

Summit Report

A SUMMIT FOR DEMOCRACY AND POLITICAL ACCOUNTABILITY: Fostering Pathway for Sustainable Democracy in Liberia

Held at the Sinkor Palace Hotel,
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Sweden
Sverige

Young Political Leadership School Africa

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I would like to express my deepest appreciation and gratitude to all those who provided us the opportunity to host the first Summit for Democracy and Political Accountability in Liberia held under the theme: "Fostering Pathway for Sustainable Democracy in Liberia".

The Summit created a space for Liberia stakeholders, international partners, and civil society actors to come together and deliberate on strategies with the view of strengthening Liberia's democracy and consolidating the gains made twenty-one years after Liberia's destructive civil war. A special gratitude to His Excellency Jeremiah Kpang Koung, Vice President, Republic of Liberia who delivered the keynote address as well as our many speakers and facilitators whose contributions inspired and motivated participants at the Summit for Democracy and Political Accountability in Liberia.

Thank you all. I want to extend appreciation to our professional colleagues, supporters, volunteers, and all those with whom we have had the pleasure to work with during the summit, we say thanks for your contributions. A special thank you to the Ducor Institute for Social and Economic Research for providing us technical support and leading the process of developing a very comprehensive report from the Summit. Thank you Ducor, you are a true partner. Thank you to Madam Peace Thor Mahteh-Boyee, Program Director, of Naymote Partners for Democratic Development, and Ms. Alphia Faith Kemokai, Manager of the Young Political Leadership School Africa a flagship program at Naymote for the leadership provided during the summit, and all the staffs at the institution, we made it together as a team. Thank you.

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KEY ABBREVIATIONS

AGR	**Annual Governance Report**
CDG	**Center for Democratic Governance**
CENTAL	**Center for Transparency and Accountability in Liberia**
CPA	**Comprehensive Peace Agreement**
CSO	**Civil Society Organization**
ECC	**Election Coordinating Committee**
EU	**European Union**
GoL	**Government of Liberia**
ICT	**Information Communication Technology**
INCHRL	**Independent National Commission on Human Rights of Liberia**
LNBA	**Liberia National Bar Association**
MACs	**Ministries Agencies and Commissions**
MoFA	**Ministry of Foreign Affairs**
MoJ	**Ministry of Justice**
NAYMOTE	**Naymote Partners for Democratic Development**
NEC	**National Elections Commission**
OBIP	**Open Budget Initiative Program**
PAC	**Public Account Committee**
PFM-Law	**Public Financial Management Law**
PWDs	**People Living with Disabilities**
TOR	**Terms of Reference**
UK	**United Kingdom**
UN	**United Nations**
USAID	**United States Agency for International Development**



1. Background

Liberia's transition from war to peace has been marked by much stability. In twenty-one years since the signing of the Accra Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), the country has had four democratic elections, transferring political power from one political administration to the next. International and domestic election observers have declared the processes in these elections to be free, fair, and transparent. Isolated incidences of electoral malpractices documented were noted to be insignificant to discredit the progress made to date. In particular, the November 2023 election victory by President Joseph N. Boakai, Sr. by nearly 50.1% of the total valid votes cast and the remarkable concession by former President George M. Weah sent a strong message that Liberia's democracy is maturing.

Liberia's democratic progress, however, must not be seen in isolation from the changing democratic environment in Africa. On 30th August 2023, a group of Gabonese senior military officers announced on national TV that they had taken power, and election results were annulled. In July 2023, Niger's Presidential Guard detailed President Mohamed Bazoum and declared they were seizing power due to bad governance. Likewise, Burkina Faso's Army in 2022 and Guinea Special Forces Commander, Colonel Mamady Doumbouya ousted Alpha Conde, former President of Guinea. The rise of the military and gradual return to military dictatorship in the Sahel Region and some parts of Central Africa is correlated with bad governance and democracy. The 2023 Afrobarometer report revealed that "majorities say elections do not work well for people to account and ensure that members of the House of Representatives (61%) and Senates (60%) reflect the views of voters. But more than half (55%) say elections do enable voters to remove from office leaders who do not do what the people want." Civil society campaigns for the legislature to be more accountable with strong oversight functions of the executive, and with less political interference in the judiciary are linked to the need to strengthen Liberia's democratic institutions.

Given these dynamics, we, Naymote Partners for Democratic Development, a prominent civil society group in Liberia and beyond, hosted a two-day Summit for Democracy and Political Accountability. The Summit created a space for Liberia stakeholders, international partners, and civil society actors to come together and deliberate on strategies with the view of strengthening Liberia's democracy and consolidating the gains made twenty-one years after Liberia's destructive civil war.



2. Introduction

Naymote Partners for Democratic Development organized a two-day long Summit for Democracy and Political Accountability held under the theme: ***"Fostering Pathway for Sustainable Democracy in Liberia. "*** The Summit served as the platform to initiate the process through which the government will be brought closer to the people. The Summit, conceived as the first step in starting a nationwide conversation about policy change and discussed expectations about President Boakai's development agenda. Following a national election, with the votes split right through the middle revealing how deeply divided the society has become, Naymote prioritizes the urgency to facilitate an open and friendly discussion across the three branches of government. Accordingly, the Summit for Democracy and Political Accountability in Liberia created a forum where diverse stakeholders (including government officials, political parties, civil society organizations, development partners, youth, and marginalized groups) explored challenges and pathways for sustaining Liberia's democracy, enhancing democratic dividends thereby promoting political accountability and encouraging active citizen engagement in democratic processes.

The Summit was held at the Sinkor Palace Hotel, Monrovia, Liberia and it brought together a broad array of stakeholders from eight (8) of Liberia's fifteen counties. A total of 90 participants were brought together, including the Vice President of the Republic of Liberia, the Chair of the Public Account Committee of the Liberian Senate, the Chair of the Judiciary Committee, the House of Representatives, the Secretary General, and members of the Liberia National Bar Association (LNBA) and representatives of the executive branch of government. The Ambassadors of the British High Commission, the European Union, the Second Secretary of the Swedish Embassy, and the Mission Director of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) were represented. Likewise, heads of International NGOs, the President of the University of Liberia, delegates from diverse political parties, civil society, youth, student leaders, and persons living with disabilities (PWDs) were represented.



1. Recent Coups in West and Central Africa, Reuters (2023), https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/recent-coups-west-central-africa-2023-08-30/
2. Liberia Afrobarometer Report Round 9, (2023), https://www.afrobarometer.org/publication/liberia-round-9-summary-of-results/

A. Opening Ceremony

The Summit proceedings began with remarks by the organizers and special guests.

Ms. Alphia Faith Kemokai, Manager of the Young Political Leadership School Africa began with a welcome remark. She underscored the importance of democracy and political accountability in Liberia amidst the growing challenges posed by authoritarianism worldwide. To address some of these challenges, she called for collective action and commitment to safeguarding Liberia's democratic future. Likewise, Ms. Kemokai highlighted the essential role of political accountability as the cornerstone of any functioning democracy. For those in political power to be accountable, there must be a culture of transparency, integrity, and responsiveness. In closing, she encouraged participants drawn from 8 counties to use the Summit as a call to action for engendering change and fostering a spirit of collaboration. In this public manner, she urged the participants to reaffirm their commitment to democracy, equality, human rights, and justice to work together towards a future where every voice is heard and valued.

Ms. Kemokai's remark was followed by a statement of commitment from the Mission Director of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).





Jim Wright
USAID Mission Director U.S. Embassy, Monrovia, Liberia

Jim Wright, Mission Director, (USAID) – commended the government for the free press and media freedom. He indicated that from his experience as a diplomat and the countries he has traveled to, the free press in Liberia is extraordinary. In the same breadth, he acknowledged the extraordinary contributions of the local voices at the grassroots level in helping to protect democracy.

> ***"Civil society organizations and the media must take ownership in holding government accountable because there is more work to be done including holding political leaders accountable and ensuring the rule of law is respected, Jim Wright, Mission Director, (USAID)."***

On the issue of compliance, Mr. Wright stressed the need for the government to comply with the Public Financial Management Law (PFM Law). Accordingly, he emphasized the need for the government to put an end to and bring to closure the fraudulent procurement process that is undermining the collaborative relationship between USAID and the Government of Liberia, particularly in the health sector. In his final remarks, he pledged USAID support to civil society organizations and urged Naymote Partners for Democratic Development to continue holding political leaders accountable and ensuring that the rule of Law is respected.



Nikolina Stålhand
Second Secretary, Program Officer, Democracy and Human Rights

Nikolina Stalhand, the Second Secretary, Program Officer, Democracy and Human Rights, Embassy of Sweden. In her remarks, she made three critical points. Firstly, she underscored the importance of long-term commitment to democracy, highlighting Liberia's progress and the ongoing support from Sweden. Along this line, she congratulated the people of Liberia after 20 years since the Peace Agreement was signed, demonstrating to the world that Liberia now has a strong democracy. Without large-scale international support, peaceful elections were conducted in 2023, and a transition between the two governments. Liberia has become a role model not only in the region but globally when it comes to the conduct of credible and transparent elections.

Secondly, Nikolina asserted that democracy is not only about elections and that election day is not the sole focus. Rather, it is about building a strong democracy and ensuring credible, free, and fair elections through significant effort over a long period, both during and after an election. Sweden has repeatedly been impressed by the strong commitment to democracy in Liberia, demonstrated not only in Monrovia but also from Harper in Maryland County to Voinjama in Lofa County.
Lastly, Nikolina charged that political will and commitment toward democracy and good governance are undoubtedly important for the bilateral cooperation between Liberia and Sweden. Sweden and other international partners will not be here forever; therefore, Liberia's development needs to be owned by the Liberian people, otherwise, it will not be sustainable in the long run. Liberia plays a significant role in demanding accountability and justice, actively participating in key issues affecting Liberians today and, in the future, as well as committing to transparency and the rule of law. Exploring new pathways to strengthen gender equality and human rights is also essential for a vibrant democracy. In closing, she indicated that the government should be one of inclusion and tolerance in accepting divergent views as well as protecting civil liberties and human rights.



H.E. Neil Bradley
His Majesty Ambassador
British Embassy, Monrovia, Liberia

In His Excellency Neil Bradley's (Ambassador, British High Commission) remark, he emphasized the importance of democratic institutions, accountability, human rights, and the rule of law in fostering stable and prosperous societies.

The UK government believes that democracy and freedom of human rights are individual human rights. The absence of democratic governance impedes development, investment, and innovation. The Ambassador acknowledged the democratic gains of Liberia but asserted that it was not enough in itself. Rather, proper accountability, service delivery, and democratic governance are among some of the key hallmarks of a functional democracy. In closing he intimated that political parties are key partners to the

democratic process of Liberia, their views expressed should be protected, and their lives. Also, he admonished the Liberian Legislature to strengthen and promote legislative oversight through the Public Account Committees (PAC) and ensure that PACs hire the relevant expertise and integrate CSOs to make them more effective.

> ***"The absence of democratic freedom, the accountable government of human rights, rule of law, will impede prosperity, deterred investment, restrict innovations, reduce opportunities and importantly increases the risks of conflict."***
> ***- H.E Neil Bradley, Ambassador British High Commission***



H.E Nona Deperz
Ambassador - European Union in Liberia

H.E Nona Deperz - Ambassador, European Union (EU) in Liberia—conveyed through her speech that Liberia has become a role model not only in West Africa but in Africa at large when it comes to democracy.

The EU Ambassador highlighted the peaceful transfer of power and political maturity exhibited by the key political actors during the election. She also indicated that democracy doesn't end at the ballot box, but is a continuous process that requires respect for the rule of law, free speech, accountability and transparency, adequate public service delivery, protection of human lives, gender inclusion and amongst others.

> ***"We, EU, believe very strongly that democracy and human rights are the cornerstone of an inclusive and sustainable development. We believe in the triumph of democracy and cannot take it for granted."***
> ***-H.E Nona Deperz.***

The EU through its collective commitment, urged the government to promote mainstream gender in all of its work. The Ambassador emphasized that the Government of Liberia should put in place stronger measures and develop adequate reporting systems that will document human rights issues and human rights abuses in government and society.

Further, she underscored the need for the Government of Liberia to protect the freedom of the press and ensure a free press. The government should ensure that basic social service is provided and focus more on the issue of transparency and accountability. In closing, she expressed the EU's commitment and readiness to support Civil Society organizations in Liberia.



B. Following the remarks by development partners and diplomatic missions in Liberia, the Keynote Address was delivered by H.E. Jeremiah Kpang Koung, Vice President, Republic of Liberia.



H.E. Jeremiah Kpang Koung,
Vice President, Republic of Liberia.

H.E. Jeremiah Kpang Koung Vice President, Republic of Liberia.

Vice President Koung delivered a short speech in which he explained the importance of accountability in democracy, highlighting the significance that those entrusted with power must answer to the citizens and not present their interests at the expense of the governed. The Vice President reaffirmed his commitment to the democratic process and the rule of law. Vice President Koung admitted that there exist excesses in government but admonished that President Joseph N. Boakai's administration is prepared to mitigate those excesses in the best interest of the people. He called on the young people to be objective and to engage in constructive debates such as this Summit that would bring about policy recommendations and desired changes.

The Vice President said, that together with political accountability, democracy presents the surest pathway to address a nation's socio-economic challenges. He told participants that for us to maintain a functional democracy, we must as a people, cultivate the mindset that accountability is one of the key tenets of democracy and that the citizens will always demand answers from those of us who are trusted with the torch of leadership.

The Vice President reminded Liberians that while Liberia's democracy is steadily improving, there must be an emergence of a new generation, with an approach of building strong democratic institutions. He said, we can never achieve accountability and democracy unless institutions are placed above individuals. This is the challenge that confronts our democracy, and we must change the narrative without any form of doubt!

The Vice President stated that the political landscape of Liberia still has a lot of corrupt leaders that we must hold accountable.

Speaking further, the Vice President declares that Liberia's democracy must not only be celebrated because of peaceful elections and transition of power, rather, it must also be based on leaders' collective ability to be accountable to their people and to improve their livelihood. This is the essence of true leadership in a modern democracy, he re-echoed.

> ***"In closing, the Vice President encouraged the frank exchange of ideas and recommendations to develop a strong resolution that can improve our governance framework."I want to use this forum to reaffirm our government's commitment to remain accountable to the People of Liberia, as we strive to strengthen our fledgling democracy" Vice President, Jeremiah K. Koung.***

3. See the Social Cohesion and Reconciliation Index (SCORE) for Liberia 2018 https://use.scoreforpeace.org/en/liberia/about
4. Afrobarometer Survey, Liberia Round Nine (2023), https://www.afrobarometer.org/countries/liberia/

Panel Discussion 1: Checks and Balances: Legislative oversight and political accountability in Liberia – Hon Michael M. Thomas and Hon Amara Konneh.

This panel was prefaced with the perspective that perceptions of accountability and corruption were critical to the recently held presidential and legislative elections. It is largely believed that the majority of Liberians voted for change. A recent social cohesion and reconciliation survey revealed that the general public distrusts key organs of the state (Legislature, Judiciary, and Executive) by more than 50% while it finds societal organizations such as civil society, churches, and mosques more favorable in terms of trust. Likewise, the Afrobarometer survey reveals that more people believe that the Legislature and the Executive are more corrupt and less accountable than the Judiciary. However, the survey clarifies that although bribery takes place in the court, the Legislature and Executive are more corrupt than the judiciary.



Hon. Micheal M. Thomas
Representative District #4 Montserrado, Chair, Judiciary Committee

Honorable Michael Thomas; Representative Electoral District:4 Montserrado County, serving as one of the panelists underscored several key points concerning checks and balances and political oversight:

Hon. Thomas stressed that the youth of Liberia should join the call for the Legislature to be audited through a system audit in other to ensure that the relevant control mechanisms are put in place to allow the legislature to function effectively.

He added that rebranding the legislature is another important step that ought to be considered for adequate governance. The entire recruitment process of the staff of the legislature is the first step toward public accountability. Currently, there is no system in place to guide the recruitment of how staff persons across the legislature are recruited. For example, there are no terms of reference (TOR) or a central H/R policy in place.

Lastly, the governance systems and decision-making process ought to be (re) visited. For example, we as Legislators should not be receiving cash that is above the standardized threshold of procurement to purchase goods and services. We must first be accountable to ourselves before we do checks and balances with the Executive and Judiciary branches of Government.

> ***"The issue of corruption has been a challenge and we must strive from a larger perspective from all sectors to fight this meaner". Hon. Michael Thomas, Representative District 4, Montserrado County, and Chairman of the Judiciary Committee, the House of Representatives.***





Hon. Amara Konneh
Chair, Senate Committee on Public Accounts
Senator, Gbarpolu County

For his part, **Hon. Amara Konneh**, Chairman, of the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) and Senator of Gbarpolu County, made the following observations: There is a need for Liberians to engage in self-reflection and determine what they truly desire as a nation. Further, the Senator pointed out that Liberia has established a culture of peacefully electing leaders—political parties are consolidating and citizens are being customed to the right to vote. Speaking of selective criticism, Honorable Konneh challenged Liberians to move away from the culture or mindset of only criticizing corruption when it involves others, but remaining silent when it concerns those within our circles.

The Senator noted that the majority of attendees at the Summit were young people, which is a positive development as they need to actively participate in transforming the socio-political landscape of the country. Active participation and engagement in political processes are essential for effecting meaningful change. As the future leaders of Liberia, their involvement is vital in shaping a more accountable and inclusive governance system.

On legislative oversight, the Senator declared that the current practice needs to be changed. Firstly, the presidential nominees must hold an initial meeting with the committee before that nominee is presented to the plenary. Secondly, for oversight responsibilities, the legislature should set a budget that will allow lawmakers to seek consultancy and experts' opinions on particular subject matter. Everything can't and must not be politics.

Senator Konneh added that before checks and balances are done, the Legislature needs to first initiate a capacity-building audit of the Legislators. The process whereby, the Chief Clerks gathers all the CVs of its Legislators ahead of the full legislative duty is not sufficient. Instead, a capacity-building audit must be conducted to give the leadership of the Legislature an understanding of the level of human resources that are available. From this exercise, we'll then have a strong insight into the capacity in-house and the gaps that we need to fill in by hiring specific expertise. Effective legislative oversight requires an adequate level of technical expertise.

Senator Konneh said that Civil Society Organizations will be an integral part of the Public Account Committee, (PAC) and there will be innovations that reflect the functions of the PAC, through which the check and balance mechanism will be effective. He also emphasized the necessity of holding leaders accountable for their actions and decisions, irrespective of their position or affiliation. This action, he underscored, calls for a change in mindset, a crucial step towards fostering a culture of transparency and integrity within the political landscape.

> ***"If we want accountability then we have to change the culture of how things are done and embrace an open government".- Hon. Amara Konneh, Chair, Senate Committee on Public Account, Audit and Expenditure.***

In conclusion, both presenters, Senator Konneh and Representative Thomas's presentations, served as a call to action for Liberians to demand greater accountability, transparency, and integrity from their leaders. It underscores the importance of fostering a culture of accountability, wherein both citizens and officials are held to the same standards. Ultimately, the establishment of an open government and a robust accountability system is crucial for ensuring the long-term prosperity and stability of Liberia.

Plenary Discussion

Participants discussed the balance of power—the three branches of government exercising their functions equally and judiciously. Accordingly, participants questioned the extent to which the Legislature is exercising its oversight responsibilities. The budget process and the role of the Public Account Committee featured prominently during these discussions. The final issue raised was that of transparency and accountability at the Legislature. Perception about previous Legislatures being corrupt was highlighted.

2.1. Panel Discussion 2:
Harnessing the demographic dividend: Youth Empowerment and Participation in Governance and Development in Liberia – Hon. Mamuna M. Kamara Waydon.

This panel was organized around Liberia's changing demographics. The recent census (2022) pits the society in two. 70% of the population accounts for those who are 30 years and below while those older, account for the remaining 30%. Placing this in perspective, suggests that the majority of Liberians alive are the youth who have had little education and career training. For a struggling post-war economy, this is a burden



Mrs. Mamuna M. Kamara Waydon
Senior Policy Analyst/ Program Manager Governance Commission

as much as it is a challenge.

Mrs. Mamuna M. Kamara Waydon, Policy Analyst, Governance Commission, RL

– mentioned that Liberia, like many other African countries, has a significant youth demography. With a large portion of the population being young, addressing their empowerment and participation is crucial for the country's development trajectory. She reflected on the demographic trend and opportunity for the youth.

The 2022 population census confirmed that half of the population are those below the age of 25 years. To first harness the demographic dividend, she asserted the government should invest in education and be keen on quality. Additionally, the government should focus on mid-level career development, especially hands-on skills for young people. Along this line, she talked about support for the youth to acquire senior executive skills to boost and incentivize the private sector. The need for high level human resource capacity was emphasized to promote the culture of research and critical thinking. The idea of building a public library was discussed as a channel and pathway to develop an enlightened society.

In closing, Mrs. Waydon argues that harnessing the democratic dividend should not involve the rewarding

of unprepared youth with limited, technical experience to do what they are unprepared to do. She maintained that it is also not the place to reward political supporters with a job for which they are inexperienced and unprepared for.

Rather, in harnessing the democratic dividend, the government should support small agro-businesses that are contributing to the greater food security of Liberia. The government should also provide support to young entrepreneurs across the country who are struggling to grow.

Plenary Discussion

Hereafter, a plenary discussion was held with a focus on the democratic dividend of young people to ensure that the youth benefit from their participation in democratic processes. It further emphasizes the need for respect for the rule of law, greater transparency, accountability, and the fight against corruption but discourages political patronage. Importantly, the plenary discussion highlighted the importance of improving the private sector and working towards the creation of jobs for young people.

2.2. Panel Discussion 3. Democracy and Technology: what are the positive impacts of technology in advancing democratic development ?

The rapid advancement of information and communication technology is impacting democracy at multiple levels. Election monitoring has been enhanced by the use of information technology. Likewise, access to information. While information and communication technology has notable gains in the advancement of democracy, Liberian youth have been observed to be lagging in its deployment and comparable high-tech usage. This panel explored the opportunities and challenges in the use of information and communication technology.

Samuel J. Kpartor, Alumnus Young Political Leadership School Africa (YPLS Africa) and National Program Manager at Federation of Liberia Youth (FLY), Willie Bee Tingba Jr. Chief Information Officer at CertiTech Solution Liberia and Author of the ICT Tools for Liberia's Development and Lauren E. A Kolleh Alumna YPLS



Samuel James Kpartor
Alumnus YPLS Africa, National Program Manager, Federation of Liberia Youth (FLY)

Africa and a Digital/Cyber Security & Marketing Expert at Lonestar Cell MTN presented.

Samuel Kpartor - technology has added so much more to Liberia's democracy and one of the major contributions is electoral integrity. Technology has improved the integrity of elections in Liberia by facilitating voter registration and voter education campaigns.

Digital tools also enabled the monitoring of election processes and the rapid dissemination of election results. This is helping to prevent fraud by ensuring a fair, and transparent electoral process. Additionally, Mr. Kpartor stated that technology has played a pivotal role in enhancing civic engagement in Liberia. Platforms such as social media, online forums, and mobile apps have provided citizens with new avenues to participate in political discussions and engage in civic discourse. He emphasized that the digitization of public records and financial transactions have promoted greater transparency in government operations, enabling citizens to monitor the allocation of public resources and hold officials accountable.



Willie Bee Tingba Jr.
Chief Information Officer, CertiTech Solution Liberia

Willie Bee Tingba Jr - Explained that Technology has played a pivotal role in advancing democratic development by fostering transparency, accountability and participation across the political system.
The use of technology has now become an effective tool through which we can navigate all of the basic social services, (health, education, commerce, and trade, among others).

Tingba noted that the proliferation of technology, particularly the internet and mobile phones, has significantly increased access to information for all Liberian citizens. Despite this process, he cautioned that Liberia is far behind because young people are lacking in comparable high-tech education. He observed that the Government of Liberia has not utilized the potential of technology. For example, there is no cyber security policy, no digital security protection law.

In his closing statement, he recommended the government to develope a policy and strategy on cyber security, enact cyber crimes laws, data protection law, child online protection law and the inclusion of ICT into universities curriculum.



Lauren E.A Kolleh
Alumna YPLS Africa, Digital/Cyber Security & Marketing Expert Lonestar Cell MTN

Lauren E. A Kolleh –encouraged young women to get involved in the pursuit of Information Communication Technology (ICT). She underscored its value as a bigger opportunity for exposure.

She indicated that technology can not be spoken of without people having an understanding of what it means. However, she added that in Liberia, some people perceive and limit technology to the use of Facebook. University students on the other hand struggle to authenticate the veracity of information obtained from other sites for research purposes.
Ms Kolleh added that the verification of fake news, and basic research techniques are lacking in the Liberian school system. This fact alone has limited a fair appreciation of technology in the democratization of Liberia, she underscored. Finally, she noted that the internet traffic in Liberia has increased a little more due to the election while a significant portion of our population is still faced with the challenge of access to technology.

In her closing statement, she called on the government functionaries to begin the process of having the necessary equipment to guide the internet space and encourage every Ministry, Agency, and Commission (MAC) to have an active email address and website and to regularly update their respective social media platforms.

Plenary Discussion

Discusants emphasized the need for technology to be used more in the advancement of the society. Other argued that countries in the subregion were far more advanced in the use of technology compared to Liberia. The proper use of technology was also linked to the issue of job recriutment and the expansion of the private sector. Participants called upon the Government to provide more opportunities through the innovative use of technology to enhance Liberia's democratic development.

2.3. Panel Discussion 4. Shrinking or Constricted: the evolving civic space and the fight for democracy and political accountability in Liberia.

Mr. Narvin Ireland of Integrity Watch Liberia, Madam Peace Thor Mahteh-Boyee, Program Director, of Naymote Partners for Democratic Development, and Anderson Miamen, Executive Director, of the Center for Transparency and Accountability in Liberia (CENTAL).

Panel Introduction: Civil society is envisioned as the third sector, the space between the household and the state. 2021 updated Civil Society Directory with the support from USAID/CSA Project put the total registered CSO documented at 2,815 and found the space to be fragmented, lacking an internal governance system and the visions for growth are largely short-term rather than long-term. Understanding the evolving nature of this space is essential for addressing democratic deficits and ensuring political accountability.



Narvin Jusay-Fanonkon Ireland
Integrity Watch Liberia

Narvin Ireland – indicated that the civil society space further shrank during the previous administration, limiting the Government of Liberia's listening ability to hear what the ordinary people were saying. Mostly, the ordinary people speak through civil society and if a government does not have a listening ear, the fight to achieve political accountability will have limited or no impact.

Further, he said, the frequent breakdown of institutions, undermines the rule of law, and the total disregard for constituted authority. He underscored that this practice set in motion the beginning of a lack of accountability.







Madam Peace Thor Mahteh-Boyee
Program Director, Naymote Partners for Democratic Development



Anderson Miamen
Executive Director,Center for Transparency and Accountability in Liberia (CENTAL)

Madam Peace Thor Mahteh-Boyee – emphasized the shrinking of the civic space by what she describes as constant attacks from political actors and government, due to their critical stance on accountability issues against the government. She further highlighted the case of the release of the President Meter Report by Naymote Partners for Democratic Development noting how the institution and its staff have suffered many blowbacks from government and political actors. She noted that sometimes, the government undermined the civic space by using the media and other political auxiliary groups to silence critical civil society actors through other forms of threats, harassment, and intimidation. Overall, Madam Boyee asserted that the relationship between political institutions and civil society in Liberia is sometimes fraught with tension and risk while political entities sometimes target and smear the character of civil society actors who challenge government's actions.

In terms of impact and viability, she indicated that the reliance of civil society organizations on international funding underscores the need for the sustainability of the civil society agenda. In this regard, the President Meter Project serves as a prime example in terms of the challenges faced by the sector and the fight that is required to protect the sector from political interference and intimidation.

Anderson Miamen – explained that civil society must focus on institution building, establishing robust structures, fostering collective teamwork, and avoiding the concentration of power solely around the executive director, founder, or chief executive officer.

Additionally, he noted that any hint of corruption within civil society undermines the credibility and creates barriers, allowing the government to discredit and undermine civil society efforts.

Mr. Miamen mentioned that the effectiveness and credibility of civil society in Liberia depend on building strong institutional frameworks, fostering collaboration, and maintaining transparency and integrity. Centralizing power around a single individual can weaken accountability and hinder collective action. Moreover, corruption within civil society not only damages its reputation but also provides ammunition for the government to dismiss legitimate criticisms and undermine the vital role of civil society in promoting democracy and accountability.

Plenary Discussion

Participants highlighted the need for civil society to be more transparent and accountable to the people they serve. They highlighted the interference of government into the civic space. The participants further raised concerns on the restrictive NGO

policy including issues of sectoral clearance, police clearance, the centralization of NGO accreditation and registration. Participants cautioned government to protect the civil society actors and human rights defenders and see civl society as partners to the development process of the nation. Participants encouraged the civil society sector to continue the fight for open and transparent governance system.

2.4. Panel Discussion 5. The role of the media in promoting democracy and political accountability in Liberia in an era of fake News.

Jackson Clay of Local Voices in Liberia, Ruth Gbatoe, Liberia Sustainable Management of Fisheries Project & Bai Best, Managing Director, Liberia Observer Corporation, Publisher of the Daily Observer News Paper.

Panel Introduction. The media is sensational. It appears that the media is more interested in breaking news stories than news/stories that are carefully investigated to inform the public. Most of the news reported has been determined to be partially investigated and verified. This pattern of news reporting is contributing to the occurrence of fake news in Liberia.

Jackson Clay of Local Voices, Liberia - began by asserting that citizens are an integral part of the civic space. To effectively clarify roles and responsibilities, civil society organizations need to establish standards for who is considered an actor in the civic space and how they should operate. He noted that in Liberia, numerous media outlets and institutions are owned by political figures who utilize these platforms to target civil society actors. The government must develop policies or enforce current laws that safeguard civil society actors irrespective of whether they are expressing approval or criticism towards the government's policy.



Jackson Clay
Local Voices Liberia

Mr. Clay's statement underscored the importance of safeguarding civil society actors from political interference, intimidation, and manipulation. He emphasized the government's responsibility to protect these actors in upholding democratic principles of free speech.

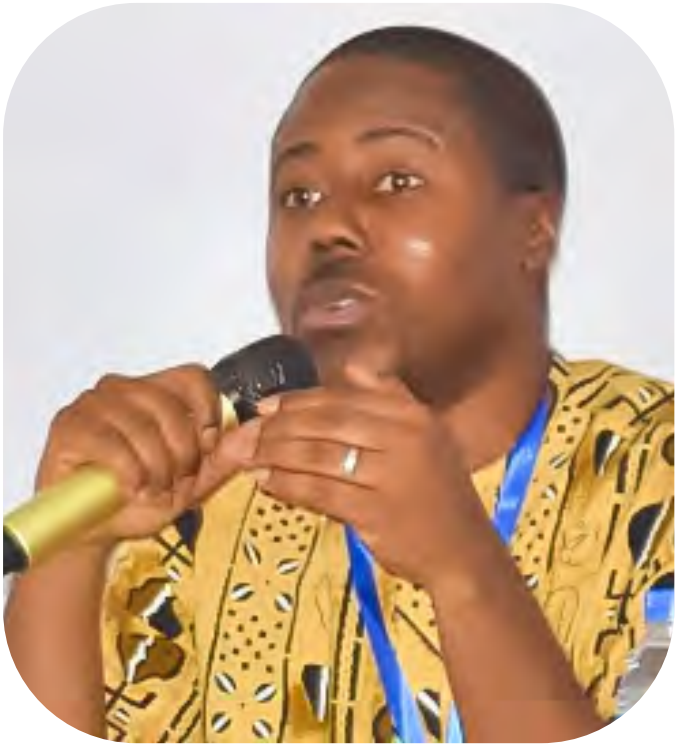
Ruth Gbatoe – described fake news as false information presented as legitimate news, often with the intent to deceive and misinform. On the other hand, however, the information may not be necessarily false but the inaccuracy of the information questions its legitimacy. Both can have detrimental effects on public perception, decision-making, and social cohesion. Ruth's presentation specifically mentioned the internet as the platform where fake news and misinformation are being spread. With the advent of social media and online news platforms, misinformation can spread rapidly and reach a large audience, making it a significant concern.



Ruth Gbatoe
Liberia Sustainable Management of Fisheries Project

She concluded by emphasizing that fake news poses a major threat to democracy. In a democratic society, an informed citizenry is crucial for making educated and wise decisions and holding those in power accountable. However, when misinformation proliferates, it distorts public discourse, undermines trust in institutions, and erodes the foundation of democracy.

Bai Best - In discussing fake news, he underscored that the case of fake news in Liberia has now become a business and a money-making scheme.



Bai Best
Managing Director, Liberian Observer Corporation, Publisher of the Daily Observer Newspaper

He cautioned that information should be validated before sharing.

Mr. Best also talked about the Artificial Intelligence, (AI) apps that are being used to carry out fake news. He stressed that when fighting fake news, it is critical to understand the root causes or motives behind the sharing of this fake news. He named some of the motives as money, political interest, and other personal selfish reasons.

He concluded by stating that fake news was widely used during Liberia's just-ended election and the Government of Liberia needs to revisit the media law to avoid all of this.

Plenary Discussion

Participants indicated that the media landscape had been infiltrated by politicians. Some indicated that some politicians owned radio stations while others are affiliated with some with the intent of using the platform as propaganda instrument. Another discussant confirmed that the state-owned broadcast has been compromised, that it has become more political than national. However, participants clarified that some media houses were independent and are committed to principles of good journalism. In particular, the work of Local Voices on fact-checking was identified as notable though limited at the national level. The discussion unanimously underscored the significance of media independence.

2.5. Panel Discussion 6. The courts and democracy: The role of the Judiciary in advancing political accountability in Liberia:

Cllr. Bornor M. Varmah, Secretary General, Liberia National Bar Association, Cllr. Moriah Yeakula-Korkpor, Lawyer, Political Analyst, Women's Rights Activist, & Cllr. Benedict Sannoh, Managing Partner, Sannoh and Partners.

Panel Introduction

More than twenty years after the conflict, Liberia's judiciary still suffers from political interference, judicial independence, and the limitation of the courts in advancing political accountability. Upholding the rule of law remains a daunting challenge. The panel discussed the rule of law and constitutionality as an essential pillar of democratic governance.





Cllr. Bornor M. Varmah
Secretary General, Liberian National Bar Association

Cllr. Bornor M. Varmah – Cllr. Varmah discussed the crucial role of the judiciary in advancing political accountability in Liberia, focusing on the independence of the judiciary, judicial review, and the rule of law. He highlighted the importance of an independent judiciary in safeguarding citizens' rights and freedom of speech, impartiality, and the need to hold government officials accountable.

Cllr. Varmah stated that an independent judiciary is fundamental for political accountability in Liberia. He declared that it upholds the rule of law, protects citizens' rights, combats corruption, and ensures fair and transparent legal processes.





Cllr. Moriah Yeakula-Korkpor
Lawyer, Political Analyst, Women's Rights Activist

Cllr. Moriah Yeakula-Korkpor – noted that in Liberia, the judiciary plays a crucial role in advancing political accountability within the framework of democracy. As an essential pillar of governance, the judiciary is tasked with upholding the rule of law, ensuring adherence to constitutional principles, and safeguarding citizens' rights. Cllr. Yeakula-Korkpor stated that in recent years, Liberia has witnessed significant strides in judicial independence and accountability, even though some challenges persist. She intimated that despite progress, issues such as corruption, political interference, and resource constraints continue to undermine the judiciary's effectiveness in promoting political accountability. Nonetheless, ongoing efforts to strengthen judicial institutions, enhance transparency, and bolster citizens' access to justice are pivotal in consolidating Liberia's democratic governance.

Cllr. Yeakula-Korkpor concluded by noting that the judiciary in Liberia plays a critical role in fostering political accountability within the democratic system. Regardless of the challenges like corruption and political interference, strides have been made toward enhancing judicial independence and transparency. However, sustained efforts are necessary to address these challenges and strengthen the Judiciary's effectiveness in upholding the rule of law and safeguarding citizens' rights.

Promoting accountability within the political sphere requires ongoing commitment to judicial reform and ensuring equitable access to justice for all Liberian citizens.



Cllr. Benedict Sannoh
Managing Partner, Sannoh and Partners

Cllr. Benedict Sannoh – asserted that many democracies around the world face challenges in upholding political accountability, and Liberia is no exception. These challenges may include corruption, lack of transparency, weak institutions, and political interference in judicial processes.

Cllr. Sannoh stated that the judiciary plays a crucial role in advancing political accountability by ensuring that the rule of law is upheld, and government actions are scrutinized within legal frameworks. In Liberia, as in many other democracies, the judiciary acts as a check on the executive and legislative branches, holding them accountable for their actions. There is a common misconception that once elections are conducted, the democratic process will naturally unfold, leading to accountability and good governance. However, this belief oversimplifies the complexities of democratic governance.

Furthermore, Cllr Sannoh inferred that the mere holding of elections does not guarantee a functional democracy. Without strong institutions, including an independent judiciary, elections alone cannot ensure political accountability. He concluded by noting that democracy is a continuous process: it requires ongoing commitment from all branches of government, civil society, and citizens to uphold democratic values and principles.

Plenary Discussion

The discussion here centered on the court system. Participants indicated that there are limited information available on how the court system operates. Some participants intimated that judges and magistrates are not dispensing justice, rather, they are involved with bribery. Allegation of bribery in the court system are consistent with reports about the Judiciary. Lastly, other discussants inquired about the average time involved in the adjudication of a case and the measures that are in placed to reprimand a lawyer or judge whenever they fall short of such an ethical standard.

2.6. Panel Discussion 7. Human rights and Justice towards democracy sustainability.

Adama K. Dempster, Secretary General, Civil Society Human Rights Advocacy Platform, Juan D. Martinez, Political and Human Rights Officer, Embassy of the United States of America, and Dr. Cllr. Jallah Barbu, Dean, Louis Arthur Grimes School of Law, University of Liberia.

Panel Introduction

Life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness are the fundamental rights for all. However, recent human rights reports revealed that basic rights such as the right to justice among others are hindered. The Panel explores the link between democracy, human rights and access to justice.



Dr. Cllr. Jallah Barbu
Dean, Louis Arthur Grimes School of Law,
University of Liberia

Dr. Cllr. Jallah Barbu - In our modern world, he said, the rule of law, respect for human rights, and equitable justice systems are indispensable for the maintenance of democratic principles. Cllr. Barbu stated that human rights form the bedrock of any democratic society and without the protection of fundamental rights such as freedom of speech, assembly, and expression, democracy cannot thrive. Governments must ensure the protection of these rights for all citizens, irrespective of race, gender, religion, or political affiliation.
Furthermore, a fair and accessible justice system is essential for fostering trust in democratic institutions. It is incumbent upon governments to guarantee equal access to justice for all individuals, regardless of their socioeconomic status. This includes, ensuring the independence of the judiciary and providing legal aid to those in need.



Juan D. Martinez
Political and Human Rights Officer
Embassy of the United States of America

Juan D. Martinez – in an interconnected world, Martinez told the audience that the promotion and protection of human rights require international cooperation, solidarity, and collective action. Martinez's presentation explores the imperative of global solidarity in advancing human rights and justice toward the sustainability of democracy. Further in his speech, he spoke about multilateralism and diplomacy, humanitarian assistance, and peacebuilding.

Multilateralism and Diplomacy: Sustainable democracies benefit from multilateral cooperation and diplomatic engagement, fostering dialogue, collaboration, and mutual respect among nations. By upholding international human rights norms and treaties, states can demonstrate their commitment to democratic principles and strengthen global solidarity in the face of transnational challenges.

Humanitarian assistance and peacebuilding: promoting human rights and justice are inseparable from efforts to alleviate human suffering, address conflict, and promote peace and stability worldwide. Providing humanitarian assistance, supporting peacebuilding initiatives, and addressing root causes of conflict are essential for creating conducive environments for democracy to thrive.

Juan concluded by stating that international actors, including NGOs, civil society organizations, and human rights defenders, play a vital role in advocating for human rights, holding governments accountable for their actions, and amplifying the voices of marginalized communities on the global stage. By supporting grassroots movements and defending universal values, the international community can bolster democratic resilience and promote a culture of human rights worldwide.



Adama K. Dempster
Secretary General, Civil
Society Human Rights Advocacy Platform

Adama K. Dempster - stated that human rights and social justice are intertwined. They both serve as catalysts for inclusive democracy. Dempster examined the pivotal role of societal dynamics in fostering human rights and justice towards the sustainability of democracy. He further noted in his remarks that:

Sustainable democracy prioritizes inclusivity and active participation, dignity, and the equal worth of all individuals. ***"Upholding human rights requires dismantling barriers to participation, amplifying marginalized voices, and fostering a culture of dialogue, empathy, and respect across diverse communities"*** Adama K. Dempster.

In conclusion, he maintained that fostering inclusive democracy grounded in social justice and human rights is paramount for ensuring long-term democratic sustainability. By promoting inclusivity through civic education, nations can build resilient democracies that prioritize the well-being and dignity of all its citizens.

Plenary Discussion

Discussants underscored the need for stronger human rights institutions. Specifically, participants called out human rights institutions to avoid the selective application of human rights standards. Other participants mentioned the excesses of human rights violations that occurred in the past governments. INCHR and Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection were identified as institutions engaged into selective defense and protection of human rights. In summary, participants called upon the government to do more in the protection and defense of human rights.

2.7. Presentation 1 The History of democratic development in Liberia: Where are we and where are we heading? Cllr. Oscar Bloh, Executive Director, Center for Democratic Governance (CDG).





Cllr. Oscar Bloh
Executive Director, Center for Democratic Governance, RL

Cllr. Oscar Bloh – highlighted the ongoing challenges such as inadequate administrative accountability, limited access to justice, and weak demand from citizens. He emphasized the need for continuous efforts to defend democracy through education, the rule of law, free press, civic engagement, and international cooperation. Overall, he underscored that defending democracy is an ongoing process requiring active participation and collaboration among various stakeholders to ensure stability and legitimacy in governance. He asserted that constitutional democracy contains core elements such as freedom of speech, freedom of assembly, separation of powers, institutional limitations on power, checks and balances, due process of law, and a system of accountability for elected leaders.

Cllr. Bloh underscored the significance of upholding the pillars of democracy, including free, and fair elections, the rule of law, political accountability, and civil liberties. Despite these grey areas, when checks and balances are operational and working effectively, arbitrariness is minimized, power is exercised responsibly, and governance is transparent and accountable.

Furthermore, despite the doctrine of separation of powers and checks and balances guaranteed in the Liberian constitution, Liberia's governance system has consistently been faced with the lack of horizontal political accountability .

2.8. Presentation 2. Democracy and Human rights as a foreign policy goal: Understanding Liberia's role in the global campaign for democracy.

Ibrahim Nyei Ph.D., Deputy Minister for International Cooperation Economic Integration, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, (MoFA).



Ibrahim Nyei Ph.D.
Deputy Minister for International Cooperation Economic Integration, Ministry of Foreign Affairs RL

Panel Introduction

The development democracy foreign policy approach of Liberia, explores the correlation between human rights and democracy.

Ibrahim Nyei Ph.D. - Minister Nyei delved into the importance of democracy and human rights as key foreign policy objectives, shedding light on Liberia's pivotal role in the global democracy movement.

He underscored the nation's unwavering dedication to upholding and revitalizing its democratic principles. The belief is that freedom and democracy are inherent values that define human nature. He emphasized the significance of the Bill of Rights as a cornerstone of Liberia, enshrined in the 1986 constitution.

Furthermore, he challenged the notion that democracy is solely a Western concept, asserting that it is a fundamental value for Liberia and Africa as a whole. The importance of building the necessary capacity for rigorous policy research and engagement to support evidence-based advocacy efforts. This approach will enable Liberia to effectively promote and defend its democratic values on the global stage.









3. Recommendations

Policy Engagement Perspective

- Civil Society Organizations including (Naymote Partners for Democratic Development) must engage the Government of Liberia through the Independent National Commission on Human Rights (INCHR) or Civil Society Human Rights Advocacy Platform and solicit funding to ensure the development of a national reporting system that will be used as a central reporting system to document, keep records, and report on all human rights issues in the country.

- Civil Society Organizations (Naymote Partners for Democratic Development) must engage the Government through the Ministry of Post and Telecommunication and the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) to ensure that Liberia develops a cyber security policy, digital security protection law, and an amendment to the penal code that protects the internet space and disallows people to misuse and abuse the space in the name of freedom of the press

- Civil Society Organizations (Naymote Partners for Democratic Development) should go further through the tracking of the President's performance against promises made to advocate for each MACs responsibility to develop their performance report on the President's campaign and post-campaign promises or commitments.

- Civil Society Organizations (Naymote Partners for Democratic Development) must work with MACs to start developing a tracking mechanism against the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) the goals will come to an end in 2030 and each country is mandated to develop a full report that outlines the progress, Issues, challenges and means for verifications.

- Civil Society Organizations (Naymote Partners for Democratic Development) must engage the Government of Liberia through the Ministry of Youth and Sports and the Legislature to create a National Youth Service Program which will inculcate discipline in Liberian youths by instilling in them a tradition of patriotism, nationalism and inspire them to be committed to service to Liberia in any situation they may find themselves across the country.

- Civil Society Organizations (Naymote Partners for Democratic Development) concerning service delivery should engage the Ministry of Internal Affairs to first have a clear understanding of the ministry's plan and support the implementation of the Local Government Act 2018 with a key focus on the county service centers and the county councils and having public awareness and drills on how people can access public services at the community levels.



CSO Legislative Oversight Engagement

- Civil Society Organizations (Naymote Partners for Democratic Development) must engage the legislature through its leadership to help develop a Human Resource (HR) manual for legislative staffers not central administration with clear TORs for each position.

- Civil Society Organizations (Naymote Partners for Democratic Development) should work with the Public Account Committee, (PAC) to look at their communication strategy/approach on how the citizens are aware of the working of the PAC, and the PAC in conducting policy dialogues in communities, Coffee Shops , and public places on awareness on the work of the PAC.

- - Civil Society Organizations (Naymote Partners for Democratic Development) follow up on the ongoing systematic audit of the legislature, provide support where necessary, and ensure that the report is made public.

- Civil Society Organizations (Naymote Partners for Democratic Development) initiate a legislative internship program bringing middle-level professionals to contribute to legislative openness and effectiveness as well as provide support where necessary, and ensure that the legislative information is public.

- Support the conduct of a performance evaluation on the legislature with a specific focus on legislative staffers understanding their contributions to the legislature and an analysis on whether or not a legislator needs to have more persons working in his or her office and fewer professionals to help with the work of the lawmaker.

Strengthen CSO's Engagement with the Judiciary

- Civil Society Organizations (Naymote Partners for Democratic Development) should work with the National Bar Association (NBA) with the support from other partners to integrate the NBA as part of the Democracy by Radio Program with a segment on the Rule of Law.

- Civil Society Organizations (Naymote Partners for Democratic Development) should engage in the public relations session of the Judiciary and solicit support and partnership to increase citizens' awareness of the working and function of the judiciary,

- Civil Society Organizations (Naymote Partners for Democratic Development) should work with the National Bar Association (NBA) and the Liberian National Police to host series of Law and Justice Program across high schools, universities and communities to educate citizens about access to justice, rule of law and build citizens trust in the justice system, etc.





4. Conclusion

Liberia's democracy is maturing. The 2023 elections and its outcome confirm yet again that Liberians are working together in building a sustainable democratic society. The work of the National Election Commission (NEC) has demonstrated this commitment more powerfully; ensuring that the voices of ordinary Liberians were respected in choosing their leaders. The two-day-long Summit was envisioned as a platform to discuss and explore a range of policy options. It was also a platform designed to send a strong message to policymakers that true democracy is not the silence of guns nor is it the hosting of regular elections. Rather, it is the respect for the rule of law, civil liberty, transparency, and adequate service delivery. In keeping with this principle, the Summit adjourned with a resolution and a call to action.







Annexes

A. Summit Resolution

1. Whereas: The Summit for Democracy and Political Accountability be hosted annually and decentralized to empower and develop the minds of the stakeholders to the development of a strong culture of responsibility, holistic and inclusive accountability.

2. Whereas: We the participants represented here in this first Democracy Summit on Political Accountability deem it necessary in the interest of good governance that the National Legislature shall submit and make public the findings of the system audit carried out by the General Auditing Commission to show a fair appreciation on how the National Legislature has been functioningl in the past and shall be the foundation for ongoing accountability and transparency.

3. Whereas: The National Legislature should make legislative information public to improve legislative openness, ensure accountability, and build public trust through the establishment of functional websites and other digital platforms.

4. Whereas: Strengthening Electoral Accountability, (SEA): Implement electoral reform recommendations from the ECC, LEON, EU, and other national and international observer groups to ensure electoral integrity, peace, accountability, and inclusion. There should be revision and enforcement of campaign financing regulations, election laws, and sustainable support to the National Elections Commission, etc.

5. Whereas: Ensuring Gender Inclusion, (EGI): The National Legislature revisits the proposed amendment of 1986 new elections law with specific reference to the gender quota, section 4.5b on political parties' candidates' registration and ensure increase women political participation and representation.

6. Promoting Political Transition, (PPT): The National Legislature shall ensure the passage of a Political Transition Law to promote a smooth and better political transition and ensure public education for citizens understanding of the law.

7. Whereas: Investing in Secondary Civic Education: The government shall develop comprehensive programs aimed at educating ALL citizens, particularly the youth, about their rights, responsibilities in a democratic society, and the importance of active participation in democratic processes. This includes promoting critical thinking skills and media literacy to empower individuals to make informed decisions. Thus, prioritize education and civic engagement initiatives to foster a culture of democracy, tolerance, and active citizenship among the population. Integrate civic education into school curricula, promote civic participation through community programs and youth empowerment initiatives, and encourage public dialogue and debate on democratic principles and values.

8. Whereas: Strengthening the Civic Space: International partners and donors shall support and empower civil society organizations to play strategic democratic and policy advocacy roles in holding government accountable. Provide resources for strengthening advocacy, monitoring, and engagement to ensure that the voices of marginalized groups are heard and considered in policy-making processes. Furthermore, implement strategies to effectively promote and defend Liberia's democratic values through advocacy efforts. This includes developing targeted communication campaigns, engaging with stakeholders across sectors, and utilizing digital platforms and media channels to raise awareness about the importance of democracy and human rights. Empower civil society organizations, advocacy groups, and grassroots movements to mobilize public support, lobby policymakers and hold government accountable for upholding democratic values and priniples.

9. Whereas: Youth Engagement and Leadership Development: Foster the emergence of a new generation of leaders committed to democratic principles and values. Create platforms for youth participation in decision-making processes, mentorship programs, national youth service program, and leadership training opportunities to cultivate a culture of political engagement and responsibility. The removal of sports from under the Ministry of Youth and Sports, to have an exclusive Sports Bureau and rename the Ministry of Youth and Sports as "Ministry of Youth Development and ICT".

10. Whereas: Youth political participation: That the National Legislature shall pass into law the National Youth Act for the inclusive national youth development package making essential use of ICT



in finding solutions to national challenges and development processes.

11. Strengthening Policy Research and Engagement: Invest in building the necessary capacity for rigorous policy research and engagement to support evidence-based advocacy efforts. Establish research institutions, think tanks, and training programs focused on analyzing key policy issues, conducting empirical studies, and generating data-driven insights to inform decision-making processes. Foster collaboration between academia, government agencies, civil society organizations, and international partners to enhance policy research and promote evidence-based policy formulation and implementation.

12. Whereas: Support Anti-Corruption Efforts: Implement measures to combat corruption and nepotism, which undermine public trust in government institutions and erode political accountability. This includes enacting and enforcing anti-corruption laws, promoting transparency in government operations, transparent procurement processes and strengthening whistleblower protections.

13. Whereas: Strengthen Judicial Independence: Safeguard the independence of the judiciary and ensure that courts have the authority and resources



to adjudicate cases impartially and without political interference. Upholding the rule of law is essential for maintaining political accountability and protecting citizens' rights. Ensure the diversification of the jury processes.

14. Whereas: Encourages and supports young women's involvement in Information and Communication Technology (ICT) fields by establishing programs that specifically target young women and provide them with access to quality education and training in ICT-related skills. This can include coding boot camps, workshops, online courses, and mentorship programs tailored to the needs and interests of young women.

15. Whereas: Creating cyber-security and data protection laws and improving the technological strategic pathways to national progress in a luminous and ever-growing ICT world and building tech hubs and hack Aton centers.

16. Whereas: Institutional Strengthening and Collaboration: To improve the effectiveness and credibility of civil society, there should be a focus on building strong institutional frameworks, fostering collaboration among different organizations, and promoting transparency and integrity within the sector. This could include establishing codes of conduct, facilitating networking opportunities, and promoting good governance practices among CSOs.

17. Whereas: Protection of Rights Defenders and Civil Society Actors: Government should take proactive measures to safeguard civil society actors from rights defenders from undue influence and harassment, particularly from political figures. This includes protecting their freedom of expression and ensuring their safety, regardless of whether their views are supportive or critical of the government. Strengthening legal protections and promoting a culture of tolerance and respect for diverse opinions are essential in this regard.

18. Whereas: Government should revisit media laws to adapt to the challenges posed by fake news, ensuring that they strike a balance between freedom of expression and responsible journalism. Additionally, efforts should be made to educate the public on how to identify and combat fake news, including promoting media literacy and critical thinking skills.

19. Whereas: Establish clear and transparent procedures for judicial appointments, ensuring merit-based selection processes that prioritize professional competence, integrity, and independence from political influence.

20. Whereas, Enhancing Judiciary Review Mechanisms: Strengthen the capacity of the judiciary to conduct effective judicial reviews of government actions, policies, and legislation. This may involve:

- Establishing clear procedures and deadlines for judicial review cases to expedite the resolution of disputes and prevent undue delays.
- Encouraging public awareness and engagement in the judicial review process to promote transparency and accountability.

21. Whereas, Promoting the Rule of Law: Prioritize initiatives aimed at promoting and upholding the rule of law as a fundamental principle of democratic governance. This could include:

- Strengthening legal education and awareness programs to ensure that citizens understand their rights and responsibilities under the law.
- Implementing anti-corruption measures to combat graft and enhance transparency within government institutions.
- Supporting civil society organizations and independent media in monitoring government actions and advocating for accountability.
- The establishment of the War Crimes and Economic Courts aims to provide closure to families who have been victims of crimes, put



an end to the culture of impunity, and hold individuals accountable for actions that violate our laws. These courts serve as a deterrent for potential violators in the future. as, International Cooperation and Assistance: Seek support from international partners, including other democratic nations and multilateral organizations, to provide technical assistance and capacity-building programs for the judiciary and collaborate with regional bodies such as the African Union and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) to share best practices and experiences in strengthening democratic institutions. By prioritizing these policy recommendations, Liberia can make significant strides in advancing political accountability, reinforcing democratic governance, and fostering trust in its institutions.

22. Strengthening Domestic Legal Frameworks and Institutions:

- Implement comprehensive legislation that guarantees the protection of fundamental human rights such as freedom of speech, assembly, and expression.

- Ensure an independent judiciary to uphold the rule of law and provide equal access to justice for all citizens regardless of socio-economic status.

- Provide legal aid services to ensure that all individuals have access to justice, promoting equity and fairness within the justice system.

23. Strengthening Domestic Capacities and Civil Society Engagements:

- Allocate resources to strengthen domestic institutions responsible for the protection of human rights and the promotion of democracy.

- Foster partnerships with civil society organizations, NGOs, and human rights defenders to advocate for human rights, hold the government accountable, and amplify the voices of marginalized communities.

- Support grassroots movements and initiatives that promote universal values and contribute to the resilience of Liberia's democracy.



B. ACTION PLAN

Theme	Policy/Engagement Shift	Timeline	Actions	Means of Verification	
Democracy by Radio Program	Shift toward ensuring that segment of the radio program is focus on the rule of law on Rule of Law Issues and Citizens' Understanding of the Legal Process	May – June 2024	-	Engage the NBA and the Judiciary in a partnership arrangement that will allow each institution to provide public education on their activities and rule of law issues concerning democratic governance	Copy of the Partnership Agreement, Radio Stations Service Agreement, and audios of the airtime
CSO Legislative Engagement	Shift toward ensuring the systematic audit by the legislature report is made public and engages other issues	April – July 2024	-	Engage both House committees on rules order and administration to release a copy of the systematic audit report	
-	Engage the PAC office to establish the CSO partnership in promoting the work of the PAC and increase citizens' understanding				
-	Engage the leadership of both houses to support the legislative drive in developing an H/R Manual with TOR for each legislative staffer				

-	After the submission of the System Audit, engage with the legislative leadership to develop a performance evaluation template for legislative staffers that will enhance their reporting.				
Copy of the Systematic Audit Report					
The signing of an MoU with the PAC with civil society organization led by NAYMOTE					



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