

Launching of Paris Declaration Survey  
February 25, 2008  
Humanitarian Coordination Service Conference Room  
Mamba Point, Monrovia, Liberia

Officials of Government  
Development Partners  
Members of Civil Society  
Ladies and Gentlemen

On behalf of the Civil Society of Liberia, which is represented through various organizations that are involved in a multitude of development promotion initiatives, I'd like to thank both the Government of Liberia and our development partners for recognizing the need, and granting Civil Society the opportunity to participate in the launching of this Paris Declaration Survey. Our participation is true to the spirit and principles of participation and mutual accountability realized by donors and partners at the Paris Declaration of 2005.

Although Liberia did not participate in this program in 2006, we however commend both the Government's and donors' efforts to hold a survey as enshrined in the Paris Declaration, in order to monitor the effectiveness of aid in 2007.

In February 2007, the Liberian Government made a very strong case at the Partners' Forum in Washington, calling for direct budgetary support to make the coordination and monitoring of aid more effective so that efforts to assist Liberia in its reconstruction drive do not go astray. I personally represented Civil Society at that meeting, and also supported the Government's request for direct budgetary support, however, members of Civil Society are particularly concerned that while donors consider giving direct support to Government through multilateral or bilateral partnerships, it is also expedient to build the capacity and strengthen support for civil society so that country level pressure can assure that Government is held accountable. It is better that development funds are channeled through those who have been elected and who can be held accountable by those who elected them. Many of our colleagues are wary that direct budgetary support should not crowd out other funding and support to non-governmental initiatives aimed at assisting Government.

We also believe, too, that civil society should be held accountable for entrusted funds and resources, while it assists Government in doing those things that Government may not have the capacity to do. We emphasize this because accountability is a two way street. Nevertheless, attempts to hold Civil Society accountable as manifested in the Ministry of Planning-UNDP-Civil Society-NGO policies should always be driven by collective participation and mutual accountability, rather than used as an avenue to muzzle dissent.

Civil Society organizations and Non-Governmental Organizations have played a pivotal role in moving Liberia in the transition from conflict to peace. Our role has changed over this period, first by assisting in relief during the conflict, engaging in peace building

during the peace process, ensuring transparency and participation in elections for the ushering in of democracy. Now we are engaging governance monitoring. All of these efforts have been aimed at making sure that the dividends of peace that our people yearned for, in the form of development, are attained. We remain committed to this process.

We want to publicly thank development partners for the continued support given to Liberia in its transition from war to peace, and to say that as we move forward, development assistance must build the capacity of the country and its people to recuperate speedily politically and economically. While the Government of Liberia crafts its Poverty Reduction Strategy, along which much development assistance is expected to be aligned and harmonized, we emphasize the need to give more care and concern to investment in areas and sectors that enhance the productivity of the country, i.e. the provision of electricity, water, roads and the improvement in telecommunications. Improvement in productive capacity will definitely yield improvement in income levels when more value is added to our products due to increased industry.

Post conflict reconstruction is a difficult endeavor that is saddled with many challenges. Income inequality, poverty, disease, lack of education, and poor health care remain problems for many developing countries; it is even more pronounced for post-conflict countries. However, it is still worth trying to change this phenomenon. We believe that strong donor and Government partnership can help to stabilize the investment climate, thus helping to gradually reduce aid, and increase direct foreign investment. With a more stabilized environment, our people can participate fully in an economy where they can realize their dreams and aspirations, and Government efforts to fight poverty and income inequality through better social welfare programs would become a reality.

We asked development partners to work along with Government strongly along these lines, such that in the near future, the livelihoods of our people will be improved. We also urge Government to ensure that the democratic space created for Civil Society and the media remain more vibrant and engaging, so as to improve governance and ensure development.

About the Speaker:

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