



LIHEDE

LIBERIAN HISTORY, EDUCATION & DEVELOPMENT, Inc.

Motto: We Dare Preserve History

News Release

Greensboro (June 27, 2005): A representative group of Liberians residing in the United States has stressed the urgent need to re-model the proposed Liberian Economic Plan drawn up by the international contact group on Liberia, to reflect the socio-economic, political, cultural, and manpower development aspirations of the Liberian nation and people.

The group said it seems odd that an Economic Plan intended to establish a system of good governance, fiscal responsibility, democracy, and political accountability in Liberia would opt for foreigners to run the courts and other public institutions of Liberia without any real efforts to solicit the direct input of Liberians or recruit qualified Liberian professionals at home and abroad in the design and implementation of the plan.

The group voted, after nearly three hours of deliberations on the pros and cons of the Economic Plan during a teleconference Saturday, June 25, not to reject the Economic Plan outright but to have it remodeled to include a specific operational time table for implementation, along with specific benchmarks for recruiting qualified Liberian professionals and training other Liberians to implement the plan instead of relying on foreigners who know little or nothing about the customs and traditions of Liberia.

The group, which included representatives from the Union of Liberian Associations in the America (ULAA), the Liberian Council on Foreign Relations (LCFR), the Liberian Mandingo Association of New York (LIMANY), the Liberian History, Education, and Development, Inc. (LIHEDE), the heads of various county associations, Liberian professionals and former Liberian government officials such as Dr. Emmanuel Dolo, Dr. Mariah Seton, former Liberian Vice President Bennie D. Warner, former Liberian Justice Minister Philip A.Z. Banks, former University of Liberia History Professor Yancy Peter Flah, and former Grand Bassa County Superintendent (county executive) Joseph M. N. Gbadyu, also expressed concern about the legal scope of the Economic Plan, with respect to the 1986 constitution and the authority of the transitional government in Liberia to honor such a plan.

Counselor Banks, a member of the 25-member commission that drafted the 1986 constitution of Liberia had clarified earlier that the 1986 constitution forbids foreigners from serving as judges in Liberian courts and said the current transitional government in Liberia does not have the constitutional authority to honor a plan that runs counter to the provisions of the constitution of Liberia.

Other speakers said the Economic Plan was a welcome relief for the waves of corruption and mismanagement among Liberian political leaders, while other speakers argued that corruption is a systemic problem confronting all of human nature, which was not a good reason for Liberia to surrender its sovereignty to foreigners.



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Most speakers also expressed appreciation to the international community for its continued efforts to bring about peace and stability to Liberia, but warned that such efforts should not seek to violate the basic laws of Liberia or disenfranchise Liberians in the running of their own country.

At the end of the meeting, two committees were set up to implement the outcomes of the discussions. The committee headed by Counselor Banks would draft a letter to Transitional Chairman Gyude Bryant asking his government not to issue an Executive Order or enact a law to bring into force the Economic Plan, as stipulated in the draft Economic Plan, without the direct input of Liberians and required modifications to the plan. The Banks committee would also draft other letters for the US Secretary of State and members of the Contact Group on Liberia to reevaluate the Plan to ensure the full participation of Liberians.

The Committee headed by Mr. Ijoma Flemister, with Cllr. Philip Banks as legal advisor, will analyze the legal, economic, and political implications of the Economic Plan on Liberia and recommend appropriate changes for its remodeling.

The teleconference was organized by LIHEDE, in consultation with ULAA and the county associations. Dr. Syrulwa Somah chaired the teleconference in his capacity as host and Executive Director of LIHEDE. ULAA's Liberian Affair Committee Chairman Joe Tehmeh and co-chairman Asafu Thomas represented ULAA, while LIMANY Board Speaker Mohammed Keita represented the Liberian Mandingo Association of New York (LIMANY). The county associations of Lofa, Maryland, Bong, Grand Gedeh, Sinoe, and Bomi were represented by their respective presidents or vice presidents.

The Nimba and Lofa delegations fully participated in the teleconference but said they could not take specific position on the Economic Plan until they had finalized ongoing consultation with their members.

Meanwhile, the group of concerned Liberians participating in the teleconference would like to invite the input and feedback of other Liberians in drafting an alternative vision to enhance the quality of the Contact Group's Economic Plan for Liberia.

Signed: Nat G Gbessagee
Secretary-General LIHEDE (for the organizing committee)

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