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WEAK STATES IN AFRICA: U.S. POLICY IN LIBERIA

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BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON AFRICAN AFFAIRS

OF THE

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TUESDAY, JUNE 11, 2002

U.S. SENATE,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON AFRICAN AFFAIRS,
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS,
Washington, DC.

The subcommittee met, pursuant to notice, at 2:30 p.m., in room SD–419, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Hon. Russell D. Feingold (chairman of the subcommittee), presiding.

Present: Senators Feingold and Frist.

Senator FEINGOLD. I call this hearing to order. I want to thank all of the witnesses for being here today as the Subcommittee on African Affairs convenes the third in a series of hearings focused on weak states in Africa. This series is an attempt to identify some of the characteristics of Africa's weakest states that make the region attractive to terrorists and other international criminals, focusing on issues such as piracy, illicit air transport networks and trafficking in arms, gemstones, and sometimes people. The subcommittee hopes to identify long-term policy options for changing the context in these states such that they are no longer so weak and so appealing to criminal opportunists.

Earlier hearings already examined Somalia and the Democratic Republic of Congo. Today we turn to the case of Liberia. So often we discuss Liberia only in the context of what is happening in Sierra Leone or Guinea. Those discussions of Liberia's role in the destabilization of the region are certainly appropriate, but they rarely create a space for considering the conditions of the Liberian people themselves, or the state of Liberian institutions, or the extent to which those institutions have been corrupted into private criminal networks aimed at accumulating wealth for those in power. I believe that that is an equally important discussion, and the two are by no means mutually exclusive.

The United States and the international community have invested tremendous resources in bringing peace to Sierra Leone. The formal end of the war and recent elections are positive signs, but chaos in neighboring Liberia is just the opposite. Consider this—citizens of Sierra Leone are coming home from the countries in which they sought refuge, Liberians are fleeing into Sierra Leone—over 20,000 of them.

For all these reasons—because our post September 11 understanding of security threats must include international criminal networks that operate in Africa, because allowing Liberia to deteriorate further without taking action is to ignore a major human

tragedy, and because the success or failure of a major international intervention in the region hangs in the balance—it makes sense to focus on Liberia today.

Let me be very clear at the outset. I think that the current President of Liberia is a war criminal, and I hope to see him held accountable for his actions in a court of law. I strongly support our continued efforts to isolate and pressure the Taylor regime. I think there is nearly universal support for this policy within both parties and both Chambers of Congress. But I also recognize that pressuring Taylor is not a complete policy toward this troubled and volatile country. We must ask ourselves what will Liberia look like in 10 years, and what will that mean for the Liberian people, for the West African region, and for international criminal networks? What steps can be taken today to influence that outcome?

I certainly will turn to the ranking member of the subcommittee, Senator Frist, if he is able to make it. I know that he cares deeply about Africa, and it is a pleasure to work with him on this subcommittee, and I thank him for all his cooperation.

Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Walter Kansteiner is here today to testify in behalf of the administration. It is good to have you back. I know that the Department intends to come and provide a thorough briefing on the nature of international criminal activity and opportunities in Liberia soon, and we look forward to that, and we appreciate the administration's desire to be detailed and comprehensive, but I hope that what we can do today is to hear how you would comment and that you are prepared to discuss these issues in general terms today, and to share the administration's thinking on overall policy aims and policy tools with regard to Liberia. And with that, it is good to see you again, and you may proceed with your testimony.

STATEMENT OF HON. WALTER KANSTEINER, ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF STATE FOR AFRICAN AFFAIRS, DEPARTMENT OF STATE, WASHINGTON, DC

Mr. KANSTEINER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It is a pleasure to be here again, and the failed state series is a very important one to be looking at for Africa in particular. If I could briefly review how Liberia came to the state that it is in, and then perhaps look at some of the questions you have raised as far as what the international community, particularly the U.S. Government, is thinking about doing to assist.

Greed and lack of good governance are the root causes of Liberia's descent into its present deplorable state of affairs. Up until the early 1980s, the government, representing primarily the interests of a privileged minority, ruled the country. One night, a group of noncommissioned officers put an abrupt end to that government, but unfortunately did not bring an end to narrow-interest governance. The new Liberian leader then was Sergeant Sammy Doe. He hijacked an election and created a narrow, ethnically based government.

Within 9 years of taking power, he, too, faced a challenge, this time by an insurgency led by Charles Taylor. Liberia suffered a 6-year civil war and, as we know, that war was truly devastating. Some 750,000 persons were driven out of Liberia as refugees, and

another 200,000 were killed. The unprecedented regional military intervention that ECOWAS launched did bring about a cessation of fighting, and elections followed. Those elections were held under the threat of a renewal of violence if Charles Taylor was not elected. Many observers believe that the people of Liberia really voted for peace, and not necessarily for Taylor.

Doe and Taylor both had an opportunity to provide Liberia some real leadership, but they did not. For our part, we tried to strengthen democratic institutions and help rehabilitate the social and economic infrastructure. When Taylor came to power, we had USAID support in full, ready to assist to help rebuild those institutions. The opportunity of this period was squandered.

Taylor devoted Liberia's resources to supporting the Revolutionary United Front, the RUF, next door in Sierra Leone and its continued efforts to seize power in that country. Instead of investing in Liberia, Taylor divested Liberian assets to support his broader ambitions in the region, to enrich his cronies, and to ensure the loyalty of his hired security forces. He stopped servicing Liberia's debt and, as a result, the country is under Brooke sanctions.

To fund this regional ambition, Charles Taylor created new sources of revenue primarily through trading illicit diamonds. He provided the conduit and the paths through which the RUF got their diamonds out, and by which they were marketed. Taylor also contracted with the Oriental Timber Company and with other foreign logging firms that exploit the indigenous hardwood forests of Liberia, some of the most beautiful forests on the continent, I might add. Global Witness and others have done an excellent job of documenting this atrocious raping of Liberia's irreplaceable natural resources.

Taylor has used these revenues from both diamonds and timber to fund his reckless exploitation of the conflicts in the neighborhood. In doing so, he has clearly violated a number of U.N. embargoes, particularly the U.N. arms embargo, as he pumps more weapons into the territory, into the neighborhood.

The international community reacted slowly to Taylor's regional destabilization and even more slowly to his malgovernance of Liberia. Faced with the disengagement of ECOWAS forces, the Government of Sierra Leone negotiated a power-sharing agreement with the RUF. Encouraged by Taylor, the RUF repudiated the agreement and took as hostages several hundred U.N. peacekeepers. Really, only by the intervention of the British forces in May of 2000 did we see the RUF prevented from seizing Sierra Leone.

Mr. Chairman, Charles Taylor has set Liberia on a course toward ever-greater hardship and suffering of the Liberian people and, as you mentioned, it is that which we need to focus on in addition to his reckless behavior in the neighborhood. The latest military challenge that he is now facing is by a group called Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy, known as the LURD. I do want to make it clear that the U.S. Government does not condone armed insurrection in Liberia, nor do we support the LURD. In fact, we have pressed the Government of Guinea and others not to support the LURD.

But let me finally conclude with attempting to really get at what you were asking earlier, and that is, how does a failed state such

as Liberia recover, and what role can and should the United States play? It is important to recognize that Charles Taylor's regime is probably unlikely to change. It would be a long shot to assume he is going to change his stripes. He might, and we need to be ready, but it is a long shot.

I think a more important starting point is that of the widespread Liberian desire for peace and stability. That popular will must be given more concrete direction by leaders who are able to craft a widespread common vision of a new Liberia. We believe that widespread vision is there, and we need to help the opposition forces and those that have that vision coalesce around that vision and with each other. A united opposition should contest Liberia's 2003 election. With the right support from the international community, the elections can be made free and fair. If not free and fair, they can be exposed as a sham.

The key to elections being free and fair is ensuring that the Liberian people feel that their vote will be confidential, and that their preferred candidates could run and win without the renewed risk of violence. Securing this condition while Taylor's security forces remain unchecked is going to be difficult, and so that is why we are now discussing with our European allies as well as African states perhaps looking at an outside force, or maybe ECOWAS, to ensure that security and give that pre-election environment that is so needed to make a free and fair election.

The Liberian people want to see some improvements in the quality of life. With few resources at its disposal, any post-failed state government will depend on help from the international community. Of paramount importance is ensuring an adequate food supply until commercial mechanisms can be restored. The United States should play a lead role here, along with other international partners such as the World Bank and the European Community and ECOWAS.

In conclusion, I might say two things are certain about Liberia: No. 1, it is not going to recover from its present deplorable state without some real help; and No. 2, the timing and circumstances of any change really is not predictable. We have to remain flexible, and with your help, and with consultations, we plan to look for opportunities to do just that.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Kansteiner follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF HON. WALTER KANSTEINER, ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF STATE FOR AFRICAN AFFAIRS

Mr. Chairman, members of the committee, it gives me great pleasure to appear before you today to pursue the topic of failed states in Africa. Today you have asked that I focus on Liberia, West Africa's most failed state. I would like to review briefly how Liberia came to its present nadir as well as how the decline in Liberia's fortunes has affected the sub region and created an opening for international criminal and terrorist activities. Then I would like to address what the United States and others in the international community are doing and I believe will need to do to bring Liberia back into the fold of democratically well governed nations.

Greed and lack of good governance are the root causes of Liberia's descent into its present deplorable state of affairs. Up until the early 1980s, a government representing primarily the interests of a privileged minority of Liberians pursued to excess the enrichment of a narrow class. If you wanted to send your child to school, you had to buy textbooks imported by a relative of the president. If you wanted to operate a taxi, you had to buy the yellow paint for it from a company owned by a

close associate of the president. Rice, the staple food, was imported and sold by another government monopoly. One night, a group of non-commissioned officers put an abrupt end to that government, but unfortunately, despite significant U.S. assistance, did not bring about an end to narrow interest governance. The new Liberian leader, Sergeant Doe, slowly eliminated most of his original compatriots, hijacked an election and created a narrow ethnically based government. Within nine years of taking power, he faced an armed insurgency led by Charles Taylor. Though Doe lasted less than a year after Taylor launched his bid for power, Liberia suffered a six-year civil war. That war had such tremendous humanitarian consequences, with at least 750,000 persons driven out as refugees, one million IDPs and estimates of up to 200,000 killed, and so threatened the stability of the sub region that the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) dispatched a military force to try to restore order.

The unprecedented regional military intervention did bring about a cessation of fighting, but the subsequent disarmament and demobilization program it oversaw was far from complete and the elections that followed were held under the threat of a renewal of violence if Charles Taylor were not elected. Many observers believe that the people of Liberia voted for peace, not Taylor.

Like Doe before him, Taylor had an opportunity to provide Liberians the good governance they deserve. USAID support for Liberia during the early Taylor period focused on the country's transition from emergency assistance to sustainable development. We tried to strengthen democratic institutions, reintegrated IDPs and invested in the rehabilitation of social and economic infrastructure. The opportunity of this period was squandered. Instead of good governance and reconstruction, Taylor devoted Liberia's resources to supporting the Revolutionary United Front's (RUF) continued efforts to seize power in neighboring Sierra Leone. After five years in power, Liberia's capital still has no reliable electric supply or running water. Instead of investing in Liberia, Taylor divested Liberian assets to support his broader ambitions in the region, to enrich his cronies and to ensure the loyalty of hired security forces. While hundreds of thousands of refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) returned home, Taylor's government made no real efforts to foster development and recovery to build on the investments the international community made through reintegration assistance. He stopped servicing Liberia's debt and the country fell under Brooke sanctions.

To fund his regional ambitions, Taylor went beyond diverting the resources of the Liberian state. He created new sources of revenue through trade in illicit diamonds. He provided the conduit around international sanctions, for diamonds mined in RUF-controlled areas of Sierra Leone to pass through middlemen based in Liberia to world markets. The middlemen brought in by Taylor and his cronies have certainly operated outside the legitimate diamond trade and may, though we cannot confirm the press allegations on this, have dealt in diamonds with persons affiliated with international terrorist groups. Taylor also contracted with the Oriental Timber Company (OTC) and other foreign logging firms that have exploit Liberia's hardwood tropical forests. Global Witness and others have done an excellent job of documenting this atrocious raping of Liberia's irreplaceable natural resources. Possibly worse, there are reports that after signing a forestry protection agreement with an international conservation group, Taylor has allowed logging operations in the Sapo National Park.

Taylor has used revenues from diamond smuggling and reckless exploitation of Liberia's rain forest primarily to buy weapons, to fuel conflicts in neighboring countries, and to arm his proliferating internal security forces. To obtain these weapons, Taylor has violated successive United Nations arms embargos (UNSCR 788 of November 19, 1992, UNSCR 1343 of March 7, 2001 and UNSCR 1408 of May 6, 2002). He dealt with gray and black-market agents, such as Victor Butt, to procure and transport weapons into Liberia. Thus, both on the resource generation side and on the expenditure side, Taylor has taken up company with those on the fringe of and outside legal operations.

The international community reacted slowly to Taylor's regional destabilization activities and even more slowly to his malgovernance of Liberia. The United States and the rest of the international community failed initially to provide the backing ECOWAS needed to continue its peacekeeping operation in Sierra Leone. Faced with a disengagement of ECOWAS forces, the Government of Sierra Leone negotiated a power sharing agreement with the RUF. Encouraged by Taylor, the RUF repudiated the agreement and took as hostages several hundred UN peacekeepers who had gone to Sierra Leone to oversee its implementation. Only intervention by British forces in May 2000 prevented the RUF from seizing power in Sierra Leone. In July 2000, the United States gave Taylor an overdue ultimatum, cease supporting the RUF and destabilizing the region or face serious consequences. In Sep-

tember 2000, the Taylor-supported RUF invaded Guinea. We replied with unilateral travel sanctions on Taylor and his cronies. A few months later UN sanctions on diamonds, arms and travel were instituted.

Despite the RUF's reversal of fortunes at the hands of the Guinean military and under pressure from an ever stronger and more determined UN peacekeeping force in Sierra Leone, which led the majority of the RUF to unconditionally agree to disarm and demobilize, Taylor remains recalcitrant. He has welcomed into Liberia those elements of the RUF who refused to disarm and demobilize, and has ensured they remain armed and dangerous. This potential threat to peace and stability in the region led the UN Security Council to renew sanctions on Liberia last month.

The reluctance of the international community to address the internal affairs of Liberia is beginning to crumble, as ECOWAS has begun urging the Liberian government to talk with the rebels of the group known as Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD). On March 1, Embassy Monrovia issued a press statement that clearly laid out what we expect of the Taylor government, both in terms of its actions in the region and within Liberia. We called on Taylor to: (1) discipline members of the security forces who have threatened or have used violence against political or civil society leaders; (2) to grant amnesty to all political opponents; (3) to respect the freedom of the press, cease harassment of members of the press and allow independent electronic media to broadcast AM, FM and shortwave throughout Liberia; (4) to fully address the security/safety concerns of political and civil society leaders; (5) to reach agreement with all peaceful political movements and parties on the specific nature of guarantees and mechanisms required for the conduct of open political debate and free, fair and inclusive elections; and (6) to respect fully the right of peaceful assembly and freedom of speech.

Using the pretext of a threat posed by an armed group calling itself, "Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy" (LURD), the Taylor government responded to our calls for greater openness with a ban on public gatherings, closure of an independent newspaper, harassment of human rights activists, and recruitment of new undisciplined and unpaid militias to protect itself.

Mr. Chairman, Charles Taylor has set Liberia on a course towards ever greater hardship and suffering of the Liberian people. He waged war to gain power, but has failed to govern justly and wisely and now faces an armed revolt. The United States government does not condone armed insurrection in Liberia nor do we support the LURD. In fact, we have pressed the government of Guinea not to support the LURD. Although Taylor blames the LURD for the rampant insecurity in the countryside, in fact, his own poorly trained and unpaid troops are mainly responsible for the looting and fear that is generating tens of thousands of internally displaced persons (IDPs). The Liberians displaced by the depredations of Liberian security forces are resettled by Liberian government authorities in areas where they are vulnerable to further depredations by armed forces. Taylor blames the international community for not responding to the plight of these IDPs. The reality is that these people need protection from their own government and humanitarian suffering will go on to some degree as long as Taylor's lack of good governance persists. Nevertheless, the United States government will do its part in addressing the humanitarian needs of Liberian refugees and IDPs.

ECOWAS has also recognized that the growing instability in Liberia demands an outside response. ECOWAS, at its recent meeting in Cote d'Ivoire, issued a call for cease-fire and talks between the Liberian government and the LURD. Although Taylor's spokesman initially rejected the proposal and his government has since equivocated about how it will respond, we are encouraged that ECOWAS has asked Nigeria's President Obasanjo to pursue this. ECOWAS has also tried to facilitate a dialogue between other political factions and the Liberian government. This is the type of action warranted under the peer review provisions of NEPAD.

Mr. Chairman, let me conclude by attempting to address the questions I believe most interest you: how can a failed state such as Liberia recover and what role can and should the United States play. First, it is important to recognize that the Taylor regime is unlikely to change its manner of governance or its ambitions. Given the monster of undisciplined security forces it has created, it is questionable whether the Liberian government could survive if it sought to change the way it governs. That leads to the question of what happens next. Chaos is a possible scenario. Since a state in anarchy is fertile ground for international criminal and terrorist activity and since restoring order out of chaos is a tall order for the international community, our focus must be to ensure there is a plausible alternative scenario.

A starting point is the widespread Liberian desire for peace and stability. That popular will must be given more concrete direction by leaders who are able to craft a widespread common vision of a new Liberia. Political and civil society leaders focused on a common vision rather than internecine squabbling is a prerequisite for

rebuilding a peaceful, democratic and more prosperous Liberia. Due to the historic relationship between the United States and Liberia, many Liberians still look to the United States to help lead the way to a better future for Liberia. As a first step in helping Liberia recover from its current circumstances, the United States can facilitate discussion about the shape of a new Liberia, but the vision of a new Liberia must come from Liberians themselves.

A united opposition should contest Liberia's 2003 elections. With the right support from the international community the elections can either be made free and fair or exposed for the sham they easily could be. The key to elections being free and fair is ensuring that the Liberian people feel they can vote for their preferred candidates without the risk of renewed violence. Securing this condition while Taylor's security forces remain unchecked is unlikely to occur. Perhaps the answer is an outside force, possibly an ECOWAS force to ensure security.

However change may occur, no political leadership can succeed if the armed thugs running rampant in the countryside are unchecked. Experience in Eastern Europe, East Timor and Sierra Leone suggest that an armed outside force, perhaps another ECOWAS force in Liberia's case, will be needed in order to protect a nascent government, disarm and demobilize the willing, and marginalize and hunt down as criminals those who persist in living by the gun. Disarmament and demobilization can only succeed if there is a new life for the former fighters. Some can be retrained and reformed into a new Liberian Armed Force; most will need to be provided retraining and real opportunities for successful integration into civilian life.

First and foremost, the Liberian people want to see peace and feel secure again. But for urban populations in particular, they will soon want to see some improvements in the quality of life. With few resources at its disposal, any post-failed state government will depend on help from the international community. Of paramount importance is ensuring an adequate food supply until commercial mechanisms can be restored. Visible progress in restoring basic infrastructure and public services such as water and electricity is likely also necessary to generate popular support and the legitimacy such support confers. The United States should play a lead role here along with other international partners, such as the World Bank, European Community and ECOWAS. Efforts must begin very early to develop national consensus on a new political framework, to strengthen independent media and civil society. Technical assistance and funds to rebuild institutions from the courts to the civil service will also be critically needed. To staff these rehabilitated institutions, Liberia will need its best and brightest to return from abroad.

Two things are certain, Liberia will need our help recovering from its present deplorable state, and the timing and circumstance of any change is not predictable. We will need to remain flexible, prepared to act quickly, boldly and generously if Liberia is to make a success of a third opportunity to succeed.

Senator FEINGOLD. Thank you, Mr. Kansteiner, for your testimony. You referred to the Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy, and let me ask a few questions about that group. Has the U.S. Government had any contact with the LURD?

Mr. KANSTEINER. I think we have had some very minimal contact, and it is primarily through individuals in surrounding neighboring countries and in the United States. We do not have a continuous running dialog with them, no.

Senator FEINGOLD. Do you know if the LURD has a clear and unified leadership structure, or do they have sort of multiple voices that purport to speak for them?

Mr. KANSTEINER. My analysis is the latter, in fact. It is rather disunified, and they have multiple patrons, really, supplying them and helping them.

Senator FEINGOLD. I think I know your answer to the next one, based upon your remarks, but let me be sure. Is negotiation with the LURD feasible in this sense, based upon what you just said?

Mr. KANSTEINER. I think it would be very difficult.

Senator FEINGOLD. Would it be desirable?

Mr. KANSTEINER. I am not sure it would be desirable. I think it is worth exploring that option, quite frankly. I think it is worth

learning more about this organization, and we in fact have asked certain of our agencies in the government to help us learn more about it.

Senator FEINGOLD. So I take it at this point you would not be ready to say negotiating with the LURD would be akin to negotiating with the RUF?

Mr. KANSTEINER. No, I do not advocate that our policy priority be to seek them out and negotiate with them, no.

Senator FEINGOLD. I know these are tough things to guess about, but then how do you get to a cease-fire in Liberia, given the difficulty of trying to negotiate with the LURD?

Mr. KANSTEINER. I think a very important role can be played by ECOWAS and by the neighboring countries. Clearly, some of the neighboring states, Guinea in particular, seem to have some influence with the LURD and other organizations; it is perhaps through them that we can learn more about and pressure the LURD to negotiate.

We also have to pressure the Taylor side, too, but again, I do not think it is a policy priority. I certainly would not want to rule it out, either. I think we need to explore it.

Senator FEINGOLD. Let me pursue the connection to the Government of Guinea. Your comments suggest the Government of Guinea is assisting the LURD, is that correct?

Mr. KANSTEINER. I am not sure I would characterize it as assisting. I would say that they probably are aware of assistance that is going through Guinea. If they are actually part and parcel of that, I do not know, but they are certainly aware there is assistance that is going through their country.

Senator FEINGOLD. Have we in any way in our assistance, American assistance to Guinea, tried to condition that assistance on an end to support for the LURD?

Mr. KANSTEINER. We have not.

Senator FEINGOLD. Are there any plans to do so?

Mr. KANSTEINER. No, but Guinea knows exactly where we stand on the LURD, and we have told them that we see any direct Government of Guinea assistance to the LURD as highly problematic and, in fact, would jeopardize our relationship.

Senator FEINGOLD. This is something we may want to pursue with you in further discussions. Let me talk a little bit about the relationship which you have already talked about between the RUF and the Liberian Government. To what extent do you believe that the RUF is still associated with the Liberian Government?

Mr. KANSTEINER. I believe there is still a link. As you know, the RUF stood for elections in Sierra Leone and came down in defeat as far as the electoral outcome is concerned.

Senator FEINGOLD. Did the Government of Liberia get involved in any of RUF's political activities that led up to the elections in Sierra Leone?

Mr. KANSTEINER. I would not rule it out. I do not know specifically, but that would not surprise me, and recently, as recently as 10 days ago, we have seen activity going on between Liberia and the RUF into Sierra Leone. That linkage is still there.

Senator FEINGOLD. I think you have alluded to this, but as I understand it, it is U.S. policy to support a transition to a credible

democratic government in Liberia and obviously to ease the suffering of Liberian civilians. What precisely is the U.S. Government doing to pursue these goals?

Mr. KANSTEINER. We have a couple of programs that are underway. We have a couple more we are considering. The ones that are currently underway are assistance to authentic opposition, that is, opposition parties helping them become better organized in the sense of seeking this common vision we discussed. The opposition is splintered, and the best way for them to present a viable alternative to Taylor is, in fact, to have some kind of coalition, some kind of unification.

The other way, the other project we are specifically working on is communications, AM-FM and shortwave radio transmissions. Again, as you know, Senator, the Taylor regime has controlled the media very tightly and become quite autocratic about it, and so what we are trying to do there is simply get a free, independent, objective media source that has some capability to get into Liberia and disseminate news and information that is unbiased and objective.

Senator FEINGOLD. Let me pursue both of those for a minute. What exactly is being done to assist what may be perceived or hoped to be authentic opposition? What are we doing to help them?

Mr. KANSTEINER. A couple of things we are doing is actually trying to bring them together, literally, physically.

Senator FEINGOLD. Hosting meetings?

Mr. KANSTEINER. Primarily meetings, getting them to understand some basic party-building exercises, some grassroots organization. In the oppressive environment of Liberia, building an opposition party is hard.

Senator FEINGOLD. But there is an active effort that we are involved in to do that?

Mr. KANSTEINER. There is, yes, sir.

Senator FEINGOLD. What about the radio piece again? What exactly are we doing?

Mr. KANSTEINER. We have an $800,000 program that will promote independent media. It is shortwave AM and FM radio, training journalists, and the purchase of what in Africa is becoming quite standard are these wind-up radios, so it is not necessary to have batteries or electricity. It is actually a wind-up radio, and so we are providing these wind-up radios, so once we get these shortwave and FM stations up and running, people can hear them.

Senator FEINGOLD. Let me ask you a closely related question. To what degree is the United States providing assistance to Liberian civil society, and how well is the civil society well-developed in Liberia? I mean, to some extent that is governed by opposition parties, but civil society is broader than that.

Mr. KANSTEINER. It is broader than that. In fact, we are including the civil society into some of these discussions, because they have a large role to play. So on the training of the journalists, for instance, we are kind of broadening that out, and we would consider independent journalists as a key component of that civil society, so we are trying to be as inclusive of civil society, and as you know it is pretty thin right now in Liberia, and they need all the help they can get.

Senator FEINGOLD. Very good. Thank you.

Last year, an article in the Washington Post alleged that Hezbollah and even al-Qaeda representatives had purchased Sierra Leonian diamonds through Liberia. Can you speak generally about other international actors known to be doing business in Liberia?

Mr. KANSTEINER. We also read those reports and were quite interested and concerned, and we have asked for a thorough analysis of that. So far, we cannot find any direct evidence that they were primary buyers, but they probably were secondary buyers, though, and certainly tertiary buyers for the second and third and fourth transactions that clearly were taking place. These organizations quite frankly use all the commodities, be they diamonds, or—as we know, al-Qaeda has used honey—multiple businesses and commodities that they trade and buy and purchase. I have no doubt that gemstones and diamonds somewhere along that food chain are involved.

The other major source of revenue, of course, in Liberia right now that could fall into that category, and I am not saying it is, but could fall into that category, is timber. We see the timber sales primarily going from the hardwood forests that Taylor licenses and probably gets a cut of, no pun intended, directly to end users. But there could be middle men involved in that as well.

Senator FEINGOLD. And who would be some of these other international actors?

Mr. KANSTEINER. Malaysian and Chinese timber companies have been active in Liberia, and clearly getting licenses to cut this timber from President Taylor.

Senator FEINGOLD. Senator Frist, the ranking member of the committee, has arrived, and what I will do at this point is call on him for any remarks he has, as I have already taken a few minutes to ask questions. If you wish, after you make your remarks, you can ask your questions.

Senator FRIST. I apologize, Mr. Secretary and Mr. Chairman, for my tardiness. I planned on being here right on time, but I apologize. Let me just say—and I will just be very, very brief, actually, and will submit my opening statement to the record if that is OK, Mr. Chairman.

[The prepared statement of Senator Frist follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF SENATOR BILL FRIST

U.S. POLICY OPTIONS IN LIBERIA

Mr. Chairman, thank you. I look forward to hearing what I anticipate will be very thoughtful testimony and policy recommendations from our witnesses here today.

There are three general issues that I hope we can explore here today. First, what policy options do we have to place pressure on President Charles Taylor so that he will stop engaging in behavior that undermines regional stability? Should this pressure be extended to others, and if so, who? Second, I hope to hear your thoughts on steps can we take to help relieve the plight of ordinary Liberians. And finally, Liberia is scheduled to hold elections in October 2003. I would like to hear your thoughts on what steps can we take to ensure that those elections are free and fair and how can we engage Liberia's civil society to encourage their participation in the elections and their efforts to rebuild civil society over the long-term.

As our witnesses will describe here today, Liberia has suffered from a long-standing off-and-on civil war that has torn the country apart for over a decade. Fighting between the regime of Charles Taylor and the Liberian United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) threatens not only the citizens of Liberia but the fragile peace and stability of the region.

Neighboring Sierra Leone is taking the first careful steps toward reconciling its long and brutal civil war—holding free elections on May 14. Yet, I am concerned that the Taylor regime could be undermining those efforts through his support for RUF fighters who have refused to disarm and demobilize. I would also like to hear from our witnesses their assessment of the other participants in this fighting, particularly the LURD and the support that Guinea might be providing to the rebels.

Mr. Chairman, not only am I concerned with the threat the fighting poses to neighboring countries of West Africa, I am also concerned with the threat the Taylor government poses to its own citizens. Increasingly, credible reports are showing that the regime continues to harbor international arms strugglers, drug dealers, and other criminal enterprises.

Special "security officers" and "anti-terrorist units" intimidate the civilian population and harass the political opponents of the government. Human rights advocates and journalists are assaulted jailed on a regular basis as independent newspapers and radio stations are closed down. Liberians continue to live under a State of Emergency imposed in February 2001 by President Taylor.

I am concerned for the welfare of Liberia's citizens who are caught in the middle of the ongoing hostilities. Liberia's health care and education systems are collapsing. The capital is without electricity and running water, and communication with the outside world is mostly limited to satellite telephones. On June 10, yesterday, our Ambassador, Bismarck Myrick, declared a disaster due to the complex emergency in Liberia.

In October 2003, Liberia is scheduled to hold presidential elections. I am interested from hearing more from our witnesses their thoughts on steps we should take to engage with the Liberians so that we can help them prepare for the elections.

I look forward to hearing your views on how we, as legislators, can support the Administration and use our influence to end the violence in Liberia. Through your testimony, I hope we can get a better understanding of how we can begin to address these problems and a better understanding of how Liberia's civil war affects the United States' own interests, so that we can further those interests and those we share with Africa. Thank you for appearing before us today.

Senator FRIST. A couple of the issues—I will just have one question about that—you have already touched upon, but something which I do not believe you have mentioned thus far is about health care and education in Liberia, and the collapse that as I read and study, and I have talked to people, seems to be happening. The ongoing hostilities leave the welfare of Liberian citizens in the middle.

When you look at health care, and you look at education, and you look at infrastructure in the midst of these hostilities, the potential for complete collapse is there, and I want you to sort of paint the picture for me so I will understand it. The capital is without electricity and without running water, communication with the outside world seems to be in large part limited to satellite telephones. On June 10, Ambassador Myrick declared a disaster due to the complex emergency in Liberia.

Could you take those comments and just expand upon them, and then maybe lead into a little bit the humanitarian efforts, either that are underway, or might potentially be underway as we look to the future?

Mr. KANSTEINER. Thank you, Senator. The general state of affairs in Liberia and Monrovia in particular is rapid decay, quite frankly. As you say, there is no electricity. Most institutions and buildings that have power have it because they have generators. Hospitals are lacking medicines and power. The infrastructure of the country is sagging, if not broken. It is in that context that some of the political maneuvering that Taylor is doing is particularly egregious, in the sense that he has three hearty meals a day and

is living quite comfortably, as are his cronies, while the country is increasingly lawless, as well as lacking in infrastructure.

For instance, Taylor could not pay his own security forces a few months ago, and so what he essentially did was pull out a map of the country and allows certain units in the military to basically take over this region of this county and go do whatever they wanted, which meant rape, pillage, and plunder there units what they need to be paid, since he is not paying them. It is that kind of atmosphere that is prevalent throughout the country.

Senator FRIST. And education, what is education now?

Mr. KANSTEINER. The education system has suffered mightily, and a country that had a fairly high literacy rate is now only 38 percent.

Senator FRIST. When you look at that, the potential for humanitarian efforts to have some impact, given the hostilities and the approach of the Taylor regime, will humanitarian efforts have an impact?

Mr. KANSTEINER. Well, the humanitarian efforts do have an impact in the sense that they provide food assistance, they provide medicines, and what we are trying to do, of course, is funnel all of those food assistance and medical, particularly those, through nongovernmental organizations [NGOs]—we push it through the NGOs that are, quite frankly, brave and bold enough to be there. I think you are going to hear from some of them who are there today. We make a very real effort to make sure that that assistance does not go through the Government of Liberia, and that it does go through independent NGOs that will disburse it not based on political largesse, but based upon true humanitarian need.

Senator FRIST. Did you talk about the elections at all, the May 14 elections?

Mr. KANSTEINER. The Sierra Leone elections? We briefly touched on it.

Senator FRIST. Generally, the international community obviously has recognized those as appropriate and free. As we look at the alleged interference by Taylor in Sierra Leone as a key source of the charges that Taylor's actions have destabilized the region, and I speak in particular of his support for the Revolutionary United Front in Sierra Leone, what is the current status today? Does the Taylor government pose a threat to what is a very fragile peace of Sierra Leone and put it in danger of collapse?

Mr. KANSTEINER. Senator, I think the good news is that Taylor's influence on the election process in Sierra Leone is pretty minimal. I mean, the RUF did very poorly, and I have no doubt that Taylor was somehow trying to assist the RUF in their political campaigns. That is the good news, that it was a relatively free and fair election, and we do have now a democratically elected government next door in Sierra Leone.

The bad news is that Taylor is still involved in cross-border operations. They are not large-scale. They are relatively small, but they are still occurring, and if it is just shipping a few AK–47's into the RUF territory, or if it is trying to smuggle 10 percent more diamonds out, whatever that activity is, it is significantly less today than it was a year ago. It is still going on to some degree.

Senator FRIST. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator FEINGOLD. Thank you very much, Senator Frist. I will just continue with some further questions for Mr. Kansteiner. I would like to follow on something Senator Frist asked. Have we actually stepped up our humanitarian assistance to Liberia since the fighting with the LURD began affecting civilians?

Mr. KANSTEINER. We have. The fiscal year 2002, which they just handed me the numbers, we have provided $4.8 million in support for humanitarian assistance programs. Again, most of it is food assistance and medicines. A lot of it is targeted for the refugees and the internally displaced persons. The total 2001 assistance for education, nutrition, and refugees and IDPs was $10.7 million. That also gives the primary vehicles the NGOs, as we mentioned, and also UNHCR we are working with, and ICRC, and we predict that that the fiscal year 2002 level of support will stay or increase in 2003, in fiscal year 2003.

Senator FEINGOLD. I would like to go back to another question that I was beginning with before Senator Frist came. Are there links between people doing business in Liberia and armed groups that are elsewhere in Africa, political parties elsewhere in Africa?

Mr. KANSTEINER. Not that come immediately to mind.

Senator FEINGOLD. What about the relationship between Liberia and Libya?

Mr. KANSTEINER. The Taylor-Qaddafi relationship is a long one. Some of Taylor's original training we believe in fact was in Libya, and some of those early weapons shipments and perhaps current weapons shipments clearly emanated from Libya.

Senator FEINGOLD. Obviously, you have no reason to believe that relationship has softened or changed.

Mr. KANSTEINER. No, sir. I see no evidence of a lessening relationship there, and as we have seen elsewhere in Africa, when African leaders often get in tight spots they turn to the few friends they have, and so as the pressure on Taylor increases, we might even anticipate a deepening of that relationship.

Senator FEINGOLD. I am pleased you mentioned the timber issue. We have talked about this before. Many credible reports allege the Liberian Government's logging policy is not only environmentally disastrous, but is also characterized by abusive acts of security forces working with logging companies. Could you talk about the relationship between the Government of Liberia, the logging firms operating in Liberia, and state-sponsored security forces?

Mr. KANSTEINER. Well, the Government of Liberia has entered into negotiations and, in fact, contracts with a number of international timber companies. The OTC, Oriental Timber Company, is probably its largest partner in the cutting of the hardwoods. We are very pleased that the U.N. Security Council agreed with the United States and the British in what we are calling ring-fencing those timber revenues. It is a voluntary process where the Security Council has demanded that the Taylor regime and Monrovia give us a transparent and complete accounting for all timber proceeds.

If they do not give us that accounting, I would hope that the U.N. Security Council would, in fact, move the next step forward, which would be a mandatory cordoning off of those revenues, so we know exactly how much those revenues are, where they are going, and how they are being spent.

Senator FEINGOLD. You actually support the calls for a ban on timber exports from Liberia because of the links between timber revenues and illicit arms purchases?

Mr. KANSTEINER. I think that is a very viable option we ought to look at.

Senator FEINGOLD. How would sanctions like that affect Liberian civilians who are already suffering in a devastated economy?

Mr. KANSTEINER. We have looked at that, and we were surprised to find how few Liberians are actually actively engaged in some of the timbering operations. In fact, we have seen where companies coming in from the outside, non-African companies like the Oriental Timber Company, often bring in workers to provide the labor, so the Liberians themselves are not even benefiting from the clear-cutting of their own forest.

Senator FEINGOLD. So the impact would be negligible?

Mr. KANSTEINER. I think it would be pretty small.

Senator FEINGOLD. Let me turn to another aspect of Liberia's economy. Liberia maintains one of the largest maritime fleets in the world. An expert report to the U.N. Security Council last autumn concluded in part that the Liberian Commission of Maritime Affairs Bureau acted at times as, "little more than a cash extraction operation," offering cover to fund and organize Liberia's off-budget expenditures, including prohibited U.N. sanctions-breaking activities.

In one particularly troubling allegation, the panel of U.N. experts also presented evidence to suggest that the Maritime Registry itself, which is run by a corporation in the United States, transferred funds on behalf of the Government of Liberia to suspicious nongovernmental accounts. Some of those funds could have been used directly to support sanctions-busting activities.

In a more recent report to the Security Council in April of this year, that same expert panel reported that they had obtained additional documentation linking an arms dealer to the Maritime Affairs Bureau in Liberia. They also reported that despite steps by the Maritime Registry and the Ministry of Finance to provide a full accounting for all maritime funds, as much as $2 million in recent payments from the Maritime Registry to the Central Bank of Liberia remain unaccounted for.

Given these reports, do you believe that hard currency revenues generated by the registry are being used by the Government of Liberia to support arms trafficking or other sanctions-busting activities, and should the United States press the international community to set up an international auditing mechanism to account for the money generated by the maritime registry, thereby ring-fencing the revenues to ensure that they are used for legitimate development or humanitarian purposes?

Mr. KANSTEINER. I agree on all of the above. We have pretty clear evidence that there were at least some payments—now, this goes back a couple of years, but there were some payments from the Maritime Registry to arms shippers. We have been given assurances, and the fiscal data we have seen since would suggest that that has ceased, that has not occurred since, but that does not mean that that money is not fungible.

The revenue stream goes from the ship registry to the Government of Liberia, and once it gets into the Government of Liberia's central bank system, we do not know where it all goes. So with regard to the second part of your question, we are very supportive of cordoning off that revenue stream. It is, we think, about $20 million a year. We would like to know where that $20 million a year goes, and how the Liberian Government spends it. The Security Council has imposed basically a process where the Government of Liberia would voluntarily demonstrate to us ring-fencing and accountability.

There are a number of companies that could do this. Crown Agents out of the U.K. is being considered right now as basically an accounting mechanism. But if the Government of Liberia does not proceed with some good intent, then I think we need to go back to the Security Council and make it mandatory rather than voluntary.

Senator FEINGOLD. I appreciate that answer. Some observers, notably the International Crisis Group, have suggested that the international community should focus its energies on encouraging a genuinely free and democratic election in October of 2003. I would like your assessment of that suggestion. Will the United States provide assistance in the months leading to the elections and, given what you have described, the government's history and the current state of emergency, can we really take the prospect of democratic elections seriously?

Mr. KANSTEINER. It is going to be the policy tactic or strategy that I think we are going to need to work most on as we approach the third quarter 2003 election. Will there be an environment in Liberia that truly is going to allow for a free and fair election. Or is there going to be intimidation? Are Taylor's thugs going to run rampant? Hence my reference in the testimony about possibly getting some kind of peacekeeping operation, or certainly an outside force like an ECOWAS to be there to provide that more open and friendly environment where Liberians truly could have a voice and really could vote in a reasonably free and fair environment. I think those are the issues that are going to be confronting us in the next 15 months.

Senator FEINGOLD. With regard to ECOWAS, what is the current ECOWAS position regarding sanctions on Liberia? Do some of the regional actors have some clear interest on easing pressure on President Taylor?

Mr. KANSTEINER. I think ECOWAS is walking this fine line between wanting to see Liberia go right—that is, have a decent election in 2003—and putting the pressure on Taylor to make sure that that happens and on the other hand are concerned that if they push too hard, Taylor will fall but chaos may follow. They do not want a neighbor that is fraying at the edges in every way, shape, and form, and refugees, overwhelming their countries.

That worries them too, and so they, I think, are trying to walk this fine line between keeping the heat on Taylor so he will, in fact, have a free and fair election, but not pushing so hard that they drive him over the edge prompting Liberian chaos for the next 3 years or so.

Senator FEINGOLD. One more question, then I will see if Senator Frist has additional questions for you. Overall, how effective has the international community been in implementing sanctions on Liberia? How easy it is, really, to engage in sanctions-busting activity in West Africa, and what can be done to improve the enforcement?

Mr. KANSTEINER. Well, I think our targeted sanctions have been pretty effective. The U.N. has its sanctions against the Taylor elites. We have additional sanctions on top of that. A lot of these are travel prohibitions. That is important, and we need to maintain that heat.

It is also important in the sense that it is a targeted sanction. The people of Liberia do not really suffer because Taylor's Cabinet cannot come to New York to shop. These are targeted, personality-driven specific sanctions against individuals, and in that sense I think they are effective. I think it puts some heat on Taylor, and I think the financial sanctions, that is, the prohibition on the diamonds and hopefully placing the timber and maritime proceeds in escrow will be additional pressure.

Senator FEINGOLD. Senator Frist.

Senator FRIST. Mr. Chairman, I do not have further questions. I just want to thank the Secretary for his outstanding work, and I appreciate the opportunity of working with you on all of these issues. Thank you for being with us.

Mr. KANSTEINER. Thank you, Senator.

Senator FEINGOLD. I join in thanking Secretary Kansteiner for his fine work, for his testimony, and his patience in answering all of our questions.

Mr. KANSTEINER. My pleasure. Thank you very, very much.

Senator FEINGOLD. We will go to the second panel now. We have an excellent private panel before us today. They all have very distinguished backgrounds. Ms. Binaifer Nowrojee is counsel for Human Rights Watch's Africa Division. She has been with the organization since 1993. Prior to that, Ms. Nowrojee served as staff attorney on Africa for the Lawyers Committee for Human Rights from 1989 to 1992. She was most recently in Liberia in April 2002, and is coauthor of the Human Rights Report, "Back to the Brink, War Crimes by Liberian Government Rebels," published in May 2002.

Ms. Rory Anderson is government relations manager and African policy advisor for the U.S. office of World Vision, one of the largest privately funded humanitarian relief and development organizations. World Vision gives direct humanitarian assistance to local populations in over 95 countries worldwide, operational in 24 countries in sub-Saharan Africa, including Liberia, Sierra Leone, Angola, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Ms. Anderson has also worked as a project manager overseeing multimillion dollar development assistance projects funded by the U.S. Agency for International Development. In 1993 and 1994, Ms. Anderson worked in the White House Speechwriting Office of the President, and the President's National Policy Council.

Mr. Benedict Sannoh is currently a Reagan-Fassell Democracy Fellow at the National Endowment for Democracy. An attorney, Mr. Sannoh has served as an assistant professor of law at the Lewis Arthur Grimes School of Law at the University of Liberia,

and has successfully litigated several constitutional law cases before the Supreme Court of Liberia. He is the founder of the Liberian Center for Law and Human Rights.

I welcome all of you. I would also note we have a very good statement here from Amnesty International that I will submit for the record without objection.

[The prepared statement of Amnesty International follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT BY AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL USA

HELP THE LIBERIAN PEOPLE BUILD PEACE AND JUSTICE

On behalf of the members of Amnesty International we would like to thank the Africa subcommittee for holding these hearings on U.S. Policy toward Liberia. Amnesty International is the largest non-governmental human rights organization in the world with some 1 million members, 53 sections and groups in a further 22 countries. Since 1961 Amnesty International has been monitoring the performances of governments in terms of protecting fundamental human rights. In particular AI monitors abuses such as arbitrary detention, extra judicial executions, torture and restrictions on freedom of assembly, association and expression. Amnesty International collaborates with local human rights groups to document abuses and question and challenge the governments in question in an effort to end the abuses and educate the general public about their rights. Amnesty International also seeks to hold members of the security forces accountable for human rights abuses.

It is time that the United States reengage in efforts to restore the rule of law, respect for human rights and security in Liberia. With elections scheduled for next year, a growing military conflict with armed opposition groups and a serious humanitarian crisis—it is essential that efforts being made by the international community to try and end this 20-year old nightmare be vigorous, and coordinated—a critical role that can only be played by the United States.

Introduction

The current military crisis in Liberia is now 12 years old. The political and human rights crisis and the breakdown of U.S. policy however, dates back to U.S. support for the regime of Samuel Doe who came to power in 1980. Support for Doe, despite a wealth of documentation showing rampant human rights abuses by the country's security forces was the first in a series of policy decisions that contributed to the deterioration of the protection of fundamental human rights in Liberia and arguably the entire region. Following the Reagan administration's endorsement of Doe, first Bush administration and the Clinton administration declined to or play a leadership role in military interventions to stop or limit bloodshed when opposition to Doe coalesced and a brutal seven-year war ensued that soon spilled over into Sierra Leone. Then when the Nigerian led West African peacekeeping force known as ECOMOG, pulled out and allowed elections that were neither free nor fair to be stolen by Taylor, and his NPLF faction that had an appalling human rights record, the Clinton administration and the international community did nothing arguing that there was no alternative and no resources to do anything else. With each decision to do nothing, the Liberian people have been sold down the river—and they continue to pay the price to this day.

Liberia's political, human rights and economic crisis continues to deepen as efforts by the international community to isolate the government of President Taylor increase. While efforts to pressure the Taylor government to change its behavior are a critical step in the right direction. Such policies and initiatives must not be used to disengage and walk away from the crisis and the needs of the Liberian people. In other words, while seeking to neutralize the worst of the Taylor regime the international community must also help build a viable alternative based on respect for human rights and genuine democratic practice. Lasting peace, stability and security in the West African region will only be achieved if conflicts like the civil wars in Sierra Leone and Liberia are replaced by peace, security and governments that abide by and enforce the rule of law and human rights. The Bush administration's efforts to pressure on President Taylor and his supporters to reform should continue and be accompanied by increased support for Liberian civil society and the Liberian people.

Current Situation

Liberia's government remains locked in a conflict with the rebel group, Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy. Human rights abuses continue to be per-

petrated by all sides and the situation has deteriorated since President Taylor issued a state of emergency in February. There is great concern regionally that if unchecked and unresolved the conflict in Liberia will undermine the fragile peace painstakingly established in Sierra Leone, and beyond that the stability of the wider region. Reports by the United Nations and human rights groups have exposed that Liberian security forces collaborated with Sierra Leone's armed rebel group, the Revolutionary United Front, providing military training, equipment and supplies through the trade of rough diamonds and timber. Liberia has also had military clashes with Guinea who it accuses of housing and supporting the LURD. In yet another example of U.S. policy gone awry, Guinea is currently the recipient of U.S. military assistance as part of an effort to shut down the RUF. Yes at the very same time Guinea is supporting the LURD, a faction with an equally poor human rights record.

Human Rights Concerns

Tens of thousands of Liberians have fled the fighting and human rights violations such as extra judicial killings, unlawful detention, torture, rape, abduction, and forced labor and conscription, perpetrated by all sides of the conflict. Human rights abuses perpetrated by Liberian government forces occur frequently and with impunity. Men and boys have been extra judicially executed on suspicion of backing armed opposition groups, or illegally held as "dissidents" in dozens of illegal detention centers where they were held incommunicado and tortured. They are sometimes held for weeks in holes in the ground, tear-gassed, had acid thrown on them, were denied water and food. Several have reportedly died as a result.

Sexual violence, including rape is used as a weapon by the government forces to instill terror among the civilian population. Hundreds of women and girls, some as young as 12 years of age, were detained at military checkpoints and gang-raped. Some were forced into sexual slavery in homes. Again, security forces continue to enjoy impunity for these abuses.

Outside conflict areas government forces have attacked critics: including journalists, human rights defenders, lawyers and opposition politicians, some of whom were forced to flee the country. In April the government banned all political activity, including public meetings, declaring a state of emergency.

LURD forces have also committed human rights abuses against civilians. They have reportedly deliberately killed and tortured, including by raping, unarmed civilians suspected of supporting government forces.

The crisis in Liberia has generated at least 40,000 internally displaced people. Many others have crossed the border, including 4,000 who fled into Guinea, with 10,000 expected to join them, and 3,000 others trying to cross into Sierra Leone. These people are particularly vulnerable to abuse by all armed groups in the region and face many obstacles when trying to flee to these countries. Amnesty International is extremely concerned with the lack of freedom of movement and the right to seek safe refuge, as well as threatened food security for Liberian citizens along with the other human rights abuses before mentioned.

Recommendations

The U.S. must ensure that the United Nations Peace-building Support Office (UNOL) in Liberia is activated and substantively strengthened. UNOL must deploy more staff to monitor the human rights situation throughout the country, including the situation at the borders, and maintain a visible and strong international presence to try and help create the conditions for free and fair elections due next year.

Liberia's conflict has been fueled by the government's ability to trade in rough diamonds and timber, as well as the easy availability of small arms in the region. The U.S. should support enforcement of UN sanctions and take effective measures to prevent arms transfers, including the exploitation and trade of diamonds and timber which helps fund the weapons trade. Such measures should include: strict controls and monitoring of international arms brokerage and arms transportation by states' own nationals and residents; rigorous procedures to be followed when considering applications for arms transfers to countries known to have links to Liberia; and effective and transparent controls of the diamond industry in the region.

Adequate humanitarian aid must continue to flow into the country and the region, to protect food security and to take steps ensure that displaced people are protected and allowed to move freely.

Senator FEINGOLD. We will start with Ms. Nowrojee. Please proceed.

STATEMENT OF MS. BINAIFER NOWROJEE, SENIOR RESEARCHER, HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH AFRICA DIVISION, NEW YORK, NY

Ms. NOWROJEE. I have been following the human rights situation in Liberia since before the civil war in 1989, and then through the war looking at human rights violations by various rebel groups, and then since the election that brought Charles Taylor to power, and I can tell you that Charles Taylor runs his government pretty much in the same way as he ran his rebel group, which is with lawlessness, a lack of accountability, and without respect for human rights or the rule of law, and so Liberia is in pretty bad shape at this time, and it has only been 5 years since the shaky transition to peace began, and the situation is extremely volatile.

State power is regularly used by high-ranking officials to further political objectives of the state, to avoid accountability, and for personal enrichment, and the institutions in the state that could provide a check on the Taylor government such as the judiciary, the legislature, the Human Rights Commission, they are all weak and very cowed.

And then in the north of the country there is the rebel incursion, and so the country is back at war, and LURD rebels are basically doing hit-and-run attacks in the northwest, coming quite close to Monrovia, and in response the government has basically been remilitarizing the society, so what you have is a situation where excombatants are being called up again, and you see a proliferation of militia groups that are pretty shadowy, hard to know who is controlling them, what their numbers are, and so what you see is a return to war, but this time the war lord is controlling the state.

So basically what is happening is, Liberians are basically functioning in an environment where there is absolutely no rule of law, and so what I was doing in Liberia at the beginning of the year was documenting war crimes by both Liberian Government forces and rebels, and there are some very serious war crimes and human rights abuses going on.

The government troops that are going up to fight the rebel incursion are basically running rampant in terms of violations against civilians. What we are seeing are executions, rapes, abductions, lootings, burning of villages, and pretty serious violations, quite a serious pattern, including people being put alive in houses and set alight, civilians, so the government forces are behaving completely without any rein, and there is no accountability at all.

And then in the face of rebel action the government of Charles Taylor is becoming increasingly intolerant of this, and what you see is a state of emergency imposed in February, and since then harassment of civil society groups and the independent media.

Additionally, the government supposedly to crack down against the rebel incursion is also continuing its illegal flow of weapons, so despite the U.N. arms embargo which has been in place since 1992, the Taylor government is continuing to procure weapons, so there is a documented network of arms brokers and transport companies that are providing false documents and relying on lax controls in places like Slovakia, Moldova, Ukraine, Kyrgyzstan to arrange these illegal weapons purchases, and then other countries that are providing cover.

For instance, in 1999–2000, Burkina Faso and Cote d'Ivoire provided false cover for arms shipments destined for Liberia, and the illicit flow continues to date. We have evidence that shows that a plane that crashed outside Monrovia in February 2002 carried an illegal military cargo for the government, and it was one of three suspicious flights coming from Chad using planes fraudulently registered in Moldova, and filing false flight plans. When the U.N. investigators went to Liberia they were blocked from investigating this crash.

As has already been mentioned, Liberia's illicit arms purchases are often financed through off-budget spending or by payments not accounted for in the budget. For example, income received by the U.S.-based Liberian International Shipping and Corporate Registry was twice used to pay for Liberia's arms purchases, and after they refused to engage in the practice as of August 2000, other off-budget outlays of maritime funds were utilized.

The U.N. has established that in 1999, a timber company paid for an illegal arms shipment, so the recent move by the U.N. Security Council to audit the shipping and timber revenues is a very welcome step.

The lawlessness and chaos that is descending on Liberia is not just detrimental to Liberia, but also to the subregion. These three countries, Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Guinea, their conflicts are intertwined. They spill over the borders. The alliance has crossed borders, so that the lawlessness in Liberia has the potential to upturn the fragile peace established in Sierra Leone.

Even now, fighters across the Liberia-Sierra Leone border are moving hundreds of Sierra Leone ex-combatants who are crossing into Liberia to fight as mercenaries for both sides, and LURD rebels and Liberian Government troops cross into Sierra Leone to loot, to escape fighting, and in some cases to abduct people for forced labor, and Liberian Army deserters are also found on the Sierra Leone side of the border, where they could present an additional security threat.

LURD is also running a clandestine supply line along that border, and there is no consistent policy either on the part of the Sierra Leone Government or by the U.N. peacekeepers on how to address this problem. Additionally, Guinea, is playing a very detrimental role in providing support, logistic, and some military support to the LURD rebels, and I think it is important to recognize that Charles Taylor bears primary responsibility for much of the longstanding aggression and violence in the subregion, but at this time it is Guinea that is playing a destabilizing role, and that needs to be addressed.

The developing crisis in Liberia, if unchecked, threatens to erode the fragile peace and stability that is established in Sierra Leone, and may likely destabilize Guinea and the wider region, and so it is imperative that the international community actually remain engaged in efforts to establish conditions for sustainable peace, and here I would like to just stress the sustainable, because I think there have been efforts to bring peace, and they are always sort of quick and dirty, and they move in and out, but they are not sustainable, and it has to be done for all three countries in the subregion so all of the three governments need to be called on to do

several things to end cross-border attacks and illicit weapons flows, to cease support for armed rebel activity, to respect the rule of law and human rights, to prevent and punish war crimes and other human rights abuses, and to create state institutions that are transparent and accountable, particularly in the state security apparatuses.

Moving to U.S. policy, I would like to just say that U.S. pressure on the Liberian Government to address human rights abuses has commendably been strong and consistent, and relations between the United States and Liberia have deteriorated, particularly as President Taylor's role in fueling the war in Sierra Leone became more evident, and the Bush administration has continued the Clinton policy of isolating Taylor politically and diplomatically, although less publicly.

Other initiatives that are in the right direction include U.S. support for regional security and peacekeeping. For example, the United States has been involved in several initiatives to address regional peacekeeping efforts through training and equipping of West African peacekeeping battalions. Additionally, the United States has played a very constructive role in bringing peace to Sierra Leone by concentrating its efforts on ending the Liberian Government's support for the RUF and by supporting the military actions, peacekeeping actions in Sierra Leone, and providing humanitarian assistance.

The pledge of $15 million over 3 years to the Special Court for Sierra Leone was the largest of any contributing nation, so the U.S. Government should be proud of that. The Special Court in Sierra Leone really can play an important role not only in holding Sierra Leonians accountable for human rights violations, but also Liberian nationals accountable for their role in the Sierra Leone conflict, but there are aspects of U.S. policy with regard to Liberia and the subregion that could better contribute to the rule of law and respect for human rights.

Pressuring and isolating the Taylor government while turning a blind eye to similar abuses by other regional actors will not result in sustainable peace to the subregion, so there are three things I would like to suggest in terms of improving U.S. policy. The first is that U.S. assistance and support to Liberia's beleaguered civil society community could be stronger, and greater efforts should be made to provide independent journalists, human rights activists, and other civil society groups with assistance and support for their important work.

The United States has also remained silent on civil rights abuses and war crimes being committed by the LURD rebel forces. International condemnation could pressure the LURD to address abuses against civilians by their fighters.

The last is, the United States has been silent about condemning Guinea's flagging human rights record and its destabilization of Liberia. The United States now has an important role to play vis-a-vis Guinea's support for the LURD. The United States is beginning a long-delayed training program of $3 million for the Ghanian military, focusing on border security to assist that country in defending its borders against Charles Taylor's incursions, and we suggest

that our U.S. military assistance to Guinea should be conditioned on an end to Guinea's support to the LURD.

Thank you for this opportunity to appear today.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Nowrojee follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF BINAIFER NOWROJEE, COUNSEL, HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH/AFRICA

Thank you very much for convening these hearings and inviting Human Rights Watch to testify. My name is Binaifer Nowrojee. I serve as counsel with Human Rights Watch's Africa Division. I have been with the organization since 1993. Prior to that, I served as staff attorney on Africa for the Lawyers Committee for Human Rights from 1989 to 1992. I have been involved in human rights research and advocacy on West Africa since 1989.

After only five years of a shaky transition to peace, the situation in Liberia remains fragile and extremely volatile. President Charles Taylor's government continues to function without accountability or respect for the rule of law, exacerbating the divisions and resentments fueled by the seven-year civil war. Due to the misallocation of resources, the nation's economy remains in tatters, with some 80 percent of the workforce unemployed and 80 percent illiteracy. Basic services such as health care, communications, electricity, and the public supply of drinking water remain limited. Public and private institutions continue to deteriorate amid widespread corruption and fear.

Fighting has raged in the country's northwest since the start of a rebel incursion in 2000, the fifth serious outbreak of violence since the 1997 elections that ended the civil war. Fighters from the rebel Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) continue to launch hit-and-run attacks moving steadily towards the capital Monrovia. Both Liberian government forces and LURD are responsible for committing war crimes and other serious human rights abuses against civilians, including summary executions of civilians, rape of girls and women, abduction, and looting and burning of villages. Tens of thousands of Liberians have been forced to flee their homes. This incursion sparked the fifth serious outbreak of violence since the national elections of 1997 that ended a seven-year civil war.

In the face of renewed rebel action, the government of Charles Taylor has become increasingly intolerant of dissent. Since imposing a state of emergency on February 8, 2002, the government has intensified its harassment of civil society groups and the independent media. The government is also remilitarizing the society by remobilizing ex-combatants and allowing the proliferation of militia groups. The security forces regularly commit abuses with impunity.

The spreading conflict in Liberia presents an ominous prospect. The lack of respect for the rule of law and human rights by the Taylor government makes prospects for sustainable peace in Liberia unlikely. A further escalation in repression and human rights abuses against civilians can be expected as the area of fighting widens, causing more suffering and displacement in Liberia.

Moreover, the renewal of war in Liberia threatens to further undermine prospects for sustainable peace in the wider region, known as the Mano River Union, encompassing Guinea, Sierra Leone, and Liberia. Over the past decade, the governments of these three countries have frequently harbored each other's rebel groups and supported cross-border incursions, causing widespread instability. Charles Taylor, both as leader of the former rebel group known as the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) and as president of Liberia since 1997, bears primary responsibility for much of the long-standing aggression and violence in the sub-region, both in Liberia and in particular through his support for the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) in Sierra Leone. The renewed war in Liberia could easily destabilize the fragile peace in Sierra Leone as a result of a spillover of the Liberian war, as growing numbers of Liberian refugees and combatants cross into neighboring countries. At this time, the government of Guinea is also playing a destabilizing role in providing considerable logistical and some military support to the LURD rebels that operate from Guinea. Guinea's support to the LURD intensified after the Liberian government, assisted by Sierra Leonean rebel fighters and Guinean dissidents, launched a series of cross-border attacks into Guinea in late 2000 and early 2001.

The escalating conflict and repression in Liberia, and the possibility of a spillover into neighboring countries, is a dire prospect indeed for the people of a region that has already endured so much war, wanton abuse and human suffering over more than a decade.

EXECUTIVE CONTROL, LACK OF ACCOUNTABILITY, AND PERSONAL ENRICHMENT

Since taking office, President Taylor has steadily consolidated and centralized power by rewarding loyalists and intimidating critics. One of President Taylor's often repeated statements is that Liberia is a country of laws, not of men. However, an examination of his record illustrates the opposite. Political appointees are selected on the basis of their loyalty to Charles Taylor. Ruling party officials are able to behave with impunity as long as they are compliant to the executive. In addition to loyalists from the war, Taylor has appointed numerous family members to key government positions.

State power is regularly misused by high-ranking officials to further the political objectives of the executive branch, to avoid accountability, and for personal enrichment. State institutions that could provide an independent check on the Taylor administration, such as the judiciary, the legislature, the human rights commission, and the commission on reconciliation, remain weak and cowed. In particular, the National Human Rights Commission, created by the government in 1997, suffers from a lack of qualified personnel, inadequate funding and a flawed mandate. Independent voices in the media and the human rights community are steadily being silenced.

President Taylor has used state power to personally enrich himself and his inner circle, and to support the state security apparatus that protects him. A Strategic Commodities Act reportedly passed secretly in 2000 gave President Taylor "the sole power to execute, negotiate and conclude all commercial contracts or agreements with any foreign or domestic investor" for designated commodities, including timber and diamonds.

Despite being subject to a United Nations (U.N.) arms embargo continuously since 1992, the Taylor government continues to procure weapons. In some cases, the weapons were forwarded to RUF rebels in Sierra Leone, breaking a second embargo. U.N. investigators have documented a network of arms brokers and transport companies that provided false documents and relied on lax controls in Slovakia, Moldova, Ukraine, and Kyrgyzstan to arrange illegal weapons purchases. In 1999 and 2000, respectively, Burkina Faso and Cote d'Ivoire knowingly provided false cover for arms shipments destined to Liberia. The illicit flow of arms to Liberia continues. Evidence strongly suggests that a plane that crashed outside Monrovia in February 2002 carried an illegal military cargo for the Taylor government. The flight was one of three suspicious flights from Chad, using planes fraudulently registered in Moldova and filing false flight plans. U.N. investigators were blocked from investigating the crash.

Liberia's illicit arms purchases are often financed through off-budget spending, or payments not accounted for in the budget. For example, income received by the United States-based Liberian International Shipping and Corporate Registry (LISCR) was twice used to pay for Liberia's arms purchases. After LISCR refused to engage in the practice, as of August 2000, other off-budget outlays of maritime funds were utilized. U.N. investigations also established that in 1999 a timber company paid for an illegal arms shipment. In an important and welcome move, the U.N. Security Council recently ordered Liberia to audit its shipping and timber revenue to ensure that the funds are no longer misused.

THE STATE SECURITY APPARATUS: AN IMPEDIMENT TO PEACE

One of the major problems in Liberia under President Taylor is the complete impunity with which his security and police forces operate. Following his inauguration, President Taylor rejected the peace accord provision that provided for an open and transparent restructuring of the security forces by the West African peacekeeping force. Instead, former Taylor faction fighters were placed in the security and police forces without serious efforts to provide training or to meet pledges to incorporate members from the other factions. Former Taylor fighters have also been permitted by the government to create security firms for hire by private sector companies.

One of the most important steps for Liberia's reconstruction after the seven-year-long civil war ended in 1997 was to have been the restructuring and retraining of the country's armed forces and law enforcement agencies. The existing Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL) had a long history of abusing human rights both before and during the civil war, and there were thousands of excombatants from all sides in the war to be demobilized and reintegrated into society.[1] Under the Abuja Peace Ac-

[1] The six factions of the seven-year civil war in Liberia were: the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) headed by Charles Taylor; the former government Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL); two rival factions of the United Liberation Movement for Democracy in Liberia (ULIMO),

Continued

cords that signaled the end of the conflict, the restructuring was to have been conducted by the Nigerian-led West African peacekeeping force ECOMOG (the Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group), and the newly reconstituted Liberian armed forces and police were to be drawn from all the disbanded factions.

However, one of President Taylor's first policy decisions was to refuse to allow ECOMOG to be involved in this process. Instead, he reconstituted the security and police forces using his own ex-combatants, purged and marginalized troops from the existing AFL that had opposed him during the war, and created new security forces that reported directly to him. Liberians began to have problems with the new security and police forces almost immediately.

Shortly after his inauguration in 1997, President Taylor created two elite paramilitary security forces, the Anti-Terrorist Unit (ATU) and the Special Security Service (SSS); these units report directly to Taylor and commit abuses with impunity. Neither of these forces is established by law, nor are their operational costs included in the state budget. There is no effective mechanism for victims of abuse by these forces to lodge a complaint with any government structure and obtain redress. Both forces have become notorious for abuses, including abuse of civilians, extortion, and looting. There have also been reports of extrajudicial killings and torture by the ATU, particularly at its base at Gbatala. Victims of torture by the ATU have been held in water-filled holes in the ground, burned with molten plastic, beaten and sexually abused, and forced to drink urine and eat cigarette butts. Additionally, within the Liberian National Police, headed by Paul Mulbah, an elite Special Operations Division (SOD) was created after Taylor came into office, made up largely of former Taylor-faction fighters; this police unit has also been responsible for arbitrary arrests, mistreatment, and extortion.

The Ministry of Defense, headed by Daniel Chea, oversees the now marginalized AFL, but also appears to have some measure of control over militia groups. Although it has had some new recruits, the AFL still includes many soldiers who served under the government of former president Samuel Doe (1980-1989), perhaps to secure their loyalty to the Taylor government. For that reason, the AFL is not fully trusted by the government, and its soldiers are neither well equipped nor regularly paid. Even so, the AFL remains the largest government fighting force, and the Taylor government has sent a large number of AFL troops to oppose the rebel incursion. These soldiers are effectively given free rein to pay themselves through looting.

Since the LURD incursion began, new militia groups have been proliferating, whose numbers, structures, and leaders remain unclear. Both the AFL command and Ministry of Defense officials told Human Rights Watch that the Taylor government's frontline troops are drawn not only from the AFL but increasingly include militia groups largely made up of remobilized men who fought with Charles Taylor's NPFL during the civil war. Hundreds of former combatants, many of them originally recruited as children, are being regrouped, organized, and supported by Taylor's former commanders. The militia groups are also believed to include former members of Sierra Leone's RUF rebel group, many of whom crossed into Liberia during and after the disarmament process in Sierra Leone.

The various security agencies and militia groups have extensive powers, poorly defined mandates, and overlapping functions. This situation has resulted in a jockeying for power between the various groups and a complete lack of accountability. The state security apparatus as it exists today in Liberia undermines any possibility of respect for human rights and the consolidation of peace in Liberia.

WAR CRIMES AND SERIOUS HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES BY THE STATE SECURITY FORCES

In combating the LURD incursion, Liberian government forces and militias have committed widespread abuses against civilians, particularly in Lofa and Cape Mount counties in the country's northwest. These forces include the AFL, ATU, and various militia groups. The abuses usually follow a similar pattern. After driving LURD forces from an area, government forces hunt down and detain local people whom they find hiding in the bush, including civilians. Those they suspect of supporting the LURD are then beaten, tortured, or summarily executed, in some cases by being confined in houses that the soldiers set on fire, burning the victims to death. Young women and girls are often raped and forced to become "wives" to the soldiers; young men are subjected to forced labor, being made to carry looted goods and captured weapons; and villages are systematically razed to the ground. Govern-

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one led by Al-Haji Kromah representing ethnic Mandingo interests, and the other headed by Roosevelt Johnson representing ethnic Krabn interests; the Liberia Peace Council (LPC); and the Lofa Defence Force (LDF).

ment forces violently round up civilians fleeing from the fighting, and separate and conscript young men in a manner which violates human rights. Sometimes those conscripted include boys. The conscripts are then sent to the front, often without any proper training. In February 2002, after President Taylor accused people in certain areas of Monrovia of harboring rebels, the Special Operations Division (SOD) police conducted house-to-house searches, systematically rounding up men. Hundreds of young men, and in a few cases boys, were arbitrarily detained, beaten, and accused of being rebel supporters. Many were given the choice of paying a bribe or being sent to the war front. Some who could not pay were forcibly recruited.

Government soldiers and militias have also been responsible for widespread looting, both in towns and villages that they occupied and at checkpoints on the roads. Local residents are often forced to carry looted belongings and captured weapons long distances by the army. As civilians flee conflict areas, they are repeatedly made to pay government soldiers in order to pass through checkpoints to safety, and in order to cross the border into Sierra Leone.

CRACKDOWN AGAINST THE INDEPENDENT MEDIA AND CIVIL SOCIETY GROUPS

In the face of renewed rebel action, the Taylor government has become increasingly intolerant of dissent. Since the imposition of a state of emergency in February 2002, the government has intensified its harassment and intimidation of the independent press, civil society groups, and legitimate political opposition groups who have been imprisoned, harassed, beaten and in a few cases, killed.

- Journalists Stanley Seekor, J. James, and Ellis Togba from *The Analyst* newspaper were threatened and briefly detained after their newspaper published an article discussing the state of emergency.
- The authorities also detained Frances Johnson Morris, director of Liberia's Catholic Justice and Peace Commission, for several hours among male inmates at the police prison at the Police Headquarters in Monrovia ostensibly on grounds of "mistaken identity" only days after she had made a public presentation questioning the state of emergency.
- On March 27, Nipla Wiaplah, chair of the New Deal Movement party, was held for several days in police custody without charge as police determined whether an article in *The News* that he had authored on the war posed a national security threat. *The News* editor-in-chief Jerome Dalieh and acting news editor Bill Jarkloh were also held briefly without charge for publishing the article.
- After the National Human Rights Center of Liberia, an umbrella organization comprising nine nongovernmental human rights groups, issued several press releases protesting government abuses, five of its members—Aloysius Toe, Tunny Zeogar, Peter Nickoson, John Okai, and Sam Nimely—were arrested on March 28 and held without charge for several days. Although they were released after a court order was filed, they were rearrested shortly after, and charged with "criminal malevolence" and "preventing arrest and discharge of other duties."
- Augustine Toe of the Justice and Peace Commission was arrested on March 28 and held without charge for several hours.
- On April 24, human rights lawyer Tiawan Gongloe was arrested without charge by the police, and beaten so severely that he was unable to stand and required hospitalization. He had been speaking out against security force abuses and other human rights violations. *The Analyst* newspaper, which had just reported on a statement recently made by Gongloe at a conference on peace in the Mano River Union, was ordered closed.

Disturbingly, the conflict also has taken on an ethnic dimension, with the Taylor government indiscriminately accusing ethnic Mandingo, Krahn, and Gbandi citizens of Liberia of supporting the rebel incursion. Members of these groups, as a result, face growing discrimination, arbitrary arrests, and violence at the hands of the government and its supporters, based on their ethnicity. Many LURD fighters are ethnic Mandingo or Krahn. As a result, other ethnic Mandingos and Krahns, as well as ethnic Gbandis, are clearly considered suspect by the government and have been accused of being rebel supporters. For their part, LURD forces have committed some of their worst abuses against ethnic Kissi civilians, perhaps because the RUF rebel group in Sierra Leone, which had a longstanding alliance with the Taylor government, formerly had its stronghold in an ethnic Kissi area in Sierra Leone.

PROSPECTS FOR SUSTAINABLE PEACE IN THE MANO RIVER UNION

Prospects for sustainable peace in Sierra Leone, Liberia, and Guinea remain tenuous as the intertwined conflicts continue to spill over the borders, offsetting gains that are made in each country to restore calm. As Sierra Leone's brutal conflict

comes to an end, violence and insecurity are rapidly escalating in Liberia. At this time, Guinea is playing a destabilizing role in providing support to the Liberian rebels.

The conflicts of the Mano River Union countries, encompassing Sierra Leone, Liberia and Guinea, have shown a ready potential to overflow and destabilize each other. A long-standing web of shifting military and political alliances exists among the three governments and the various armed opposition groups. Accountability for serious abuses is practically nonexistent, and military impunity in all three countries remains a serious problem. The area is also awash with hundreds of ex-combatants willing to cross over to any side as mercenaries.

THE LIBERIAN CONFLICT AND THE IMPACT ON SIERRA LEONE

For years, Charles Taylor helped fuel the Sierra Leonean conflict through his arming and support of the RUF rebels, as well as facilitation of illegal diamond exports from rebel-controlled areas. In return, when Taylor's government came under armed attack from Liberian dissidents in 1999, 2000 and 2001, RUF forces assisted in expelling them from Liberia.

The escalating conflict and growing lawlessness in Liberia has the potential to upturn the fragile peace in Sierra Leone. Fighters from all sides are moving across the Sierra Leonean/Liberia border: Hundreds of Sierra Leonean ex-combatants are crossing into Liberia to fight as mercenaries. Liberian government troops and LURD rebel soldiers are crossing into Sierra Leone to loot or escape fighting, and, in a few cases, to abduct people for forced labor. Liberian army deserters are also to be found on the Sierra Leone side of the border, where they could present an additional security threat. LURD forces operating from Sierra Leone are clandestinely recruiting and operating a supply line along the border. There appears to be no consistent policy on the part of either the Sierra Leonean government or the UNAMSIL peacekeepers on how to address this problem.

In view of the close links between the Guinean government and the LURD rebel forces in Liberia, the participation of Guinean troops in UNAMSIL should also give cause for concern. The Guinea contingent of UNAMSIL is currently deployed at the Sierra Leone/Liberia border, raising fears that this area too could become a base of operations for the LURD. At a minimum, these Guinea battalions removed from the border where the likelihood of their involvement in Liberian rebel support or refugee intimidation is higher. Ideally, they should be replaced completely.

There is an urgent need for border security to be strengthened, including screening to ensure that combatants are clearly distinguished and separated from civilians seeking refugee protection in Sierra Leone. The Sierra Leonean government needs to establish an adequate police presence along the border areas, and to establish a status determination body to screen combatants from refugees. Additionally, there is a need for improved policing to ensure that refugees are adequately protected and to guarantee the civilian nature of all refugee camps. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees should ensure as a priority the civilian nature of the refugee camps, increase the number of international protection staff, and work closely with neighboring host governments to establish screening mechanisms at the border to separate Liberian combatants from refugees.

THE ROLE OF GUINEA IN DESTABILIZING LIBERIA

At this time, the government of Guinea is playing a destabilizing role in providing considerable logistical and some military support to the Liberian rebels that operate from Guinea. Evidence indicates that this support is being given with the knowledge and support of high-ranking Guinean officials, including the president.

Domestically, President Lansana Conté remains largely intolerant of opposition and turns a blind eye to frequent abuses by his security forces. A November 2001 constitutional referendum that removed a two-term limit on the presidency, and virtually ensures him of lifetime rule, is widely believed to have been manipulated in his favor.

Guinea's support to the LURD intensified after the Liberian government, assisted by Sierra Leonean rebel fighters and Guinean dissidents, launched a series of cross-border attacks into Guinea in late 2000 and early 2001. They attacked towns and refugees camps containing Sierra Leonean and Liberian refugees, causing thousands to become further displaced and killing and wounding hundreds of refugees and Guinean civilians. These Liberian-led incursions into Guinea were opposed by Guinean government forces, backed by members of Sierra Leonean civil defense force militias and Guinea-based LURD fighters. They pushed back the Liberian and RUF forces, and the Guinean army also carried out helicopter, artillery and ground at-

tacks into RUF-held areas of northern Sierra Leone, killing scores of civilians and burning villages.

In view of the close links between the Guinean government and the LURD rebel forces in Liberia, the participation of Guinean troops in the U.N. peacekeeping mission in Sierra Leone, UNAMSIL, should give cause for concern. The Guinean contingent of UNAMSIL is currently deployed in Sierra Leone's Pujehun District, which borders Liberia, raising fears that this area too could become a base of operations for the LURD, enabling them to strike into Liberia from two directions. The Guinean forces in the UNAMSIL operation in Sierra Leone should be replaced with non-West African troops that are not implicated in the sub-regional conflict. At a minimum, the Guinea battalions should be removed from Pujehun District, and not be deployed near the Sierra Leone/Liberia border where the likelihood of their involvement in Liberian rebel support and/or refugee intimidation is higher.

THE ROLE OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY

With Liberia again on the brink of collapse, it is vital that the international community make a much more concerted effort to prevent the war spreading and the emergence of yet another human rights catastrophe in West Africa. The developing crisis in Liberia, if unchecked and unresolved, threatens to erode the fragile peace and stability so painstakingly established in Sierra Leone, and may likely destabilize Guinea and the wider region.

During the past decade, the international community's interventions in Liberia, largely under the auspices of the U.N. and ECOWAS, have repeatedly focused on restoring a short-term peace, without adequately addressing the long-term causes of the war, including continuing impunity for gross human rights abuses and blatant disregard for the rule of law in Liberia.

Examples abound, including the following: During the pre-1997 civil war, ECOMOG forces in Liberia actively contributed to the proliferation of the anti-Taylor rebel factions that were themselves responsible for serious abuses and are resurfacing today, including among the LURD combatants; the U.N. presence in Liberia during the war was limited to a small observer mission without adequate authority to address regional political interference or abuses by ECOMOG or by Liberian government or rebel forces; the U.N. backed a peace accord that granted a blanket amnesty to faction fighters and did not create any international mechanism to hold violators accountable; fearful of a return to active fighting, the U.N. rushed to hold the 1997 national elections before important provisions of the peace accord were implemented, including the restructuring of the security forces and the return of refugees; since the 1997 election, the U.N. Peace-Building Support Office in Liberia (UNOL) has remained silent on the continued erosion of the rule of law by the Taylor government.

International engagement and action is urgently required and should address both the Taylor government's abusive security apparatus and domestic repression, as well as the regional nature of the conflict. The international community must engage in comprehensive efforts to establish conditions for a sustainable peace and the protection of human rights in all three countries in the Mano River Union. All the Mano River Union governments should be called on to: (1) End cross-border attacks and illicit weapons flows; (2) Cease support for armed rebel activity; (3) Respect the rule of law and human rights; (4) Prevent and punish war crimes and other human rights abuses; and to (5) Create state institutions that are transparent and accountable, particularly the state security apparatus.

U.S. POLICY

For the past few years, United States (U.S.) pressure on the Liberian government to address human rights abuses has commendably been strong and consistent. Relations between the U.S. and Liberia deteriorated as President Taylor's role in fueling the war in Sierra Leone became more evident. In accordance with the U.N. sanctions imposed in May 2001, the U.S. prohibited the importation of Liberian rough diamonds. The Bush administration continued the Clinton policy of isolating Taylor politically and diplomatically, although less publicly. Administration officials have stressed that until Taylor ceases efforts to destabilize the sub-region, U.S. policy will remain unchanged.

Other initiatives that are in the right direction include U.S. support for regional security and peace-keeping efforts. In 2000, a program called Operation Focus Relief (OFR) was initiated by former President Bill Clinton to train and equip seven battalions of West African troops for peacekeeping with the U.N. in Sierra Leone. The training was conducted by U.S. Special Forces. The first phase of the program trained two Nigerian battalions that were deployed in January 2001 to serve with

UNAMSIL. The second phase, which ended in August, trained troops from Ghana and Senegal. The third phase, involved three further Nigerian battalions. For FY 2001, OFR was budgeted at U.S. $24 million in peacekeeping funds, as well as U.S. $32 million in Department of Defense funds for equipment and transportation. The U.S. also deployed three military officers to work with the Sierra Leone army as part of the British training program. These officers, as well as other U.S. Embassy officials, had some responsibility for monitoring the performance of the U.S.-trained troops. In addition, for fiscal year 2002, Congress approved U.S. $26 million for the West African Stabilization Program, part of the U.S.'s voluntary peacekeeping operations budget, which includes $8 million in additional training and equipment for the troops trained for peacekeeping in Sierra Leone, known as Operation Focus Relief.

Additionally, the U.S. has played a constructive role in bringing peace to Sierra Leone by concentrating its efforts on ending Liberian government support for the RUF, supporting the British-led military actions in Sierra Leone, and providing humanitarian assistance. The pledge of U.S. $15 million over three years to the proposed Special Court for Sierra Leone was the largest of any contributing nation.

However, there are three aspects to U.S. policy with regard to Liberia and the sub-region that could contribute towards the rule of law and respect for human rights:

- U.S. assistance and support to Liberia's beleaguered civil society community could be stronger. Greater efforts should be made to provide independent journalists, human rights activists, and other civil society groups with assistance and support for their important work;
- The U.S. has remained silent on human rights abuses and war crimes being committed by the LURD rebel forces. International condemnation could pressure the LURD to address abuses against civilians by their fighters.
- The U.S. has been much less consistent or vocal about condemning Guinea's flagging human rights record and its destabilization of Liberia. The U.S. now has an important role to play vis-a-vis Guinea's support for the LURD. The U.S. is beginning a long-delayed training program of U.S. $3 million for the Guinean military, focusing on securing border security to assist that country in defending against the destabilizing activities of the RUF and Charles Taylor in Liberia. In June 2001, the Bush administration notified Congress of its intention to provide U.S. $3 million in non-lethal training and equipment to the Guinean military to assist that country in defending against the destabilizing activities of the RUF and Charles Taylor in Liberia. Congressional concerns about abuses by the Guinean military led to additional reporting and monitoring requirements. The training is designed in four six-week segments for four companies, but will pause after the first two to conduct an impact assessment, which will include monitoring of the troops' behavior once they are deployed on the border, as well as a human rights assessment. All U.S. military assistance to Guinea should be conditioned on an end to Guinean support for the LURD rebels.

RECOMMENDATIONS

• Human Rights Watch urges the U.S. government to bring consistent pressure on all the Mano River Union countries to: (1) End cross-border attacks and illicit weapons flows; (2) Cease support for armed rebel activity; (3) Respect the rule of law and human rights; (4) Prevent and punish war crimes and other human rights abuses; and to (5) Create state institutions that are transparent and accountable, particularly the state security apparatus.

• Continue to sustain attention on institution building that promotes respect for the rule of law and human rights, including the Special Court in Sierra Leone that can examine crimes committed by Liberian nationals in the context of the Sierra Leonean civil war.

• Put pressure on the LUTRD rebels to cease committing human rights abuses and war crimes against civilians.

• Provide greater support to civil society groups and the independent media in the Mano River Union.

• Condition all U.S. military assistance to Guinea, scheduled to begin in May 2002, on an end to Guinean support for the LURD rebels.

• Continue to call for the maintaining and strengthening of existing U.N.-mandated controls on the flow of weapons that could destabilize the sub-region, and to establish the mechanisms necessary to break the cycle of impunity. Illicit weapons flows into the sub-region should continue to be monitored, and Guinea's role in the Liberian conflict should be investigated and ended. The U.S. should call for the U.N. to mandate the placement of international military observers and human rights

monitors along the Guinea/Liberia and Sierra Leone/Liberia borders to monitor and investigate cross-border attacks.

• Advocate for the replacement of the Guinean forces in the UNAMSIL operation in Sierra Leone with non-West African troops that are not implicated in the sub-regional conflict. At a minimum, the Guinea battalions should not be deployed near the Sierra Leone/Liberia border where the likelihood of their involvement in Liberian rebel support and/or refugee intimidation is higher. Work to secure and get commitments for the deployment of an adequate number of troops along the Sierra Leone/Liberia border to prevent cross-border attacks.

Senator FEINGOLD. Thank you for that helpful testimony. We now turn to Ms. Anderson.

STATEMENT OF MS. RORY E. ANDERSON, AFRICA POLICY SPECIALIST, WORLD VISION U.S., WASHINGTON, DC

Ms. ANDERSON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for the opportunity to present testimony before the subcommittee on U.S. policy options in Liberia. Again, World Vision is in 95 different countries, and we have been an active relief agency in Liberia for the past 15 years. I visited Liberia and Sierra Leone less than a year ago and traveled extensively throughout each country, and much of what I will discuss today are things I have actually witnessed myself.

As an active relief agency on the ground in Liberia, we at World Vision see that there are direct and immediate linkages between humanitarian crises involving large-scale population displacement and economic collapse to political and regional instability. Fear of violence is the most common reason why people flee their homes to seek safety elsewhere. In a region that has seen sustained violence and instability, the rise of human displacement in Liberia reinforces cycles of volatility.

As of the first week of June 2000, current figures on accessible, internally displaced persons in Liberia have reached over 176,000 people. Refugee statistics are less definitive, largely due to border insecurity in both Guinea and Sierra Leone, but the recent and rough estimates I have heard is that as of January of this year there have been about 35,000 refugees which have flown to neighboring countries, and in 2001 there were over 80,000 refugees, so with the increased fighting we can imagine that there are even greater than 35,000 refugees, along with the 80,000 that already existed, and women and dependent children generally comprise more than 80 percent of refugees and displaced persons.

The United Nations has said that in humanitarian disasters they bear a disproportionate share of the suffering. Refugee women must provide for their children in an atmosphere in which their security is threatened, and the likelihood of sexual violence is increased.

The violence between government forces—that is, the Government of Liberia and rebel insurgents, again known as the Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy, or the LURD, as was referred to earlier, has been the chief cause for the current Liberian displacement. Population displacement of this magnitude creates instability in the following three ways. First, it creates economic collapse, and in an agrarian society such as Liberia, removal from entitled land creates unemployment. That is, farmers who once cultivated their own land now have no land to farm, as well as a serious food security crisis. Farmers can no longer produce food and

they have no gainful employment to purchase food. The production of rice, the main staple in Liberia, has been estimated by the U.N. Food and Agricultural Organization to meet only a third of the country's requirements right now.

The second cause for instability is that host communities and displaced people compete and sometimes conflict over scarce resources. Host communities that are already on the economic margins now have to compete with a large influx of outsiders. Again, earlier, as I stated, there are over 176,000 internally displaced within Liberia alone, so you have a large influx of outsiders throughout the country who also need access to scarce resources of land, health care, and education.

Tensions can be further exacerbated between host communities and displaced populations when ethnic or political differences engender conflict. With lack of adequate aid, stable communities can quickly become part of a conflict and instability as well as a swelling population competes for limited resources. Environmental destruction also occurs as a result of the concentrated population in search of firewood and construction material.

A third cause for instability with large population displacement is that combatants often infiltrate camps. The majority of displaced persons live in camps, which should provide adequate levels of food, shelter, health care, and protection. However, camps can become another source of instability, because they often become havens for armed groups who can easily hide weapons and infiltrate camps to receive food and medical care. The presence of combatants make noncombatants targets for attacks by warring parties outside of the camp, and their presence inside the camps also increases the rate of sexual violence and forced conscription, particularly of child soldiers.

The humanitarian crisis in Liberia is currently unfolding in a cycle of violence, local economic collapse, and large displacements of the population, as I have just described. These are symptoms of the following six regional trends within the Mano River Union itself, the first being displaced, unemployed, and mostly illiterate youth are vulnerable to military recruitment both by state and non-state actors throughout the region. These child soldiers often become the most brutal perpetrators of violent acts, as we saw with the RUF in Sierra Leone.

A second regional trend is that we are seeing the illegal mismanagement of natural resources, especially of diamonds and timber, which draws largely upon unemployed adult populations where there is an absence of viable economies, or credible industries, or viable civil service.

The third point for regional trends is, we are seeing a militarization of formerly noncombatant communities as they compete over scarce resources. This makes them pawns for political actors ready to capitalize on ethnic or regional differences and further widens regional violence.

The fourth regional trend is that the trafficking of small arms in an unstable environment becomes a guaranteed source of power and income through banditry and further exploitation and trafficking of conflict diamonds, conflict timber, and other resources.

A fifth regional trend that, as reflected in the rise, and in the number and the degree of brutal acts of torture, rape, harassment, and executions perpetrated against civilians, especially women and children, and all of this foments instability and sews the seeds for social discord and social and economic collapse.

Finally, a sixth regional trend that we are seeing within the whole Mano River Union is that there is a deterioration of basic infrastructure and services due to perpetual cycles of instability and violence, and this makes resettlement of displaced populations and the restoration of economic activity like trade in agriculture very difficult. U.N. agencies such as the U.N. High Commission for Refugees and the World Food Program are exhausting all of their resources, and they cannot stretch their resources any further.

Now, despite the expansion of a regional humanitarian crisis and all of these regional trends that I have just laid out in the Mano River Union, U.S. humanitarian assistance to Liberia has actually declined by 82 percent in just the past 5 years. In 1998, total U.S. Government assistance to Liberia, including food aid, was $37.7 million. It has now decreased to $6.5 million in fiscal year 2002.

This drastic decline in humanitarian assistance demonstrates two unfortunate trends, the first being that humanitarian assistance in the Mano River Union is a zero-sum game, which means that there are only winners and losers. We take from Liberia and give to Sierra Leone, rather than having a balanced, regional approach to humanitarian assistance, and second, policymakers in the United States and elsewhere have incorrectly politicized humanitarian assistance to Liberia.

Instead, it is better to separate our humanitarian assistance goals from our political strategy in dealing with Charles Taylor. As the chairman just referred to, pressuring Taylor alone is not the only policy that we need to have, but we need to separate our two policies and be very clear about that. Humanitarian assistance, especially when it is channeled through the local international relief agencies has proven to be a strong tool for building a strong civil society that can democratically challenge the political establishment, while rebuilding societies and economies damaged by war.

This is not a quick fix. These types of investments are long- and medium-term, with long-term payoffs. Starving an already volatile region or unevenly distributing aid, and again, that is investing in Sierra Leone and not in Liberia or Guinea, simply creates a merry-go-round of violence and displacement, shifting war from one country to the next.

Mr. Chairman, in offering concluding observations and recommendations, World Vision sees that increased violence between the Government of Liberia and the LURD has caused severe displacement in Liberia and could eventually disrupt the fragile peace in Sierra Leone as displaced Liberians seek asylum there. Sierra Leone itself has recently emerged from an 11-year conflict, and an influx of Liberian refugees, as well as combatants competing for resources, has the potential of widening the Liberian conflict and sending Sierra Leone back into war. We do know that more war in the Mano River Union is not going to resolve the existing war.

I would give, again, two recommendations, again a unified and serious diplomatic initiative, especially led by the United States

and the United Kingdom, and also involving the French, as they have significant influence with Guinea. All of these allies have already demonstrated effective diplomatic leadership in Sierra Leone, and they should continue by initiating some sort of mechanism to channel whatever compromises Charles Taylor and other combatants may be willing to make into a process that is much more constructive than conflict.

Second, humanitarian assistance to the region should also increase to diffuse the potential for conflict within communities and among the Mano River Union nations.

Over the past 2 years, World Vision and other agencies have seen an increase in aid to Sierra Leone, but there has been a rapid decrease in aid to Liberia, which ultimately undermines the total U.S. Government investment in the region. Again, the total U.S. Government assistance to Liberia went from $37 million in 1998 to $6½ million in fiscal year 2002 and again, that was an 82 percent decrease in just 5 years. The rapid decline and current restructuring of U.S. Government assistance is forcing World Vision and other international aid agencies to completely close down operations and more than likely by the end of the year World Vision will have to pull out.

Declining humanitarian assistance does not affect political change, but rather gives incentives for conflict and instability over scarce resources. Sustained diplomatic leadership, coupled with increased and evenly disbursed humanitarian assistance among all three of the Mano River Union countries will bring long-term stability that will eventually give way to indigenous political change in Liberia, which will provide a peace dividend for the entire Mano River Union.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for the opportunity to present this testimony.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Anderson follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF RORY E. ANDERSON, AFRICAN POLICY ADVISOR, WORLD VISION U.S.

INTRODUCTION

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for the opportunity to present testimony to the Senate Subcommittee on Africa on the humanitarian situation and U.S. policy options in Liberia. My name is Rory Anderson, Africa Policy Advisor for World Vision, one of the largest, privately-funded international relief and development organizations in the U.S. Currently, World Vision implements more than 6,000 relief, rehabilitation and long-term development projects in 95 countries, and we have had an active presence in Liberia for almost 15 years.

I. BACKGROUND

Mano River Region

Since the late 1980s, sustained conflict in the Mano River basin has spread across borders and engulfed the region, culminating in a severe humanitarian crisis and sustained political instability. Internal wars in Liberia and Sierra Leone in the early 1990s led to the exodus of more than one million refugees to Côte d'Ivoire and Guinea over the course of the decade. In addition to refugees, an estimated one to two million people in the region have been internally displaced at the height of the various conflicts. Although Guinea, Liberia, and Sierra Leone formed the Mano River Union economic pact in 1973, the conflicts of the past decade have severely strained political and economic relations between the three states. A struggle for control of diamond fields in Sierra Leone has been central to the crisis in recent years. Several failed peace accords and peacekeeping efforts, collapsed economies, and some of the worst human rights atrocities in recent history has made the Mano River crisis one

of the world's most severe humanitarian disasters. Although 2001 brought improved security to Guinea and Sierra Leone,.an upsurge in fighting in Liberia continues to threaten the stability of the entire region. The U.N. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) estimates that 1.1 million of the 15 million inhabitants of Guinea, Liberia, and Sierra Leone continue to be either internally displaced persons (IDPs) or refugees.

Liberia

Civil war in Liberia from 1989 to 1997 led to the collapse of its economy and left its infrastructure destroyed. Sustained fighting and human rights abuses by warring factions led to the exodus of an estimated 700,000 Liberian refugees to neighboring countries and an estimated 1 million internally displaced persons during the height of this conflict. In 1997, Charles Taylor was elected president by an exhausted country and with the support of the international community. Initial steps were taken to rebuild Liberia's infrastructure and to resettle refugees. However, since 1999, the governments of Guinea and Sierra Leone, as well as much of the international community, have accused Charles Taylor of supporting anti-government forces in both Guinea and Sierra Leone and exchanging diamonds for guns. The Government of Liberia (GOL) has spent from 2001 until the present engaged in battles of their own with anti-government factions in northern Liberia. This continued fighting has lead to the internal displacement of thousands of Liberians, and caused many more to flee to Côte d'lvoire, Guinea, and Sierra Leone.

In May 2001, the U.N. Security Council (UNSC), in response to Charles Taylor's involvement with the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) in Sierra Leone, maintained an arms embargo on Liberia and imposed sanctions on diamond exports and international travel by GOL officials.

II. A COMPLEX HUMANITARIAN EMERGENCY

Insecurity, Internally Displaced and Refugees

Fighting in Liberia that was once confined to the northwestern county of Lofa, which borders Guinea and Sierra Leone, has now spread further south to within 25 miles of the capital, Monrovia. Clashes in late November and December between GOL troops and rebels identified as the Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) in Grand Cape Mount and Bong counties, caused the displacement of an estimated 4,000 Liberians. Due to heightened insecurity, World Vision was forced to withdraw relief assistance from Grand Cape Mount County. On December 20, LURD forces captured the northern Lofa County city of Zorzor.

World Vision, in collaboration with other relief agencies in Liberia currently estimate that over 176,000 persons are internally displaced and have fled their homes to other parts of Liberia. Since October 1, the movement of internally displaced persons (IDPs) has remained fluid, particularly in and out of the Bopolu and Gemana camps following the recent outbreak of violence. In late December, relief agencies were planning on establishing transit centers for IDPs in the towns of Sawmill and Nyomo in Bomi County. Because public services are non-existent, relief agencies continue to provide the majority of assistance to lDPs.

The resurgence of fighting over the past year has also created an influx of Liberian refugees into Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, and Sierra Leone. The UN High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) has registered an estimated 20,000 Liberian refugees in Sierra Leone and 6,000 in Côte d'Ivoire since May 2001: 3,400 have fled in this last week alone. Unconfirmed numbers of Liberian refugees have also arrived in Guinea throughout 2001, but have yet to be registered. Prior to 2001, UNHCR estimated that 80,000 Liberians were living in Guinea and 120,000 in Côte d'Ivoire. UNHCR also estimates there are still 70,000 Sierra Leonean refugees living in Liberia.

III. WORLD VISION IN LIBERIA

Overview

In order to address the human suffering brought by the civil war, World Vision began the Liberia Emergency Response Program in 1988. The program was based in Lofa, Bong, Grand Cape Mount and Bomi Counties, but has shifted out of Lofa and Grand Cape Mount due to increasing political violence between the government forces and the LURD. Since it's inception, World Vision's work has had two components: (1) Basic healthcare delivery; Maternal/Child Health services, and (2) Agriculture rehabilitation of food production capacity. Both components mutually reinforce each other—with increased food production capacity, there is a corresponding improvement in nutrition and health. Likewise, by improving healthcare delivery systems through the renovation of medical clinics, and providing much needed med-

ical supplies and primary health care, a healthier population has the capacity for food production and expanded economic activity.

Health

World Vision's original health objectives were to provide supplies, supervision and management to 19 health facilities located in Lofa, Grand Cape Mount, and Bomi counties. With target beneficiaries of 128,500, World Vision catchments provided immunizations to 50% of pregnant and lactating women. In addition, we also helped to:

- train certified midwives at clinics and in the bush
- monitor weight/age of children under 5
- immunize children against childhood diseases (75 percent of children by age 3)
- health education on a variety of subjects, including HIV/AIDS
- treat major health problems: malaria, diarrhea, acute respiratory infection

We found that in our catchments, most people did not know how malaria or cough was contracted; 77 percent of women delivered at home, and only 10 percent of children were immunized. In addition, 60 percent of households drank unsafe creek or river water, and 75 percent of households do not have a toilet, multiplying the transmission of waterborne diseases.

Causes for Scaling Back

Although we have had good success in the past, World Vision has had to significantly scale back its health program for two reasons: increased violence and severe declines in U.S. government funding for health programs. Shortfalls in U.S. government funding will force World Vision to completely close our current health program by Sept 30, 2002.

Agriculture

World Vision's agriculture program operated in the areas of Grand Cape Mount County; CARI, which is most of Bong County; Fumah, which is in parts of Bong and Margibi Counties; Monserrado, serving pen-urban areas outside of Monrovia; and parts of Lofa County. The program has had to retreat from two-thirds of that area due to violent conflict.

WV's agriculture program currently was serving 220 rural farming communities with improved seed and technology, and 250 communities with gardening inputs and technology. The major agricultural focus is to get area farmers back on their feet by producing their own food for their food security, and then helping them to sell any surplus, focusing on indigenous crops of rice, sweet potato, plantain, banana, yam, and expanded vegetable gardening. World Vision's specific activities included:

- Distribution of improved seeds and tools;
- Technical assistance in organizing farmer groups for (1) agricultural education and (2) for communal production of improved seeds for distribution to the entire community;
- Developing demonstration farm plots so that farmer groups can test agricultural methods for themselves (For farmers living on the margins, even improved seeds and techniques constitute a life and death risk with their food security and overall economic livelihood. Experimental plots give farmers verifiable assurances that new seeds and techniques work.);
- Promotion of lowland rice production which is the most efficient, and productive, and damages the ecology the least;
- Developing extensive improved seed production facilities and training selected farmers as apprentices;
- Introducing improved species of animals to breed with local stock, since most animals were eaten by the soldiers during the civil war; and
- Introducing appropriate, small-scale agricultural machinery to improve efficiency and the initial processing of agricultural products for better storage, consumption and sale.

Causes for Scaling Back

As with our health program, because of continued violence, WV no longer operates in Lofa or Grand Cape Mount counties. Additionally, the CARI seed production facility, which provided seeds for World Vision's target groups, was taken over by the GOL in the Fall of 2001. Declining U.S. government funds will probably force World Vision to lose its agriculture program by Sept. 30, 2002.

IV. HUMANITARIAN CRISIS AND THE LINKS TO POLITICAL AND REGIONAL INSTABILITY

Population Displacement and Instability

There are direct and immediate linkages between humanitarian crises involving largescale population displacement and economic collapse to political and regional instability. Fear of violence is the most common reason why people flee their homes to seek safety elsewhere. In a region that has seen sustained violence and instability, the rise of human displacement in Liberia reinforces regional cycles of volatility. As of the first week of June 2002, current figures on accessible, internally displaced persons in Liberia have reached over 176,000. As mentioned above, refugee statistics are less definitive, largely due to border insecurity in both Guinea and Sierra Leone, but prior to 2001, there were over 80,000 Liberian refugees; with increased conflict, this number has surely increased. Women and their dependent children generally comprise more than 80% of refugees and displaced persons. The UN has said that, in humanitarian disasters, they bear "a disproportionate share of the suffering." Refugee women must provide for their children in an atmosphere in which their security is threatened and the likelihood of sexual violence is increased.

Violence between government forces and the LURD has been the chief cause for Liberian displacement. Population displacement of this level creates instability in the following ways:

- *Economic collapse.* In an agrarian society such as Liberia, removal from entitled land creates unemployment—farmers who once cultivated their own land now have no land to farm—as well as a serious food security crisis—farmers can no longer produce food, and have no gainful employment to purchase food. The production of rice, the main staple in Liberia, has been estimated by the UN Food and Agriculture Organization to meet only a third of the country's requirements.
- *Host communities and the displaced compete and sometimes conflict over scarce resources.* Host communities that are already on the economic margins, now have to compete with a large influx of outsiders who also need access to scarce resources of land, healthcare, and education. Tensions can be further exacerbated between host communities and displaced populations when ethnic or political differences engender conflict. With lack of adequate aid, stable communities can quickly become part of conflict and instability as a swelling population competes for limited resources. Environmental destruction is also a result of a concentrated population in search of firewood and construction materials.
- *Combatants infiltrating camps.* The majority of displaced persons live in camps, which should provide adequate levels of food, shelter, healthcare and education. However camps can become another source of instability because they often become havens for armed groups, who can easily hide weapons and infiltrate camps to receive food and medical care. The presence of combatants makes noncombatants targets for attacks by warring parties outside of the camps, and their presence increases the rate of sexual violence and forced conscription, especially of child soldiers. Theoretically, there should be an attempt to separate combatants from noncombatants as they enter into camps by interviewing persons as they enter. But camp staff are usually out-numbered by the populations that they are serving, often times by the thousands per every staff worker. Displaced populations may or may not be able to identify combatants within their midst, but most are all too often worried about their own security and are intimidated into remaining silent.

Regional Trends

The humanitarian crisis in Liberia is currently unfolding in a cycle of violence, local economic collapse, and large displacements of the population. These are symptoms of the following 6 regional trends:

1. *Displaced, unemployed and mostly illiterate youth are vulnerable to military recruitment* by state and non-state actors throughout the region. These child soldiers often become the most brutal perpetrators of violent acts.
2. *Illegal mismanagement of natural resources,* especially of diamonds and timber, draws on a largely unemployed adult population in the absence of industries, or a viable civil service.
3. The militarization of formerly non-combatant communities as they compete over scarce resources, makes them pawns for political actors ready to capitalize on ethinic or regional differences, further widening regional violence.
4. The trafficking of small arms in an unstable environment becomes a guaranteed source of power and income through banditry and further exploitation and trafficking of conflict diamonds, timber and other resources.

4. Increasing disregard for human life by both state and non-state actors, as reflected in the rise in the number and the degree of brutal acts of torture, rape, harassment and executions perpetrated against civilians—especially women and children—foments instability and sows the seeds for future discord and social and economic collapse.
5. Deterioration of basic infrastructure and services due to perpetual cycles of instability and violence makes resettlement of displaced populations and the restoration of economic activities like trade and agriculture very difficult. UN agencies such as the UN High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) and the World Food Program (WFP) are exhausting their resources and cannot stretch their resources any further.

V. DECLINING U.S. GOVERNMENT ASSISTANCE

Despite the expansion of a regional humanitarian crisis in the MRU, U.S. humanitarian assistance to Liberia has declined by 82% over the past 5 years.

Since 1998, total U.S. government assistance to Liberia, including food aid, has declined to the following levels:

- FY1998—$37,786,000
- FY1999—$16,049,000
- FY2000—$17,529,000
- FY2001—$8,199,000
- FY2002—$6,519,000

This drastic decline in humanitarian assistance demonstrates unfortunate trends: (1) humanitarian assistance in the Mano River Union is a zero sum game, which means that there are only winners and losers—we take from Liberia and give to Sierra Leone, rather than having a balanced, regional approach to humanitarian assistance. And (2) policy makers in the U.S. have incorrectly politicized humanitarian assistance to Liberia. Instead, it is better to separate humanitarian assistance from our political strategy with Charles Taylor. Humanitarian assistance, especially when it is channeled through local and international relief agencies, has proven to be an effective tool for building strong civil society actors that can democratically challenge the political establishment while rebuilding societies and economies damaged by war. These are a long and medium-term investments, with long-term payoffs. Starving an already volatile region, or unevenly distributing aid—i.e., investing in Sierra Leone, and not in Liberia or Guinea, simply creates a merry-go-round of violence and displacement, shifting war from one country to the next.

VI. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Increased violence between the GOL and the LURD has caused severe displacement in Liberia and could eventually disrupt the fragile peace in Sierra Leone as displaced Liberians seek asylum. Sierra Leone itself has recently emerged from an 11 year conflict; an influx of Liberian refugees and possible combatants competing for resources, has the potential of widening the Liberian conflict and sending Sierra Leone back into war. More war in the Mano River Union is not going to resolve the existing war. Unified and serious diplomatic initiatives, especially lead by the U.S. and the U.K. who have already demonstrated diplomatic leadership in Sierra Leone, should continue by initiating a mechanism to channel whatever compromises that Charles Taylor and other combatants may be willing to make into a process that is more constructive than conflict.

Humanitarian assistance to the region should also increase to diffuse the potential for conflict within communities and among the MRU nations. Over the past 2 years, World Vision and other agencies have seen an increase in aid to Sierra Leone, but there has been a rapid decrease in aid to Liberia, which, ultimately, undermines the total US government investment in the region. Total US government assistance to Liberia went from $37.7 million in FY 1998 to $6.5 million for FY 2002; an 82% decrease in just 5 years. The rapid decline and current restructuring of U.S. government assistance is forcing World Vision and other international aid agencies to completely close down operations by the end of this fiscal year. Declining humanitarian assistance does not affect political change, but, rather, gives incentives for conflict and instability over scarce public resources.

Sustained diplomatic leadership, coupled with increased and evenly dispersed humanitarian assistance among the 3 countries will bring about long-term stability, which will eventually give way to indigenous political change in Liberia, which will provide a peace dividend for the entire Mano River Union.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for the opportunity to present this testimony.

Senator FEINGOLD. Thank you, Ms. Anderson, for your testimony, particularly in terms of the long-term perspective.

Mr. Sannoh.

STATEMENT OF BENEDICT F. SANNOH, COUNSELLOR, REAGAN-FASSELL DEMOCRACY FELLOW, NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR DEMOCRACY, WASHINGTON, DC

Mr. SANNOH. Mr. Chairman, members of this committee, I am pleased to be here this afternoon upon your invitation to share my views on Liberia as a free state, and I want to thank you for the invitation.

Mr. Chairman, today Liberia has been described as a failed state. Some have even referred to it as a rogue state, a state that has disintegrated. In 1997, the Liberian people, after a brutal and devastating civil war, went to the polls to elect a government. President Taylor won that election by an overwhelming majority of the vote, but elections, Mr. Chairman, is not an end in itself but a process toward democratization, and this process has been very bumpy for Liberia.

Notwithstanding the end of the civil war, peace and stability in Liberia still remains elusive. Crucial elements for democratization have not been nurtured. The government is at war with the rebel faction, LURD, and also at war with its own people. A third of the country is in the state of war, a war that has the propensity of destabilizing the entire Mano River Union region.

Thousands of our people are displaced either internally or externally as refugees. The brain drain of professionals and capable Liberians who otherwise would be in Liberia to contribute to the democratization process is alarming, so I have come here today to appeal to the U.S. Government to take a leadership role in Liberia. This is the time we need you, because when you needed us we stood by your side.

History tells us of the rule of Liberia during the cold war in support of your own ideological struggle. The Voice of America, VOA, in Liberia covered the entire continent of Africa. You installed a communication relay station in Liberia that served as a transit point for all communications between the State Department in Washington, DC and U.S. Embassies in sub-Saharan Africa. You installed the Omega Navigation Station on Liberian soil that picks up signals from all vessels on the high seas in Africa, and directs the vessels navigation. You constructed the free Port of Liberia and the international airport for you to use during the Second World War.

As a result of all of these efforts, Mr. Chairman, we assisted you with all of our might, and you won the ideological war. Now that you have won, you seem to have abandoned us. Today, the United States is a world leader, and Liberia remains in chaos and instability. Maybe except for Mr. Taylor and those of his government, the bulk of the Liberian people are living in abject poverty.

There is no electricity, there is no running water or health care facilities, inadequate schools, only two universities, and most of the time these universities are closed. There is massive internal and external displacement, posing an increasing burden on the subregion. If the United States fails to take such a leadership role in

Liberia, no other country would, and Liberia risks slipping gradually into anarchy and chaos.

The question is, Mr. Chairman, why is Liberia slipping into anarchy? If Liberia is today characterized as a failed state necessitating these hearings on Liberia, I would like to say up-front that the dilemma has been occasioned by the entirety of circumstances, including many factors, the abandonment of Liberia by the United States, the civil war, the transition from war to elected government through elections, and the conduct of the constitutionally elected government of Mr. Taylor himself, since he took control of our country in 1997.

For the purpose of this hearing and because of the brevity of time I would like to limit my testimony to three of these areas. The first is the transition from war to peace, and perhaps what happened in Sierra Leone is born from the experience of what happened in Liberia.

A crucial element of the EC, even the political parties, who contribute to the democratization process. The Liberian national transitional government and the parties to the conflict failed to implement the restructuring aspect of Abuja and went to the polls, and the international community knew very well the impact of that failure on the reconstitution of peace in Liberia.

Now, the conduct of the elected government. President Taylor upon his inauguration in 1997 was faced with two immediate challenges. One was how to protect the security of the state, and to maintain peace and order throughout the length and breadth of Liberia, because that responsibility has been had by ECOMOG.

Second, how to foster general reconciliation between and among the Liberian people in a manner that would induce peace, stability, and national unification, and I want to submit, Mr. Chairman, that the manner in which Taylor addresses these two issues is in a way responsible for the state of affairs in Liberia today.

So I address the issue of peace, or national unification. The government established two commissions, one on human rights and one on reconciliation and reunification. These commissions remain mere institutions on paper. They have been dormant, and they have not really done any effective work. As a result, the Liberian people still remain at odds on many, many issues.

To address the question of security and the maintenance of peace throughout the length of Liberia, Taylor immediately after the elections occasioned the early departure of ECOMOG. He did not secure any agreement for ECOWAS, for ECOMOG to stay so as to supervise the issue of the problem of security during his regime. With the departure of ECOMOG, Mr. Chairman, the government exacerbated the problem when it did not restructure the security apparatus of the country. Rather, it went on to use the former rebels of the National Patriotic Party to fill in the ranks of the Liberian National Police, and he also went on to create a paramilitary force, the ATU, comprising again mostly former fighters in the NPFL.

Now, compounding these two issues, the issues of security, the issue of national conciliation, the country suddenly found itself entangled in two other problems, first, the imposition of sanctions by the international community, and second, the attack by LURD, Li-

berians United for Reconciliation and Democracy. Those remain problems in Liberia today.

We have another issue of good governance, human rights and the rule of law. The issue of violation of human rights remains a crucial issue. Sometimes in African countries efforts are made with respect to national sovereignty. While individuals do have a sovereignty, the respect for our sovereignty has been incorporated in many international instruments, human rights documents in which Liberia is a signatory.

Most of these documents have not been worked out. The increasing violation of human rights are fundamentally practiced in Liberia with impunity, lack of respect for the rule of law, and the lack of accountability and transparency in government, and increasingly as evidenced by events over the past 2 weeks, the government seems to be closing the political space for civil society organizations and activities, including human rights advocates and the press.

On the issue of U.N. sanctions, there is a prevailing view that the sanctions imposed by the U.N. Security Council is primarily directed at President Taylor and his government, and it has indirect repercussions on the lives of the Liberian people. There has been a chilling effect on the level of bilateral assistance to Liberia since the imposition of sanctions.

Many of those who would impose sanctions have been major donors of assistance to Liberia, and they have scaled down their bilateral assistance to Liberia, and that is why when I listened to the question that was posed to the representative from the State Department as to the level of U.S. involvement toward the civil society sector of Liberia so as to ameliorate the effects of sanctions, those responses do not actually reflect the reality on the ground. The reality on the ground is that the efforts of assistance from the U.S. Government to the civil society in Liberia is at a very low level.

What are the combined impacts of sanctions and LURD on the democratization process in Liberia? Continued LURD attacks against the government, coupled with sanctions and the economic conditions in Liberia, would obviously affect the timetable for general Presidential elections and the entire process of democratization in Liberia. There are a number of legal constitutional hurdles that must be overcome if we are going to have elections in Liberia. This includes the issue of national census.

The government does not have the resources to even conduct a national census. No national census has been conducted in Liberia since 1985. The demarcation of constituencies for the voting population and the determination of the number of representatives for the legislature, these issues have not been discussed, the issue of security and the state of emergency recently declared by the President.

Let me move a little bit to the dilemma of ordinary Liberians. A couple of questions were raised with respect to this issue. Mr. Chairman, I would like to submit that the people of Liberia, the ordinary Liberians are in a dilemma. In 1997, after a bloody and devastating civil war, we went to the polls to elect a government. Charles Taylor won the elections. There now seems to be a consensus among most Liberians that the best way to exercise, to

move forward is through a democratic process by means of the ballot box and not by violence.

This dilemma is obvious. On the one hand, Liberians have a President and a government that they are stuck with for the next 18 months, and perhaps even longer, in spite of the questions of security, national reconciliation, and the lack of resources to address the myriad of social and economic problems confronting the Liberian people today.

On the other hand, Liberians are faced with rebel incursions the consequences of which have relegated them to internal and external displacement, suffering, and deprivation. Still on that front Liberians are faced with sanctions and the resultant effect of reduced bilateral assistance, as a result of which, post conflict reconstruction and development in Liberia never got off the ground, but in spite of all of these concerns the international community seems to forget the view that once sanctions have been imposed on Liberia because of the alleged conduct of their President, the fate of the Liberian public have become irrelevant and immaterial.

This is a very serious problem, Mr. Chairman. It is tough for—one of the committees succinctly put this to me when I tried to talk to many people here in the states, "that the fate of ordinary Liberians is linked to the fate of Charles Taylor." I do not want to believe that. The isolation of Liberia by the international community is also not limited to the trivialization of the plight of the Liberian people who have seen the focus on bringing peace to Sierra Leone. We see U.S. involvement in Guinea, while Liberia remains a 10-foot pole that nobody wants to touch. This has the potential of destabilizing the subregion.

On the role of the international community, Mr. Chairman, if Liberia is a failed state today, some of the causes emanate from the actions taken or not taken by the international community at the appropriate times or periods. For instance, I briefly talk about the failure to implement the relevant provisions of the Abuja agreement under international supervision.

We are also seeing the failure of the international community to condemn LURD, to intercede in the Liberian conflict so as to bring about a lasting cease-fire, while at the same time we are imposing a ban on the importation of arms by the government to defend itself and the people of Liberia, which is a constitutional duty imposed upon that government.

And second, there is a lack of U.S. interest and leadership role in Liberia. The insistence on the policy of containment, believing that with increasing sanctions and international isolation there would be a change in Liberia has not achieved the desired results. This policy trivializes the impact of containment on the lives of ordinary Liberians, and links the fate of ordinary Liberians to that of the government.

What recommendations do I have to address some of these issues? Mr. Chairman, there are some key initiatives that can dramatically turn around the turn of events in Liberia and put it on a path toward democratization and sustained peace.

First, the Government of the United States must not rely solely on the policy of containment and the increasing isolation of Liberia as the only avenue toward bringing political change in Liberia.

Second, efforts at bringing a durable peace, stability, and security to Liberia cannot be left to ECOWAS alone. Growing out of our experience with ECOWAS intervention during the Liberian civil war, regional politics, combined with tribal and ethnic affiliations will continue to have a negative impact on ECOWAS initiatives. Accordingly, we recommend, Mr. Chairman, that the United States take a leadership role in Liberia just as the British did in Sierra Leone, and help evolve a process that will bring Liberia back toward the cause of democratization.

The first step in evolving such a process is to help create an enabling environment in Liberia for security, stability, and sustained peace. There are several elements in this step. First, the United States must take a leadership role in creating a contact group, as suggested by the International Crisis Group and Human Rights Watch, to supervise the process.

Second, the contact group, once created, should call upon the government and LURD to declare an immediate cease-fire and enter into a dialog and negotiations with a view on resolving the conflict. These discussions must also include representations from the political leadership of Liberia, including political parties, or leaders of political parties outside Liberia.

Third, one of the crucial items for discussion in Liberia by this contact group that we are recommending for the United States to take a leadership role in its creation is the issue of security. There will be no lasting peace in Liberia, Mr. Chairman, if the security apparatus of the government remains intact. Hence, the contact group must obtain consensus from all parties to deploy an international force on the ground in Liberia to monitor the cease-fire, to take over the entire security of the country, to disarm all combatants, including the police, the ATU, and all security apparatus. The composition of the force must again not be limited to ECOWAS alone, and the emergency imposed by the government must be lifted upon the arrival of the intervention force.

Fourth, the question of governance and the status of democratic institutions in Liberia between now and the period of general elections must be discussed. This includes the elections commission, the judiciary, the prosecutorial arm of government, and the control over the nation's resources and finances.

And fifth, the contact group must visit the question of general Presidential elections and obtain a consensus on such crucial issues such as census, representation, number of constituencies, and provide resources to facilitate the process in Liberia.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, the U.S. Government must strengthen civil society in Liberia to enable them to make informed and reasoned decisions about the democratization process in Liberia. The level of illiteracy in Liberia is very high. When you combine the high level of illiteracy and the high level of poverty amidst the war that is going on, it is very, very possible that you'll have elections producing results that may not reflect the views of the Liberian people. Crucial areas are support for the press, human rights institutions, human rights advocates, and pro-democratic organizations. We recommend support for the strengthening of political parties and the reactivation of the Human Rights Commission.

In conclusion, Mr. Chairman, we agree with the report of the State Department, the analysis that Liberia is not likely to change right now, and without a U.S. leadership role and international involvement the country will slip into chaos and potentially destabilize the subregion, and again, as I said, we disagree with the analysis of the State Department that there is a good level of support by the U.S. Government to the civil society at this time.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Sannoh follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF COUNSELLOR BENEDICT F. SANNOH, REAGAN-FASCELL DEMOCRACY FELLOW, NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR DEMOCRACY (NED)

Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee, I am pleased to be here this afternoon upon your invitation to share my views on Liberia as a failed state. Thank you for the invitation.

My name is Benedict F. Sannoh. I am a Reagan-Fascell Democracy Fellow at the National Endowment for Democracy here in Washington, D.C. Prior to that I served as Executive Director of the Center For Law and Human Rights, a non-profit, non-governmental human rights and pro-democracy organization operating in Monrovia, Liberia. I also serve as Assistant Professor of Law, Louis Arthur Grimes School of Law, University of Liberia. For the past ten years, I have been involved in human rights, the peace process during the course of the civil war, and the process of democratization since the 1997 General and Presidential elections.

Mr. Chairman, today Liberia has been described as a failed state. Some have referred to it even as pariah state, a rogue state or a state that has disintegrated. In 1997, the Liberian people, after a brutal and devastating civil war went to the polls to elect a Government. President Charles Taylor won the election by an overwhelming majority. But elections, Mr. Chairman, is not an end in itself, but a process toward a democratization. Notwithstanding the end of the civil war, peace and stability in Liberia still remains elusive, but crucial elements necessary for democratization have not been nurtured. The Government is at war with a rebel faction, LURD, and at war with its own people. A third of the country is in a state of war, a war that has the propensity of destabilizing the entire Mano River subregion. Thousands of our people are displaced either internally or externally as refugees. The brain drain of professional and capable Liberians who would otherwise be contributing to the democratization process in Liberia is alarming.

So we have come here today to ask the United States Government to take a leadership role in Liberia. This is the time we need you because when you needed us, we stood by your side. History tells us of the role of Liberia during the cold war in support of your ideological struggle.

- You erected the Voice of America (VOA) in Liberia, that covered the entire continent of Africa;
- You installed a communications relay station in Liberia that served as the transit point for all communication between the State Department in Washington and U.S. embassies in sub-Sahara Africa;
- You installed the Omega Navigation Station on Liberian soil that picked up signals from all vessels on the high seas in Africa and also directed vessels during navigation;
- You constructed the Freeport of Monrovia and the Roberts International Airport (RIA) for use during the second World War.

As a result of these efforts, we assisted you with all our might, and you won the ideological war. Now that you have won, you seem to have abandoned us. Today, the United States is a world leader, and Liberia remains in chaos and instability. If the United States fails to take such a leadership role in Liberia, no other country would, and Liberia risks slipping gradually into anarchy and state collapse.

If Liberia is today characterized as a failed state, necessitating the convening of these hearings, I would like to state up front that the dilemma has been occasioned by the tyranny of circumstances, including among others, the abandonment of Liberia by the United States, the civil war, the transition from war to a democratically elected Government through elections, and the conduct of the constitutionally elected Government since it took over control of the Country in August 1997, and the role of the international community. For the purpose of this hearing, and because of the brevity of time, I would like to limit my testimony to these three areas.

THE CIVIL WAR AND THE TRANSITION TO A DEMOCRATICALLY ELECTED GOVERNMENT: [1]

When the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) intervened in the Liberian Civil War, it had two principal objectives: (1) To prevent the war from spilling beyond the borders of Liberia and from threatening the peace and security of the West African subregion, and (2) to forge ways and means to achieve a political settlement of the conflict through dialogue. To achieve these objectives, ECOWAS evolved what became known as the ECOWAS Peace Plan, which essentially provided for a two prong approach to the settlement of the war; one military and the other political.

On the political front, ECOWAS created the enabling environment for Liberians themselves to establish a frame work for an Interim Governance of the Country during the conflict, and in collaboration with the United Nations, facilitated several conferences between the parties geared toward the cessation of hostilities and obtaining a consensus on the holding of a free elections to put into place a democratically elected Government.

On the military front, ECOWAS deployed a multinational peace keeping force, ECOMOG, in Liberia to separate the warring factions, protect the Interim Government, and assist it in maintaining law and order. The ECOWAS Peace Plan called for a cease-fire, disarmament, encampment, demobilization and reintegration of all former fighters. To enhance the success of the military approach, ECOWAS imposed a ban on the importation of arms and ammunition into Liberia by any of the warring factions, and called for the restructuring of the security apparatus of the country prior to the hosting of general elections. Within the contemplation of ECOWAS, the restructuring of the security forces would have facilitated the creation of an enabling environment substantial enough to:

- Induce all political presidential aspirants, including heads of warring factions, to participate in the elections, by canvassing freely for votes throughout the length and breadth of Liberia, without fear of intimidation and molestation, actual or perceived from the various warring factions;

  1. induce Liberian refugees in the subregion and elsewhere to return home;

  2. induce confidence among all the warring factions to submit to the democratic process, with the expectation that their interests, individual and collective, will be subjected to fair opportunity and equal treatment; this in the mind of the authority of ECOWAS, would have enhanced and facilitated disarmament, encampment, demobilization, and the process of reintegration of all combatants; and.

  3. consolidate peace, stability, and the democratization process in Liberia after elections in a manner that would have induced not only those who lost the elections to remain in Liberia, but also other Liberians living abroad to return home after the elections and contribute to the development of the nation.

Unfortunately, the Liberia National Transitional Government (LNTG), and the parties to the conflict, failed to muster the political fortitude to restructure the security apparatus of Liberia as mandated by ECOWAS. Notwithstanding, and with full knowledge of the potential implications of this situation, ECOWAS and the international community, perhaps out of fatigue with the failure of the parties to the conflict to adhere to successive peace agreements, urged the Liberian people to go to the polls, as the only way forward to bring the conflict to an end, in spite of opposition from some political parties and human rights groups. In an election that was internationally certified as free and transparent, Charles Ghangay Taylor, then leader of the erstwhile National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) was elected as President with over 74% of the votes.

THE CONDUCT OF THE ELECTED GOVERNMENT: [2]

Upon his inauguration in August 1997, the Government of President Taylor was faced with two immediate challenges:

(1) How to protect the security of the state and to maintain peace and order throughout the length and breath of Liberia; and

(2) How to foster genuine reconciliation between and among the Liberia people in a manner that would induce peace, stability and national unification in a country that has been torn apart by seven years of civil war with ethnic and tribal underpinnings.

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[1] See Liberian Dilemma: Remaining Engaged in the Face of Sanctions, a paper delivered by Benedict F. Sannoh at the National Endowment for Democracy, April 9, 2002.

[2] Ibid.

The manner in which the Taylor led Government responded to these challenges continues to be the reasons for the current political climate in Liberia and for the characterization of Liberia as a failed state.

THE ISSUE OF PEACE AND NATIONAL RECONCILIATION:

To address the issue of peace and national reconciliation, the Taylor led Government established two Commissions: The National Commission on Human Rights (NCHR); and the Liberia National Reconciliation and Re-unification Commission (LNRRC). Unfortunately, however, these institutions either by design, or by default, have failed to rise up to the task. The National Commission on Human Rights has up to date not been fully constituted and without Government support, has remained dormant since its creation nearly four years ago.

The National Reconciliation and Re-unification Commission, although fully constituted, has not made any meaningful inroads in healing the wounds of the war, in reconciling the Liberian people, or preventing ethnic or tribal conflicts such as those between the Gios, Manos and Mandingoes. Hence the challenge of fostering genuine reconciliation between and among the Liberian people in a manner that would induce peace, stability and national unification still remains elusive.

To address the question of security and the maintenance of peace and order throughout the length and breath of Liberia, the Taylor led Government started on the wrong foot. Firstly, through its failure to obtain an agreement from the authority of ECOWAS, or the member states thereof, the Government precipitated the early departure from Liberia, of the West African Peace Keeping Force, ECOMOG, who had up to the elections and the inauguration of the Government, been responsible for the security of the Country.

With the departure of ECOMOG, the Government exacerbated the problem when it elected not to restructure the security apparatus of the Country, particularly its national army; the Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL), it having lost its legitimacy as such when it allowed itself to become factionalized during the conflict. In opting not to restructure the national army, the Government advanced the argument that the Abuja agreement, which had mandated the restructuring, was not binding on the Government, it having lapsed upon the inauguration of an elected Government and the reaffirmation of the Liberian Constitution which had been suspended in 1990. Instead of restructuring the security apparatus as mandated by Abuja, the Taylor led Government created a paramilitaiy force, the Anti Terrorist Unit (ATU), comprised mostly of former combatants of the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL). The Government also swelled the ranks of the Liberia National Police (LNP) with former combatants of the NPFL. It is these two factional institutions that the Government relies upon for the defense of the nation, for national security, and for the maintenance of law and order, leaving the Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL) marginalized and demoralized with over 4000 of its soldiers retired or discharged. It was only when the Government came under increasing attack by the dissident forces that the Government was constrained to recall most of these soldiers to duty.

Compounding the failure of the Taylor Government to properly address the challenges of security and national reconciliation, the country suddenly found itself entangled in two developments. Firstly, the International Community accused the Government of President Taylor of engaging in conduct that allegedly posed a threat to the peace and stability of the West African subregion. Specifically, the President was accused of fueling the war in neighboring Sierra Leone through the supply of arms to the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) in exchange of diamonds. Led by the United States and Great Britain, the Security Council of the United Nations imposed sanctions on Liberia—a ban on the importation of arms into Liberia (note that the ban imposed by the ECOWAS as part of its Peace Plan for Liberia was never lifted); a ban on the exportation of diamonds from Liberia, and the imposition of travel restrictions on key officials of the Government.

Secondly, the country came under armed attack by a rebel group, the Liberians United For Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD), with the professed goal of destabilizing and overthrowing the Government of President Taylor. As the attacks shifted from the Bopolu and Kolahun areas of Lofa County, (where the rebels were held by government forces for a considerable period), to lower Lofa, and Klay, Bomi County, less than forty miles from the Capital City of Monrovia, the Government declared a state of Emergency on February 8, 2002. Fighting intensified, notwithstanding. The LURD rebels took over Klay, a strategic town located about 25 kilometers from Monrovia, and subsequently Gbamga, the provincial capital of Bong County, on the major trunk route to Ivory Coast, which necessitated a counter attack by the Government. The rebels were dislodged, but at the expense of lives and

a massive humanitarian crisis. As I speak, sporadic fighting is still going on in diverse parts of Liberia between LURD and forces loyal to the Government.

Fearing that continued instability in Liberia may spill over into the neighboring countries, and potentially undermine the peace and security of the subregion, reminiscent of the civil war years, the Heads of State and Governments of ECOWAS recently called upon the Government of Liberia and LURD to declare an immediate cease-fire and enter into dialogue with the view of ending the conflict. ECOWAS also cautioned that if the parties do not adhere to this call, it will be constrained to deploy an intervention force into Liberia. Initially, the Government frowned on the call for cease-fire, noting that it is poised for an all out offensive to get rid of LURD once and for all, and that a cease-fire will give them an opportunity to regroup. Further, the Government characterized LURD as a terrorist group, and advancing the position that it cannot negotiate with terrorists. LURD on the other hand, in a press release issued about three weeks ago, has declared a unilateral cease-fire, stating that it will not attack any new positions, but will hold those areas under its control and defend them when attacked. Notwithstanding, war is still being waged in Liberia. Hence the political climate in Liberia is very grim and is deteriorating with a potential of posing yet another threat to the peace and stability of the West African subregion.

GOOD GOVERNANCE, HUMAN RIGHTS, AND THE RULE OF LAW:[3]

Exacerbating the problem of security and reconciliation, are the increasing concerns over the internal governance of the country. Increasingly, questions are been raised of the growing violations of human rights and fundamental liberties in Liberia with impunity, of the lack of respect for the rule of law, and the lack of accountability and transparency in government. Increasingly, the Government seems to be closing the political space for civil society organizations and activists, including human rights advocates and the press. The arrest and detention of Counsellor Frances Johnson Morris, former Chief Justice of the Supreme Court and director of the Catholic Justice and Peace Commission, the arrest of Counsellor Tiawon Gongloe, a human rights lawyer, the closure of the Analyst newspapers, the summoning of the Manager of the Catholic Radio program "Radio Veritas" and the confiscation of the stations' cassette of a recorded program, all without due process of law, demonstrates the low level of political space and tolerance for divergent opinions and viewpoints.

U.N. SANCTIONS:[4]

With the failure of the Taylor Government to properly address the challenges of security and national reconciliation, the country suddenly found itself entangled in two developments. Firstly, the International Community accused the Government of President Taylor of engaging in conduct that allegedly posed a threat to the peace and stability of the West African subregion. Specifically, the President was accused of fueling the war in neighboring Sierra Leone through the supply of arms to the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) in exchange of diamonds. Led by the United States and the Great Britain, the Security Council of the United Nations imposed sanctions on Liberia—a ban on the importation of arms into Liberia (note that the ban imposed by the ECOWAS as part of its Peace Plan for Liberia was never lifted); a ban on the exportation of diamonds from Liberia; and the imposition of travel restrictions on key officials of the Government.

While it is true that the sanctions imposed by the U.N. Security Council is primarily directed at President Taylor and his Government, it has indirect repercussions on the lives of ordinaty Liberians. The imposition of sanctions have had a chilling and negative impact on the bilateral relations between Liberia and several other countries from which it traditional receives economic and development aid. It is through these bilateral programs that Liberia had in the past addressed its economic and social development agenda, such as light, safe drinking water, schools, health care, roads and communication among others. Such economic aid is all the more imperative for a country emerging war, with most of its infrastructure, economy and institutions virtually destroyed.

The development indicators for Liberia are very grim: A United Nations Development Programs (UNDP) human development index ranks Liberia at 174th out of 177 developing countries; the literacy rate is less than 35%; the life expectancy at birth is pegged at 43 years; and with over 85% of its population living in abject poverty. It appears to me that with the imposition of sanctions, many of Liberia's tradi-

[3] Ibid.
[4] Ibid.

tional partners have scaled down and in some cases cut off all bilateral assistance to Liberia that would have otherwise inured to the benefit of the masses.

THE LURD ATTACKS[5]

The second proximate result of the failure of the Taylor Government to properly address the challenges of security and national reconciliation, was the emergence of LURD attacks, whatever way one may want to characterize it, is inherently brutal and violent. Those against whom the war is directed are the least to face the brunt of the suffering. Instead, Innocent people, the elderly, women and children are the real victims; some get killed by the bullets or by the starvation, deprivation and denial occasioned by the conflict, while others are injured and maimed. Properties are destroyed, and the inhabitants are forced to flee from the only place they know as home, either internally as displaced persons or externally as refugees. The consequences of a rebel war cannot all be placed squarely at the foot of the rebels. Sometimes, more damage ensues out of Government's counter attack to repel a rebel attack. What ever the cause is, as between the rebels and the Government, a stage is set for a massive humanitarian crisis. So is the case with the LURD incursion into Liberia. The LURD dissident attacks have been going on for nearly three years now, during which hundreds of people have died, while thousands have been internally displaced or forced to flee from their homes into neighboring countries as refugees. According to UNHCR sources, over 18,000 Liberians have crossed into Sierra Leone as refugees since the Lofa and the Bomi attacks. The level of starvation and deprivations in the areas affected by the conflict is reminiscent of the 1990 civil war.

One may ask the question therefore, as to whether or not, it is productive for LURD to keep launching sporadic attacks on innocent civilians, in areas far removed from the seat of Government, causing deaths and massive humanitarian suffering of innocent civilians, especially the elderly, women and children, without any real military gains. Broadcasts over BBC of military attacks and gains by LURD, only to be reversed in less than twenty four hours by the government, at the expense of lives and properties, is in my mind, counterproductive, inhumane and politically incorrect. Liberia cannot go through such a cycle of violence, while her counterparts in the subregion are consolidating democratic gains at the polls and developing their respective countries.

COMBINED IMPACT OF SANCTIONS AND LURD ATTACKS ON THE DEMOCRATIZATION PROCESS IN LIBERIA:[6]

Continued LURD attacks against the Government coupled with sanctions and the deteriorating economic conditions in Liberia will adversely affect the time table for general and presidential elections and the process of democratization in Liberia. Under the Constitution and laws of Liberia, the President shall hold office for a period of six years, and shall leave unless re-elected through a general election. Hence the next general and Presidential election is slated for October 2003. However, there are a number of legal and constitutional hurdles in the path leading to the 2003 general and presidential elections. These include the question of: (1) a national census; (2) the demarcation of constituencies for voting purposes and the determination of the number of representatives to the Legislature from each county, (3) security; and (4) the state of emergency recently declared by the government.

(1) National census and the determination of the number of representatives:

The the Constitution of Liberia requires the taking of a national census so as to determine the numerical population for the demarcation of constituencies and the determination of the number of representatives from each county for the Legislature. This is all the more crucial when taken against the background that: (1) no census has been taken in Liberia since the seventies; (2) when the 1997 elections, dubbed as special elections, reverted to the allocations in the Legislature obtained from the 1986 general elections, with no regard for population increases, decreases, or movements; (3) two new counties have been created since the 1997 elections by the Taylor Government, resulting in a concomitant decrease in the population of the counties from which these new counties were carved. The Constitution requires that for each 20,000 people, there shall be one representative. The Elections Commission determines the number of constituencies based on a national census. While it is also true that the National legislature can increase or decrease the number or the ratio of people in a constituency to a representative, the power to do so is triggered only upon the results of a national census. In the absence of a national census therefore,

[5] Ibid.
[6] Ibid.

how can a determination be made of the allocation of representatives for the new counties, as well as other counties where there have been substantial population movements.

Of further concern is the political utility of a national census considering the demographic landscape of Liberia since the civil war. Assume for instance, that a national census is taken prior to elections; is it politically correct to use the figures obtained therefrom as a basis for the allocation of seats in the Legislature, especially where it results to a reduction in the existing allocations, when there has been massive population movements occasioned by the civil war, the recent rebel incursions and dissident attacks, as for example in Lofa, Gbarpolu, Grand Cape Mount and Bomi Counties? These issues require a national evolving from participation of all the stakeholders, especially opposition political parties, the leaders of some of which are currently out of the country.

(2) Question of Security:

As indicated elsewhere in this paper, one of the reasons why the ECOWAS Peace Plan called for the restructuring of the security apparatus of Liberia was not only to create the enabling environment for all Liberians to participate in the elections, without fear of intimidation and molestation, but also to consolidate peace, stability, and the democratization process in Liberia after elections in a manner that would have induced those who lost the elections to remain in Liberia, as well as Liberian in the subregion and abroad to return home after the elections and contribute to the development of the nation. Since this was not done, and a paramilitary force dominated by former fighters of President Taylor formed instead, thousands of Liberians both in the subregion and diverse other parts, refused to return home for the 1997 elections, and many have remained abroad since then. Since the 1997 elections, thousands of Liberians have again left the country, out of fear and insecurity. More recently, there has been additional exodus of Liberians into the subregion, as result of the LURD attacks in lower Lofa, and Bomi Counties.

That the enforcement competence of Abuja seized with the inauguration of the Taylor Government in 1997 and the reaffirmation of the Liberian Constitution by the National legislature, is not legally debatable. However, it is necessaly to recognize that the underlying objectives of Abuja not having being achieved, and peace and stability at home still remaining elusive as a consequence thereof, there is a need to implement what all the parties to the Liberian conflict had agreed upon under Abuja to create the enabling environment for the 2003 elections. It is inconceivable to expect opposition politicians living abroad, or anyone aspiring to the presidency, including heads of former factions, and indeed thousands of Liberians living abroad, to have any level of confidence in the existing security institutions established by the government, substantial enough to induce them to return to Liberia either to mount a meaningful challenge to President Taylor in the ensuing elections, or to effectively participate in the electoral process, without an overhaul of the security apparatus.

(3) State of Emergency:

The February 8, 2002 declaration of a state of emergency in Liberia by the Government has a chilling effect on Liberia's democratic and economic future. Firstly, if the LURD rebel attacks persist, the state of emergency declared by the Government will remain in place as long as it is necessary to contain the attacks and remove the threat it poses to the peace and stability of Liberia. Such a situation will either reduce the period available for aspiring politicians to return to Liberia and to canvass and participate in the elections, or it may lead to the postponement of the 2002 elections. Secondly, the declaration of the states of emergency, has occasioned a new wave of violations of human rights and other fundamental liberties, especially freedom of expression and of the press, thereby undermining democratic values and potentially creating a condition of fear and insecurity.

Government's Action: Over the past few months, the Government has made several overtures, and stressed on each occasion that the action was demonstrative of its commitment to peace, national reconciliation and the holding of a free and fair elections in 2003. Firstly, the Government granted a general amnesty to all Liberian opposition leaders living abroad and encouraged them to return home to contribute to the political process. Secondly, the Government ordered the re-opening of the Radio Veritas, a shortwave station, owned and operated by the Catholic diocese of Liberia. It also ordered the Star Radio, put in place during the 1997 elections, opened so as to facilitate the creation of a plain level field during the 2003 elections. Both Radio Veritas and Star Radio have been closed for a protracted period as a result of allegations that their broadcasts were anti-government. Thirdly, the Government released all political prisoners who were serving jail sentences without any

pre-conditions, and mandated its Ministry of Justice to drop charges against those indicted for treason or other political offences, including those charged but not yet arrested, all without pre-conditions. In addition, the Government has resolved to host a national reconciliation conference in June 2003 in Monrovia so as to resolve those vexing political issues that pose obstacles to national reconciliation peace and stability in Liberia. The Government, realizing the linkage between security at home, and peace and stability, have also called for international assistance in restructuring the national army, the Armed Forces of Liberia.

Notwithstanding, the Government consistently undermines and negates its own progress by engaging in conduct unbecoming of a government committed to democracy and respect for the rule of law. The arrest and detention of Counsellor Frances Johnson Morris, former Chief Justice of the Supreme Court and director of the Catholic Justice and Peace Commission, the arrest of Counsellor Tiawon Gongloe, a human rights lawyer, the closure of the Analyst newspaper, the summoning of the Manager of the Catholic Radio program "Radio Veritas" Redgewood Rennie, and the confiscation of the stations' cassette of a recorded program of an opposition figure, all without due process of law, demonstrates the low level of political space and tolerance for divergent opinions and viewpoints. These latest conduct have cast a dark cloud on the capacity of the Government to even attract a broad based participation in the ensuing national reconciliation conference scheduled for July, 2002. The Government is yet to address the vexing concerns over the egregious and persistent violations of human rights in Liberia and the muzzling of human rights and pro democracy advocates, and to commit itself to ensuring that such excesses will stop; and that those involved are investigated, tried and punished if found guilty.

THE DILEMMA OF ORDINARY LIBERIANS AND THE INTERNATIONAL RESPONSE: [7]

The people of Liberia are in a dilemma. In 1997 after a devastating and bloody civil war, they went to the polls, under international supervision, and elected Charles Ghangay Taylor as President. Under the Constitution of Liberia, power is inherent in the people, and the people have the right to change their government whenever their safety and happiness requires it. There now seems to be a consensus among most Liberians that the best way to exercise this constitutional power is through a democratic process by means of the ballot box. That opportunity will not come until October 2003, or it may not come at all until years after, depending on the Liberian people themselves and the position of the international community on Liberia. The dilemma is obvious.

On the one hand, Liberians have a President and a Government that they are stuck with for the next eighteen months and perhaps even longer in spite of the vexing questions of security, national reconciliation, and the lack of resources to address the myriad of social and economic problems confronting them; on the other, Liberians are faced with a rebel incursions, the consequences of which have relegated them to internal and external displacement, suffering and deprivation. Still on another front, Liberians are faced with sanctions and the resultant effect of reduced bilateral assistance, as a result of which post conflict reconstruction and development never took off ground. In spite of this dilemma, the international community seems to project the view that once sanctions have been imposed on Liberia because of the alleged conduct of their president, the fate of the Liberian people have become irrelevant and immaterial. As a staffer on the House International Relations Subcommittee succinctly put it, "the fate of the ordinary Liberians is linked to the fate of Charles Taylor."

The isolation of Liberia by the international community is not only limited to the trivialization of the plight of the Liberian peoples. It has affected Liberia's position in the subregion. In spite of the recognized fact that the peace and stability in the Mano River subregion is interlinked, and that instability in any one of the three countries, has the potential of destabilizing the others, the international community has elected to approach the re-establishment of peace and security within the subregion from a "pocket approach", as opposed to a comprehensive approach. Led by Great Britain, the international community has become fully engaged in Sierra Leone, and under its supervision, successful disarmament, encampment, demobilization and reintegration of former fighters have taken place. In less than two months the people of Sierra Leone will be going to the polls to put into place yet another democratically elected government. In Guinea, with a government notorious for its human rights violations and anti democratic tendencies, the United States is engaged with the training of the national army. Liberia, on the other hand, remains a "ten foot pole", which neither Great Britain nor the United States wants to do

[7] Ibid.

business with. The international community even seems oblivious to efforts by the leaders of the three countries to normalize relations and bring peace to the subregion as is evidenced by the recent meeting in Rabat, Morocco and by the follow up meetings of their respective Ministers of foreign affairs. Considering the porous nature of the borders of the Mano River states, the tribal and ethnic affiliations, and the immediate past relationships between the warring factions operating in these countries, the desirability of turning a blind eye on instability in Liberia, and focusing on Sierra Leone and Guinea, is at best specious, and remains troubling, for it has the potential of unraveling achievements made once the international community departs.

THE ROLE OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY:

If Liberia is a failed state today, some of the causes emanate from actions taken or not taken by the international community at the appropriate times or period. Perhaps out of fatigue with the intractile peace process under the supervision of ECOWAS during the Liberian civil war, those things that would have induced peace and guaranty security and security in Liberia were not addressed fully.

1. There was no effective disarmament, encampment and demobilization in Liberia prior to the 1997 general and presidential elections. Hence there were over 60,000 former combatants, traumatized and poorly integrated into the political and democratic process in Liberia. With no skills, no opportunities, these former combatants are easy targets for recruitment back into the bush either by the Government or by LURD. They also account for substantial percentage of the human rights violations in Liberia.

2. The international community failed to ensure the implementation of a vital provision of the Abuja agreement calling for the restructuring of the army and the security apparatus, prior to the internationally supervised 1997 elections. As a result, the elected Government went ahead and constituted the security apparatus in a manner that they have not created the necessary security environment appreciable enough to induce opposition political leaders, trained technocrats, and diverse groups of Liberians to return home to contribute to the democratization process in Liberia.

3. The international community has in a way abandoned Liberia. There has been very little international support for Liberia's post conflict reconstruction and development, especially so when the country's infrastructure, economy and institutions were virtually destroyed. Hence the Government the economic and social development agenda of Liberia, such as light, safe drinking water, schools, health care, roads and communication among others remain in shambles even as I speak.

4. The failure to condemn LURD, or to intercede in the conflict so as to bring about a lasting cease-fire, especially in the face of the massive humanitarian crisis its war efforts is generating in Liberia against a democratically elected government, while at the same time imposing a ban on the importation of arms by the Government to defend itself and the people of Liberia, a constitutional imposed duty.

5. Lack of U.S. interest and leadership role in Liberia. The insistence on a policy of containment, believing that with increasing sanctions and international isolation, there will be a change in Liberia has not achieved the desired results. This policy trivializes the impact of containment on the plight of ordinary Liberians, and links the fate of ordinary to that of the Government.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

There are some key initiatives that can dramatically turn around the trend of events in Liberia and put it on a path toward democratization and sustained peace.

1. The Government of the United States must not rely solely on the policy of "containment and increasing isolation of Liberia" as the only avenue toward bringing change in the political direction of the Country. Secondly, efforts at bringing durable peace, stability and security in Liberia cannot be left to ECOWAS entirely. Growing out of our experiences with ECOWAS intervention in the Liberia civil war, regional politics combined with tribal and ethnic affiliations, will continue to have negative impact and effectively undermine actions by ECOWAS.

Accordingly, we recommend that the United States Government take a leadership role in Liberia, just as the British did in Sierra Leone, and help evolve a process that will bring Liberia back to a course of democratization.

2. The first step in evolving such a process is to help create the enabling environment in Liberia for security, stability, and sustained peace. There are several elements in this step:

a. The United States must take a leadership role in creating a "contact group" as suggested by the International Crisis Group (ICG) and Human Rights Watch to supervise this process.

b. The contact group, once created, should call upon the Government and LURD to declare an immediate cease-fire, and enter into immediate dialogue or negotiations with the view of resolving the conflict. These discussions must include representation from political both at home and from abroad. We urge the international community to deploy an intervention force into Liberia, if the Government and LURD or either of them, refuse to adhere to this call.

c. One of the crucial agenda items for discussions on Liberia by the contact group is the issue of security. There will be no lasting peace in Liberia if the security apparatus of the Government is not dismantled. Hence the contact group must obtain consensus from all parties to deploy an international force on the ground in Liberia, with a mandate to:

- monitor the cease-fire;
- take over the entire security apparatus of the country;
- disarm all combatants including the Police, the Army, the ATU and other security apparatus.

The composition of the force must not be limited to ECOWAS, and the state of emergency imposed by the Government must be lifted upon arrival of the intervention force.

d. The question of governance and the status of democratic institutions in Liberia between now and the period of general elections must be discussed. These include the Elections Commission, the Judiciary, the prosecutorial arm of Government, and the control over the nations resources and finances.

e. Finally the contact group must visit the question of the General and Presidential elections and obtain a consensus on such crucial hurdles such as census, representation, and number of constituencies, and provide resources to facilitate the process.

3. The United States Government must strengthen civil society in Liberia to enable them make informed and reasoned decisions about the democratization process in Liberia. Crucial areas are support for the press, human rights institutions and advocates, and other pro democracy organizations. We recommend support for these organizations as well as the strengthening of political parties, and the re-activation of the Human Rights Commission.

Thank you.

Senator FEINGOLD. Thank you for your well-informed, candid testimony. I thank all of you, and I will have some questions now, starting with Ms. Nowrojee. Your testimony notes the recent proliferation of militia forces in Liberia with relationships to the ruling party. What might be the motive for privatizing some of the state's use of force? Does the Government of Liberia want to disassociate itself from some policies that it still finds expedient, and what are some of the human rights consequences of this?

Ms. NOWROJEE. I think it is a combination of a number of things. I think first of all the militia groups are being headed by very trusted former NPFL, former Charles Taylor rebel affiliates who are now businessmen, or they are not particularly in government, and so they are being called up to organize the boys that were under them previously.

Another thing is, I think that since the sanctions have come into effect the Taylor government's revenues have been squeezed because they no longer have access to Sierra Leonian diamonds, so if you proliferate your formal armed forces you have to pay them, and even that he is not currently doing, so what is being done now

is basically giving militia groups a green light to basically loot and support themselves.

We interviewed three former child soldiers who were under training just outside of Monrovia who were going to be redeployed to the field, and they were basically being given $250 cash as a sign-up, and then what they looted was theirs to keep, and that seems to be the terms of the agreement, whereas if you enroll them in the armed forces you have to do a little more than that.

Senator FEINGOLD. And in terms of the human rights consequences?

Ms. NOWROJEE. The human rights consequences are extremely detrimental for a number of reasons. First of all, a lot of these are former child soldiers who have a history of committing atrocities from the war. They are also receiving little training. There is also no accountability for their actions, and there is no ability for civilians to lodge complaints or to file any mechanism to actually keep them in check, so it is very dangerous, and then above and beyond that, they are so shadowy it is close to impossible—we tried to get a sense of what the military command was, or if there was any coordination or cooperation. It is much harder for human rights groups to get a handle on the military structure.

Senator FEINGOLD. Fair enough. For you as well as for Mr. Sannoh, what role should accountability for human rights abuses play in Liberia's political future? You addressed some of this, but I am wondering, is the issue prominent in discussion among members of civil society and the political opposition? Do you expect that average Liberians will demand some degree of justice and accountability in a post conflict democratically governed Liberia?

I will start with you Ms. Nowrojee.

Ms. NOWROJEE. I think most Liberians unfortunately are busy with the day-to-day struggles of survival, so you do not see an overwhelming call for accountability, but clearly the lack of justice is on people's minds. It does not take long being in Liberia to just see how people's hopes have been whittled away, people who have been refugees once, who have come back, have rebuilt their houses, been chased away again, so justice would be a very welcome thing.

On the other hand, it is not something, a rallying point around which the society is crying for. However, I think it is the key to beginning to put a check on the cycle of violence we are seeing repeating itself again and again. I see this special court for Sierra Leone as being a very important actor now in beginning to provide an out for the sort of checkmate that we are in now, because I do not hold out much hope for the elections.

I hope what happens in the next election is not what happened in the last elections, where the international community descends on the place in large numbers, observes a quote-unquote fair and free election because there is no ballot-stuffing, but does not take into consideration the context within which such an election is being held, so I do not hold out much hope for the next election.

I do not hold out much hope for LURD offering any future that is any different, if you look at some of the characters that are in LURD, particularly, for instance, somebody like Charles Julu, who was the commander-in-chief of the armed forces under the Doe ad-

ministration. You see a history of equal atrocities, you know, people with checkered records on either side.

The special court provides an out, because if there is an indictment for Liberian officials who have played a detrimental role in Sierra Leone, you can, through the rule of law and through an international institution, begin to remove some of those faces and create a space for the opposition, which is currently divided and very cowed, to begin to move in, and that might be the beginning of a brighter future.

Senator FEINGOLD. I appreciate what you said about the special court in Sierra Leone. I have devoted a fair amount of effort to urging it along both in terms of what it would mean with regard to Sierra Leone, but also some of the things you are talking about, the larger accountability, and I appreciate that very much.

Mr. Sannoh, would you like to comment on that issue?

Mr. SANNOH. Yes, Mr. Chairman. It would be an understatement to say that the Liberian people are not as active as they should be in the process of democratization. Those who observed the process in Liberia, especially up to the elections, there was a high level of civil society involvement in the process in Liberia. Since 1997 there has been a decrease in the level of civil society activity, and some of this decrease has been attributed to fear, intimidation, arrest of human rights advocates. We had up to 14 human rights organizations operating in Liberia up to the elections. After the elections, it has come down to about three or four human rights organizations working on the ground.

Now, on the issue of accountability, that was a position that was disclosed immediately after the elections. When the Liberian Human Rights Commission was constituted, one of the questions we had faced, because I happened to have come up with an original draft of that particular provision, one of our concerns was, where do we go from here?

Do we go back and begin to review all of the atrocities that are being committed and give that responsibility to this Human Rights Commission, or shall we establish a Human Rights Commission and give it a mandate so that it can move forward from today, and not to be bogged down with what happened in the past, and let the political decisions be made as to what Liberia is going to do with the atrocities that have been committed in Liberia?

Mr. Chairman, the problem here is, if President Taylor had not emerged in the 1997 elections, then the issue of accountability would have been on the fore of the agenda in Liberia, but because Taylor led a rebel group, along with several other groups in Liberia, there have been no incentive for a government that had a rebel group imagined as winning the elections to spearhead a process of accountability, and the international community has not pressed on that issue, so that is a problem of accountability. It is like throwing it under the rock, and we are faced with that.

That still remains under the rock, but the Liberian people are yearning for peace, they are yearning for democracy, and that is why we keep stressing the call to empower the civil society so that Liberians can be well-informed to make good decisions about their own country.

Senator FEINGOLD. Let me follow that with a couple of questions for you, Mr. Sannoh, about the elections. There is some skepticism or some pessimism expressed here about the next round of elections. I think Ms. Nowrojee just suggested that. How would you assess the current pre-election climate in Liberia? Is there any chance at all of a reasonably free and fair election in 2003? For example, do you think citizens will have regular access to independent sources of information? Any comments?

Mr. SANNOH. In my presentation I identified one of the key issues to having elections in 2003, and that is the issue of security. If we do not establish the enabling environment in Liberia, then of course the road to 2003 is going to remain bumpy. There is a state of emergency in place, and the more we go into the period for elections from now until 2003 is about a year and some few months. There has to be adequate time for political parties to regroup, to converse in Liberia. Many of these political parties are outside Liberia, the leaders are outside Liberia. They cannot come back to Liberia because of the security situation.

Now, if we get up one morning and we say, well, let us go to elections tomorrow, and we do not have the participation of those political parties or leaders who are in exile because they cannot go back to Liberia as a result of the security situation, then you are going to have a problem, and that is why I keep stressing on, if we want to proceed with the process of democratization in Liberia, the first step should be to ensure that an enabling environment is created, that we induce Liberians to go back home and participate in the process.

Senator FEINGOLD. I think that answer is closely related to my next question, which was to be, what is to stop a repeat of the election scenario from 1997? I am told that many Liberians felt their choice was to vote for Mr. Taylor or endure more conflict. Would you talk about security? Are you really saying that there is still a fear of the consequences that might follow should President Taylor fail to win reelection?

Mr. SANNOH. Assuming Mr. Taylor remains as President up to elections, and elections are conducted and he loses the election, if the security apparatus remains as it is, I cannot predict what would happen, but I do not see it as a beautiful situation.

If you have an international force on the ground and Taylor loses the election, it is more likely that he would abide by the results, and when you talk about in 1997 elections, I have heard people say that if we have elections tomorrow Taylor would win, that may be true, but as the State Department representative testified, when the Liberian people went to the polls in 1997 it was immediately after the war. As a matter of fact, in many, many areas there were still rebels roaming through the villages and everything, and so these people voted for peace.

It is true, Taylor won the elections. It was a free election, Taylor won the elections, but there is no guarantee—I cannot say that if elections are held in Liberia tomorrow, in light of all of the problems that the country has been through, in light of the fact that many Liberians are beginning to believe that the problems they are having is because of Mr. Taylor, that the results would be the same.

As to what is required to make the process happen, to make it free and fair so that Liberians can make a decision for themselves as to who they are going to vote for, eventually it has to be left to the Liberian people to decide who they want to be their President.

Senator FEINGOLD. The way this is usually presented to me is that Mr. Taylor won in the previous election because people were afraid that if he did not win, that terrible things would be done to them by Mr. Taylor. Is that accurate history?

Mr. SANNOH. Well, let me just go back. If you have followed the Liberian situation, in 1996 there was a civil disturbance in Liberia because of problems that came out of the Abuja agreements. Prior to that, Liberia was divided, fractionalized among the various factions, and each of these factions had territories that they were controlling. With the composition of the LNTG, all of these areas, many of the warring factions or rebels deserted these areas.

As a result of the April 1996 crisis, when the fighting was going on in Liberia, Taylor went around and tried to recapture, to have his forces in most of the areas he had lost. Now, there was a fear that if elections did not proceed and another round of fighting ensued in Liberia, Taylor would have been at a better footing in that process, and so during the course of the elections and again, from their own experience, when people say they were afraid that if Taylor does not win the election he will go right back to fighting, that is why we have fears. That is why we have fears. We cannot say it is imaginary.

Second, most people believe that if we can see this young man to launch in Liberia and fight for several years, he must have an agenda for Liberia, so perhaps let us give him an opportunity to see what he can do.

Now that the Liberian people have seen what he has done, that is why we say, let them be the determinants of their own future, whether they are actually going to vote for Mr. Taylor the second time around, but the 2003 elections will be entirely different elections from 1997 if the process is free and fair and it is given the type of international support and money that it needs.

Senator FEINGOLD. Thank you for that interesting answer. Let me go to Ms. Anderson. I recently read about the destruction of a hospital in Bong County, a casualty of fighting between the Liberian Armed Forces and the LURD. In this kind of situation, or in this situation, are humanitarian and civilian institutions like hospitals and schools being targeted in the conflict, or is this kind of a circumstance more incidental, a consequence of what happened?

Ms. ANDERSON. I would probably say a combination of the two. As my other colleagues alluded to, oftentimes fighters are able to sort of pick out portions of the country to loot and to raid, so that means including the looting and raiding hospitals for medical supplies and also storehouses for food. So yes, sometimes, hospitals and other humanitarian sites including and especially food warehouses can be targeted.

We ourselves have experienced, at different times, attacks on our own facilities, particularly our agriculture sites, and our food warehouses. But oftentimes a lot of this is often a casualty of just crossfire, and so what happens usually is that somebody hears a shot—or you hear a lot of skirmishes perhaps 10 miles away—you imme-

diately evacuate and clear out your staff and as much equipment and supplies as possible. But human beings are more important than commodities. Usually, what happens is that people leave, and then the supplies the soldiers would like are right there ready for them, so it is a combination of the two.

Senator FEINGOLD. Again for you, what role does the Liberian Refugees Repatriation and Resettlement Commission play in caring for the internally displaced in Liberia? It is a politicized organization? Is the information accurate, and does it act in the interest of the displaced, or in the interest of the government?

Ms. ANDERSON. The LRRRC we have found has been a very cooperative and collaborative partner in Liberia. I met with several of those officials myself, and found that they were members of the government who had a genuine and sincere concern for the people of Liberia. They also were not in the inner circle of Charles Taylor as well. Nevertheless, their hands are tied because of declining international assistance to them.

When I had visited Liberia a couple of months back that, some international officials claimed that their numbers were inflated, but what I found most often when I talked with a variety of international officials was that nobody really wanted to admit the severity of the displacement and the severity of the crisis because of the lack of international political will, so LRRRC might have high numbers, but the numbers are really not necessarily that far off.

Again, they were genuinely, sincerely concerned about the plight of the Liberian people because they themselves were suffering. The majority of the civil servants in Liberia have not been paid for the past 14 months, and that is a report I got recently from our national director. As of yesterday they have not been paid, so they themselves are suffering.

And again, LRRRC, they were sincerely and genuinely supportive in trying to work with NGOs to coordinate assistance that was going throughout Liberia. Nevertheless, instability as well as declining international assistance has made it difficult.

Senator FEINGOLD. I appreciate all of your patience. I just want to ask one final question for whichever of you would like to answer, and we have already talked about, and I appreciate your candor with regard to the fact that some of you feel that certainly the American efforts with regard to supporting civil society are not adequate at this point, and I suspect that is true.

And so often when we examine states with truly abusive and corrupt governments, we have to pin our hopes on civil society as we search for partners in an effort to improve conditions for civilians and strengthen institutions and bolster the rule of law. But this requires a civil society capable of working together, rather than one that is full of opposing camps that are just competing for power. So I guess I would like you to comment on how politicized the Liberian civil society is in its current state.

Mr. SANNOH. Let me start. Let me just say something briefly about even the present level of assistance. The U.S. policy is right now, instead of providing assistance directly to the government, they would like to do it through UCIT. UCIT is on the ground. UCIT has a policy where they cannot deal directly with local NGOs

on the ground. They would like to use international NGOs as implementing partners.

Now, when you come to the issue of civil society and the process of democratization in Liberia, there is no international NGO on the ground in Liberia. NGI was there and they left. AFROS was there for the elections. They left. So in other words, if UCIT has money for civil society development and democratization, then the money sits down, and last year alone UCIT was left with about $574,000 that would have been used for civil society development that was never implemented, so that is a problem that really supersedes the issue of politicization of the civil society, and again, perhaps the problem is the lack of inertia because of the political stance of the United States toward Liberia.

Perhaps those overtures are extending to UCIT so that UCIT is factoring a political position in determining how to proceed with the civil society movement or development, and also the lack of interest in international NGOs, those involving democracy, to go back to Liberia and begin to work.

Now, on the issue of politics between NGOs, nongovernmental organizations on the ground in Liberia, that is not really a factor in Liberia. There has been a lot of collaboration among the various NGOs. There is collaboration within the human rights community. We have the human rights center all of the human rights organizations are a part of, even though we operate individual organizations, but when it comes to major issues there is a high level of collaboration on that, as collaboration on the level of religious groups, the Interfaith Mediation Committee. They have been very, very active for peace in Liberia. They have been involved in reconciliation efforts, so these institutions are there, they just need to be empowered.

You look at the press, we have a very powerful press union. The only problem they have is that a couple of times the press is closed and thrown into jail and somebody needs to stand up there to give them a type of moral support and assistance.

So the question of politics and the internal wrangling between the NGOs is not a problem in Liberia in my own view.

Ms. ANDERSON. I might also just add, in terms of the comment on NGOs, both international NGOs, of which World Vision is one, as well as local NGOs, I think that if you do increase humanitarian assistance, electoral NGOs like NDI will go. They will go, but what we are finding is that you have diminishing amounts of money actually being channeled toward democracy and governance, so therefore NGOs cannot necessarily make their costs, both their own internal costs and being able to work and facilitate civil society organizations on the ground, and then it is very difficult to run an operation there.

So we ourselves are finding from a humanitarian standpoint that it is very difficult to run an operation when you are only given a limited amount of funds, so you eventually do have to fold up and leave, and because of the declining U.S. Government assistance, particularly in democratization and governance—I talked with aid officials whilst I was in Liberia. They basically said, well, there is no free press so we cannot really sponsor press unions, and I found when I interviewed and talked with journalists while I was there

that people were willing to put their lives on the line, but they were not being supported, so it is sort of a chicken and egg. Do you provide the funding or not?

I would say you provide the funding and the international NGOs as well as local Liberian NGOs will step up to the plate, because I also found that people were very united, because the suffering is universal.

Ms. NOWROJEE. I would just add to that and say that the types of support should not only be financial. I mean, I think the civil society groups range from sort of very sort of nascent and emerging groups, the few corrupt groups, and then some excellent and really active work going on, and what some of these Liberian groups lack in terms of experience or exposure, they make up for in courage and bravery, and I am always amazed at how much they are willing to take in terms of being tossed into prison, being interrogated, being tortured, being forced to flee the country, and they continue.

These human rights groups basically started around the time of the war, and it is interesting in the safe haven created by the West African peacekeepers in that regard, Dave Peterson from National Endowment for Democracy is a real unsung hero in this, because he took a chance on a lot of these people at a time when nobody really knew who they were, what they were doing, and what has emerged now is a really vibrant community of human rights activists and independent media people.

And I think that when we talk about greater support for civil society, it should not only be financial. It is not just an issue of money. It is also an issue of providing them with protection, providing them with exposure, providing them with protection, the whole idea of providing them with radios, access to the public to be able to hear their message. It should be multifaceted, and then it will sift out, the sort of genuine and very active ones will come to the fore, and others will sift down.

Senator FEINGOLD. Thank you. I want to thank all of you for your help today. Liberia was the first African country that I ever visited in 1994, when I was a new member of this subcommittee, with Chairman Paul Simon, and it was a difficult situation then. Obviously it is very difficult now, but the purpose of these hearings, when we refer to certain countries as failed states, or weak states, is not to suggest that that is their permanent status.

In fact, I believe it would be an immoral policy for this country to regard any nation, particularly an old friend of the United States like Liberia, as a permanently failed state. The purpose of that kind of a label and the purpose of these hearings is to awaken Members of Congress and policymakers to the fact that to allow such situations to persist is not only immoral but dangerous for the United States, and I believe we have seen some of that in our analysis of what happened on September 11, and so that is the purpose of these hearings, and I think this was an extremely good one, and I assure you that as long as I am a member of this subcommittee, certainly, whether as chairman or otherwise, I will continue to want to work with each of you on the future of Liberia, and I congratulate you on your efforts.

This concludes the hearing.

[Whereupon, at 4:25 p.m., the subcommittee adjourned, to reconvene subject to the call of the Chair]

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