries affects all and by similar view, Liberians can learn and

replicate best practices from their neighbors for good governance, leadership, and development. This is an important visit that should resonate with the Liberian people especially Liberian civil society for future partnership that is relevant to Liberia's development and civic engagement.

While in Freetown, Sierra Leone, Mr. Jarwolo conducted a comparative regional learning and knowledge sharing session through his Young Political Leadership School Africa, Young Women Mentorship/Leadership Program, and the President Meter Project.



He engaged and worked with young people who are interested in politics to discuss the Young Political Action Committee establishment in Sierra Leone. Naymote intends to integrate existing innovation to compliment the protection of regional instruments and the need to collectively promote regional obligations that seek to advance human rights, democracy, good governance, youth/women political participation, and a strong relationship amongst the nations.





As a pro-democratic activist, Eddie D Jarwolo, the Executive Director of Naymote urged Sierra Leone civil society activists to hold leaders accountable to their campaign promises and policy statements often made during and after elections.



Through Naymote's three focused initiatives, there is a renewed effort to promote transparency and democratic accountability to cement the social contract between electorates and their elected officials regionally and continentally, an initiative Naymote seem to drive in its new engagement. The aim is to inform citizens on the performance of elected officials against promises made and to improve communication between the governed and the government in a sustained manner becoming a foundation for peace, stability, and development within the region and on the continent.



Naymote's Executive Director visit also ensured a broader involvement of stakeholders especially women and youth in Sierra Leone on advancing best practices on accountability, rule of law, credible elections and mature democracy that affects countries within the MRU region as part of Agenda 2063.

Bilateral meetings which were hugely successful engaged multi-stakeholders including representatives in government, civil society leaders, media, youth/women leaders from political parties and the Hub Manager, Mano River Office of the Open Society Initiative for West Africa (OSIWA) with an appearance on a national radio where Naymote Liberia experience was shared.

During these meetings, Mr. Eddie D. Jarwolo similarly shared Liberia's governance story including challenges that constrained the country in advancing democracy and good governance due to corruption, lack of citizens' trust in national institutions, limited appointment and representation of women and youth in political leadership, limited access to basic social services, and increased illicit drugs/addiction by youth, unemployment, weak political institutions and an extraordinarily little effort by present and past Liberian leaderships to fight corruption with most of the integrity or anti-corruption institutions being led by acting bosses with limited support.

Mr. Jarwolo further stressed that Liberian citizens have



limited information about the government due to the lack of support to the Ministry of Information and the national radio station to educate citizens on the performance of the government. Using the President Meter project, he said that President George M. Weah has only fulfilled 10% of his promises within three years in office and further mentioned that it will be a good practice if Sierra Leone could have similar record that can be compared, using the same standard and tools which his organization intend to achieve in the future.



Comparing the performance of the two country's Judiciary from the eyes of civil society, he could only narrate the ongoing serious problems with the Liberian Judiciary including the independence of the judiciary, the limited capacity of the Liberian National Police, the National Elections Commission, and serious restrictions on freedom of the press, and other efforts by the government to narrow the space for civil society. An example was cited on requests being made by Government agencies for a Police Clearance for renew accreditation to CSOs.



However, Mr. Jarwolo was fast to thank the Liberian civil society that has been united against all these challenges remaining a vibrant civil society that is holding government accountable and demanding respect for the rule of law, something he hopes Sierra Leone ensure that Civil Society is united without any regional sentiment or any political affiliation.



Mr. Eddie D Jarwolo is the Executive Director for Naymote Partners for Democratic Development. Eddie has over 18 years of professional experience advancing democracy and good governance in Liberia and he is the founder of the Young Political Leadership School Africa, (YPLS Africa). The YPLS Africa program is contributing to the formation of a new generation of character-driven

*young political leaders that would be accountable, responsive, and accessible to the needs and interests of their citizens and help to shape the future of their respective countries in the positive direction. The program has empowered 630 emerging leaders across Africa including Sierra Leone.*



Signed:  
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