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# Headlines

## Political News:

- Liberia:** 1. Scramble for Presidency Begins.  
2. Sirleaf's participation in 2011 polls receives mixed reactions.  
3. Taylor: American Nuns' Murder, An "Accident".

- Nigeria:** 1. AbdulMutallab - Malaysia Nabs Two Nigerian Accomplices.  
2. World powers, eminent Nigerians back Jonathan as acting president  
3. Nigeria court backs sick president

**Guinea-Bissau:** UN anti-crime agency help set up police academy in Guinea-Bissau.

- Côte d'Ivoire:** 1. Hope in new Ivorian election timetable.  
2. Côte d'Ivoire's UN mandate extended to end of May.

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- **Ghana:** Sim Card Registration against Human Liberties.
- **Nigeria:** 1. Probe Muslim massacre  
2. Fresh evidence of bloody clashes in Nigeria.
- **Liberia:** Taylor's son rejects Liberians' torture claims.

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- **Liberia:** 21 Liberians Deported From U.S.
- **Gambia:** 1. U.S.\$66,000 Medical Items for Disaster Victims.  
2. 'Gambia One Million for Haiti' Support Project Initiated

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- **Aiding Haiti Earthquake Survivors**
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## Summary

### Political news:

**Liberia:** 1. Scramble for Presidency Begins.

The 2011 general and presidential elections euphoria has surfaced with key war actors taking the lead in making known their intention for the presidency. Ex rebel commander, now Senator Prince Johnson has announced he will face incumbent President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf as a major challenger for the country's highest office.

2. Sirleaf's participation in 2011 polls receives mixed reactions.

Mixed reactions have marred Liberia following the recent announcement by President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf that she will run for re-election in 2011.

### 3. Taylor: American Nuns' Murder, An "Accident".

Lead Prosecutor Branda Hollis again confronted former President Charles Taylor with the 1992 brutal killings of five American nuns allegedly by National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) rebels in Liberia. Mr. Taylor dismissed Ms. Hollis's accounts as untrue.

#### **Nigeria:** 1. AbdulMutallab - Malaysia Nabs Two Nigerian Accomplices.

Ten terror suspects including two Nigerians said to be accomplices of Christmas Day United States jetliner failed bomber, Umar Farouk AbdulMutallab, have been arrested in Malaysia, the country has announced.

#### 2. World powers, eminent Nigerians back Jonathan as acting president.

THE United States, United Kingdom and other world leaders, on Thursday, waded into the row in Nigeria over President Umaru Yar'Adua's health, lamenting the "uncertainty" caused by his absence just as some eminent Nigerians, including past heads of government endorsed ceding of power to the vice-president.

#### 3. Nigeria court backs sick president

A Nigerian court has dismissed calls for a temporary head of state be appointed until Umaru Yar'Adua, Nigeria's president, returns from Saudi Arabia where he is undergoing hospital treatment.

#### **Guinea-Bissau:** UN anti-crime agency help set up police academy in Guinea-Bissau.

The United Nations anti-crime agency is supporting efforts to rebuild a safe and stable Guinea-Bissau by facilitating the construction of a training centre for the West African nation's security forces.

#### **Côte d'Ivoire:** 1. Hope in new Ivorian election timetable.

Côte d'Ivoire has made significant gains in recent months towards holding its long-awaited presidential elections, and if the remaining issues are resolved, the polls could be held this spring, the top United Nations envoy to the West African nation has said.

## 2. Côte d'Ivoire's UN mandate extended to end of May.

The UN Security Council has extended the mandate of the United Nations mission in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI), and the French forces supporting it, for another four months to help support the staging of free, fair and transparent elections in the West African nation.

## **Economic/Energy:**

- **Nigeria: 1. ECOWAS Aid-For-Trade Review Meeting In Abuja.**

A two-day ECOWAS Aid-for-Trade meeting held on Wednesday, 27th January 2010 in Abuja to review experiences as well as consider cases of good practice in the implementation of a number of Aid-for-Trade related programmes and projects.

## 2. Oil: Nigeria loses N6.3bn monthly to pre-shipment contract.

Assigning a private company by the Nigerian government officials to monitor pre-shipment of crude oil and gas export is a colossal loss to the country and is against the law of the land, an industry expert has warned.

## 3. MEND armed movement ends unilateral ceasefire.

Nigeria's main armed group has called off a three-month-old ceasefire in the Niger Delta and threatened to unleash "an all-out assault" on Africa's biggest oil and gas industry.

## 4. Nigeria's 12% inflation rate defies market survey.

Nigeria's inflation rate recorded a decline in December last year, dropping by 0.4 percent from what was obtainable for November, data from the National Bureau of Statistics [NBS] has shown.

- **Liberia: Forestry Sector Makes Significant Gains.**

The Government of Liberia is making great strides in Liberia's reemerging economy with some US\$5,001,307 made from forest concession companies.

- **Senegal: Experts on black-eyed peas to meet in Dakar.**

Experts from around the world are expected to present the state of the art in cowpea research, building upon technological advances to move the science of cowpea forward,

with the ultimate aim of identifying myriads of opportunities for cowpea growers to gain higher incomes, greater food security, and lead healthier lives.

- **Burkina Faso:** Burkina Faso device strategies to adapt to climate change.

Burkina Faso farmers are devising strategies to adjust to the changing weather patterns following a disappointment from the Copenhagen to help poor nations minimize the effects of global change in developing nations.

- **Ghana:** Ghana hosts Africa Investment Forum.

The capital of Ghana, Accra, will host investors and government leaders from over 30 countries at the Africa Investment Forum on 8-10 February this year.

- **COTE D'IVOIRE:** Banana Producers Turn to Regional Markets.

Twelve thousand people working on Côte d'Ivoire's banana plantations face uncertainty as the European Union begins implementing a new agreement governing tariffs on bananas.

- **Sierra Leone:** Following the Visit of Robert B. Zoellick windfall for Youths.

The visit of the World Bank President, Robert B. Zoellick left smiles in the faces of the President, Dr. Ernest Bai Koroma and his people as he did not just come and go clapping hands and making vain promises. Rather, he dished out a whopping sum of twenty million United States Dollars (US\$20) for the creation of jobs for young people in Sierra Leone.

## **Health:**

- **Liberia:** 1. Malaria Is The Number One Killer In Liberia

Many hospitals, health centers and clinics across Liberia are in a battle against what health workers describe as the 'number one killer' that affects every Liberian whether young or old and that is the fight against malaria.

### **2. Deputy health minister: No Swine Flu in Liberia**

Deputy Health and Social Welfare Minister, Dr. Bernice Dahn, has disclosed that there is no Swine Flu virus in Liberia. "Up to date, there is no sign of the virus in the country,"

she said. According to her, there is also no need to be panic because Liberia is free from the pandemic.

- **Nigeria:** 1. Nation to Be Polio-Free This Year

WORRIED over its enlisting as the only country in Africa that is among polio endemic countries along side with India, Pakistan and Afghanistan, Federal Government on Tuesday said it has put modality in place to free the country from the virus infection this year.

2. FG Boosts Fight against Malaria.

The Federal Government has commenced the distribution of Long Lasting Insecticidal Nets (LLINs) in Bauchi State, marking the beginning of series of activities that would lead to the distribution of over two million nets within the state.

## **Human rights:**

- **Ghana:** Sim Card Registration against Human Liberties.

The plan by the Mills-led National Democratic Congress government to acquire telecommunication monitoring equipment to monitor calls in the country is against human dignity and privacy. It also constitutes unnecessary control and curtailment of the rights of the citizenry.

- **Nigeria:** 1. Probe Muslim massacre

International rights group, Human Rights Watch has called on Nigeria's vice president to probe the massacre of more than 150 Muslim in central Nigeria. The mass killings follow the Muslim and Christian clashes more than a week ago in Jos city.

2. Fresh evidence of bloody clashes in Nigeria.

Charred remains and corpses dumped in wells were retrieved from a village close to the central Nigerian city of Jos on Friday in some of the worst evidence yet documented of this week's ethnic and religious clashes.

- **Liberia:** Taylor's son rejects Liberians' torture claims.

The son of former Liberian President Charles Taylor on Friday rejected as "propaganda" claims by Liberians and the U.S. government that he oversaw widespread torture and human rights abuses while head of an elite paramilitary unit in his father's government.

## **Immigration/Refugee/Displaced:**

- **Liberia:** 21 Liberians Deported From U.S.

At least 21 Liberians predominantly males are currently in the country after being deported from the United States of America for allegedly committing crimes against the laws of that country.

- **Gambia:** 1. U.S.\$66,000 Medical Items for Disaster Victims.

Officials from the World Health Organisation (WHO) Gambia office yesterday presented medical items worth US\$66,000 (sixty-six thousand dollars) to the vice president and minister for Women Affairs, Her Excellency Aja Dr Isatou Njie-Saidy for onward transmission to disaster victims.

2. 'Gambia One Million for Haiti' Support Project Initiated.

Private sector support for the people of Haiti has been initiated in the Gambia following the 12 January earthquake which rocked that country's capital, Port au-Prince, leaving death and destruction in its wake.

## **Details of the News**

### **Political news:**

- **Liberia:** 1. Scramble for Presidency Begins.

**The 2011 general and presidential elections euphoria has surfaced with key war actors taking the lead in making known their intention for the presidency. Ex rebel commander, now Senator Prince Johnson has announced he will face incumbent President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf as a major challenger for the country's highest office.**

The Senator has named his senate colleagues Abel Massaley (Grand Cape Mount) as his running mate, claiming they will raise over US\$10m to ensure that the ruling Unity Party is booted out of office for "failing the people."

"Those that she downsized [redundant workers] and those she had failed will be our supporters. If she does not step down as promised, we will give her and the Unity Party a political disgrace and defeat," the former INPFL rebel commander said Monday minutes

after the President had declared she will seek reelection, despite her 2005 promise that should not seek a second term.

President Sirleaf and Senator Johnson were members of the erstwhile National Patriotic Front of Liberia- a rebel movement that played a dominant role in the destruction of the state coupled with systematic killings and looting as documented in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's report.

Both seceded from then rebel leader Charles Taylor. Mr. Johnson headed the breakaway rebels while Mrs. Sirleaf abandoned the military campaign and return to political advocacy.

Both are named in the TRC report as financier and war lord respectively. President Sirleaf is being barred from holding public office for 30 years while the Senator Prince Johnson faces criminal prosecution for their respective role in the country's civil war.

However, the President Monday cleared those obstacles when she implicitly froze the Independent Human Rights Commission's legal authority to implement the TRC recommendations relative to public sanctions, criminal prosecution of war lords and economic criminals.

To make her stance legal, the President has proposed a legislation that will freeze the Commission's authority relative to implementing those aspects of the TRC's recommendations.

## 2. Sirleaf's participation in 2011 polls receives mixed reactions.

**Mixed reactions have marred Liberia following the recent announcement by President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf that she will run for re-election in 2011.**

Ms Sirleaf has said that she had not realized before the 2005 polls how much rebuilding work needed to be done in Liberia. She became Africa's first elected female head of state after winning 53 percent of the vote.

A draft report by the country's Truth and Reconciliation Commission said President Sirleaf should be barred from seeking further political office for 30 years.

However, the ruling party said Liberians trust her leadership, further stating that her announcement follows a petition by her supporters demanding that she contests the next year's polls because she is fit to run the office.

A draft report from Liberia's Truth and Reconciliation Commission last year said President Sirleaf should be banned from public office for 30 years because of her early support to former rebel leader Charles Taylor.

She has however admitted to giving him money, but testified that she was misled into supporting Mr. Taylor and ended that support when she learned of the human-rights abuses in his campaign against then-president Samuel Doe.

Opposition politicians in the country have contentiously called on the president to respect her one-term limit, with several of them urging her to step aside and get prepared to relinquish the presidency in the coming electoral process.

The West African nation was relatively calm until 1980 when William Tolbert was overthrown by Sergeant Samuel Doe after food price riots.

A transitional government steered the country towards elections in 2005 after former President, Mr. Charles Taylor resigned under international pressure in 2003 and went into exile in Nigeria.

Around 250,000 people were killed in Liberia's civil war and many thousands more fled the fighting. The conflict left the country in economic ruin and overrun with weapons. The capital remains without mains electricity and running water. Corruption is rife and unemployment and illiteracy are endemic.

### 3. Taylor: American Nuns' Murder, An "Accident".

**Lead Prosecutor Branda Hollis again confronted former President Charles Taylor with the 1992 brutal killings of five American nuns allegedly by National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) rebels in Liberia. Mr. Taylor dismissed Ms. Hollis's accounts as untrue.**

Sr. Barbara Ann Muttra, ASC, Sr. Shirley Kolmer, ASC, Sr. Joel Kolmer, ASC, Sr. Agnes Mueller, ASC and Kachleen McGuire, ASC, lost their lives in the October 1992 "Operation Octopus" launched by disbanded National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL).

Following their gruesome murder, the leader of the defunct NPFL, Charles Taylor dismissed claims that his men, who had then besieged Monrovia, committed the act.

In court, Mr. Taylor again denied that his NPFL rebels had deliberately killed the nuns. He called the situation a "tragic situation" which had taken place by "accident".

It was in October 1992 that five nuns were trapped in the NPFL control area of Bardnerville Junction in the Gardnerville area during the 'octopus' on Monrovia. The operation began in Johnsonville, Diggsville and Bardnersville and Gardnersville.

During the incident, the Catholic Church of Liberia through Archbishop Michael K. Francis complained the killing of the nuns to the international community stating that five Catholic nuns had been inevitably trapped in that area that was under the control of NPFL forces for about two months.

Prosecutors also questioned former Liberian president Charles Taylor about crimes

committed by his rebel forces during his country's civil conflict. This formed part of a broader effort by prosecutors to show consistent crime patterns with those of neighboring rebels in Sierra Leone, whom Mr. Taylor is accused of supporting during the West African country's bloody 11-year civil war. The aim is to show rebels in both countries had the same command structure, with Mr. Taylor at the top. Mr. Taylor has denied the allegations.

As she questioned Mr. Taylor today about crimes committed by his NPFL rebels, lead prosecutor Brenda Hollis reminded Mr. Taylor of his November 19, 2009 statement under cross-examination that certain types of crimes committed by Revolutionary United Front (RUF) rebel forces in Sierra Leone (such as amputations) were of a surprise because they did not occur in Liberia. In doing so, she sought to demonstrate that while the specific types of crimes committed in each country may have differed, the approach used by both sets of rebels were the same in that they involved widespread and systematic attacks against civilians. Mr. Taylor has consistently denied he was in control of the RUF rebels, and sought to show in his direct testimony that in Liberia, he held his own rebels to account for any crimes, and that those crimes were not, he argues, widespread in nature.

"Crimes committed by all factions in Liberia including your NPFL were widespread and systematic in nature," Ms. Hollis told Mr. Taylor today at the Special Court for Sierra Leone.

"I'll say it's incorrect," Mr. Taylor responded.

Ms. Hollis also pointed that "the NPFL did not put in place the minimum standards to mitigate against these widespread abuses" in the NPFL.

In his response, the former president said that "the NPFL had military tribunals to mitigate abuses."

Mr. Taylor also dismissed as "totally not correct" prosecution claims that his "NPFL targeted women as victims of crimes such as rape, sexual slavery and other forms of violence.

In response to Ms. Hollis's assertion that the "NPFL were responsible for burning of entire villages," Mr. Taylor said that "that is not to my knowledge."

Demonstrating that crimes are committed as part of a widespread or systematic attack against civilians is important in this case because it is one of the elements needed to prove that crimes committed by rebels in Sierra Leone, such as murder, torture or rape, rose to the level of crimes against humanity. Mr. Taylor is charged with five counts of crimes against humanity for crimes committed in Sierra Leone. One of the ways he can be held responsible for these crimes is by evidence indicating that he was in effective control of Sierra Leonean rebels and was in a position to prevent or punish their crimes. Showing that crimes against humanity were committed in both countries is a way of demonstrating a pattern between the two conflicts, prosecutors are also trying to show a

consistency in command structure. Mr. Taylor has denied the allegations, asserting that his involvement in Sierra Leone was purely for peaceful purposes in the West African country.

Meanwhile, as prosecutors tried to submit new evidence today in the form of documents or reports which point at crimes committed by Mr. Taylor's NPFL, the judges rejected the use of most of the documents on grounds that they were prejudicial to the guilt of the accused and that the prosecution had not established that it was in the interest of justice to use them and that they would not affect the fair trial rights of the accused. While she was not allowed to use the documents, that did not stop Ms. Hollis from pointing out to Mr. Taylor the crimes committed by his NPFL rebels. The former president continued to dismiss Ms. Hollis's assertions as incorrect.

Referencing the Liberian Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) report, Ms. Hollis told Mr. Taylor that "it is correct that your NPFL recruited and used child soldiers during the conflict and you continued to use child soldiers during your presidency."

"Incorrect," the former president said. "The factual nature of the TRC report is a subject of challenges in the courts of Liberia right now," he added.

As Ms. Hollis attempted to read the relevant portion of the TRC report, Mr. Taylor's defense counsel Courtenay Griffiths objected to the use of the report on grounds that it was prejudicial to Mr. Taylor's guilt and since the requirements of it being in the interest of justice and the fair trial rights of the accused were not met, it should not be allowed. The judges upheld the defense objection and Ms. Hollis was not allowed to read the relevant text.

Ms. Hollis asked Mr. Taylor about the Liberian TRC's account that the NPFL committed the largest percentage of abuses during Liberia's conflict. She also pointed at reports which alleged that the NPFL massacred civilians in various villages, some on the basis that they belonged to the Krahn and Mandingo ethnic groups, that the NPFL killed foreign nationals of Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) countries because of the actions of ECOWAS Monitoring Group (ECOMOG)—a sub-regional peacekeeping force that was put together by West African countries to stop the conflict in Liberia.

- **Nigeria: 1. AbdulMutallab - Malaysia Nabs Two Nigerian Accomplices.**

**Ten terror suspects including two Nigerians said to be accomplices of Christmas Day United States jetliner failed bomber, Umar Farouk AbdulMutallab, have been arrested in Malaysia, the country has announced.**

They include four men from Syria, two from Nigeria and one each from Yemen and Jordan, said Syed Ibrahim Syed Noh, head of a rights group that assists people held under Malaysia's Internal Security Act, which allows indefinite detention without trial.

The country has not released the name of the suspected terrorists.

They were among 50 people arrested by police while attending a religious talk by a Syrian university lecturer on January 21 at a home near Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia's largest city, Syed Ibrahim said. The others were later released.

The Malaysian government-owned New Straits Times newspaper said foreign anti-terrorism agencies told authorities that the suspects were in Malaysia and were linked to a young Nigerian man accused of trying to detonate a bomb hidden in his underwear during a flight from Amsterdam to Detroit on Christmas Day.

The newspaper did not say how it obtained the information or how they were linked.

Home Minister Hishammuddin Hussein refused to give other details yesterday, saying it might jeopardize investigations. He said the detainees posed a "serious threat" to security and their arrests were based on co-operation with foreign intelligence agencies.

"This is a very good wake-up call for us because the playground for terrorists is no longer just one nation. The whole world is their playground," he said.

The suspects include students at a Malaysian university, said Syed Ibrahim, the rights activist. He urged the government to either charge them to court or release them.

Activists identified one detainee as Aiman Al Dakkak, a Syrian university lecturer who has been living in Malaysia since 2003. He gave regular religious classes but did not advocate terrorism to his students, said Muhammad Yunus Zainal Abidin, a Malaysian who was arrested at the class and released several hours later.

Interrogators did not ask those freed about any ties to AbdulMutallab, Muhammad Yunus told a news conference.

Over the past decade, Malaysian authorities have held more than 100 militant suspects, mainly alleged members of the al-Qaeda-linked Southeast Asian network Jemaah Islamiyah, which has been blamed for attacks including the 2002 bombing on the Indonesian island of Bali that killed 202 people.

Most were released after being held for years in a northern prison centre. Authorities say they were rehabilitated and no longer posed a threat. None was ever charged in court.

## 2. World powers, eminent Nigerians back Jonathan as acting president.

**THE United States, United Kingdom and other world leaders, on Thursday, waded into the row in Nigeria over President Umaru Yar'Adua's health, lamenting the "uncertainty" caused by his absence just as some eminent Nigerians, including past heads of government endorsed ceding of power to the vice-president.**

A joint statement by the United States, European Union, Britain and France, stated that “Nigeria is going through a period of uncertainty because of the prolonged illness of the president.” The powers said they welcomed constitutional efforts in Nigeria, one of the world’s top oil producers, to “resolve the question of governing authority in the president’s prolonged absence.”

President Yar’Adua has been receiving treatment for a serious heart condition in Saudi Arabia since November 23. Three separate legal challenges are currently underway in the Federal High Court to force the government to hand presidential powers to his deputy, Dr Goodluck Jonathan.

Separately, the government and the Senate have openly clashed over how to deal with Yar’Adua’s prolonged absence and his apparent refusal to hand power to his deputy from his hospital bed in Jeddah.

In the statement issued on Thursday, the world powers said: “Nigeria’s stability and democracy carry great significance beyond its immediate borders,” given its importance as a global oil producer and stabilising force in West Africa.

The statement signed by US Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton, British Foreign Secretary David Miliband, France’s Foreign Minister Bernard Kouchner and European Union High Representative, Catherine Ashton, was issued in London as foreign ministers met to discuss how to assist war-torn Afghanistan.

It is the first time foreign powers have openly expressed concern about Yar’Adua’s absence amid concerns by opposition groups that the president’s illness has made him incapable of ruling the 150 million-strong population of Nigeria, Africa’s second-biggest oil producer.

Jonathan, who has been filling in for the president, has been unable to assume full powers because Yar’Adua has not formally informed parliament of his absence, which his opponents say is a breach of the constitution.

They also accused the government of covering up the extent of Yar’Adua’s illness. An unwritten policy of the ruling PDP allows a rotation of power between the Christian south and the Muslim north. Yar’Adua is a Muslim, while Jonathan is a southern Christian.

“We extend our best wishes to President Yar’Adua and his family and join the Nigerian people in wishing him a full recovery,” said the foreign ministers’ statement.

But it nonetheless commended efforts to break the political deadlock gripping the country, pointing to the recent outbreak of religious and ethnic violence in Jos, which claimed hundreds of lives.

“Nigerians have launched an important conversation in examining how constitutional processes can resolve the question of governing authority in the president’s prolonged absence.

“We commend these efforts and their pursuit through appropriate Nigerian democratic institutions to address its citizens’ concerns.”

Also, a group of eminent Nigerians, under the aegis of the Eminent Elders Group (EEG), led by former head of state, General Yakubu Gowon, has asked President Umaru Yar’Adua to transmit a communication to the National Assembly to enable Vice-President Goodluck Jonathan to assume office as acting president in accordance with Section 145 of the 1999 Constitution.

The group, which met with Senate president, Mr. David Mark, on Thursday, submitted a proposal addressed to the Senate President and the Speaker of the House of Representatives, in which it indicated that the issue of acting president should be resolved in favour of the provisions of Section 145 of the 1999 Constitution.

Other members of the group, who visited to the Senate on Thursday, included former head of the Interim National Government, Chief Ernest Shonekan; former Chief Justices of the Federation, Justices Muhammadu Uwais, Alfa Belgore; Idris Kutigi; Lt. Gen. T.Y. Danjuma; former governor of Plateau State, Chief Solomon Lar; South-South leader, Chief Edwin Clark; former Minister of Finance, Mallam Adamu Ciroma; a former Permanent Secretary, Alhaji Ahmed Joda; former Minister of Information, Professor Jerry Gana and a former Deputy Senate Leader, Senator Jonathan Zwingina.

The group, in its letter to the president of the Senate, said that the way out of the current political situation in the country was to ensure that the president transmitted a letter to the National Assembly transferring power to the vice-president in acting capacity.

Though the group did not openly read the contents of the letter, the Nigerian Tribune got a copy of the document.

The EEG stated: “It is important to resolve this issue by inviting the president to formally issue the necessary communication that will enable the vice-president to be acting president in accordance with Section 145 of the 1999 Constitution as soon as possible.”

General Gowon, who signed the letter, said that the group had become worried at the prolonged absence of President Yar’Adua.

He submitted: “For well over eight weeks now, our president has been ill and out of the country. This illness and long absence from the county is causing serious concern, not only to Nigerian citizens but also those who do business with Nigeria and have the well-being of the country at heart.

“It is for this reason that I called the meeting of some of our former presidents and heads of state, former Chief Justices of Nigeria and elder statesmen today. Following a critical review of the general political situation of the country in the recent past, but more especially since the illness of the president and his prolonged absence, it was decided to address this letter to the vice-president and the Speaker of the House of Representatives.

“Resolution of the issue of acting president pending the return of the president is imperative. It is important to resolve this issue by inviting the president to formally issue the necessary communication that will enable the vice-president to be acting president in accordance with Section 145 of the 1999 Constitution as soon as possible.”

He said that it was because the group became worried that it called a meeting of elder statesmen in Abuja, which was attended by the above-mentioned Nigerian leaders.

He further submitted: “Following a critical review of the general political situation of the country in the recent past, but more especially since the illness of the president and his prolonged absence, it was decided to address this letter to your Excellency, the Vice-President and the Speaker of the House of Representatives.”

The submission is a vindication of the motion passed by the Senate on Wednesday, which urged the ailing president to transmit a letter to the National Assembly in line with Section 145 of the Constitution.

The President of the Senate, Mr Mark, who received the elders, said that their visit was timely, adding that the Senate would benefit from their wealth of experience.

He said: “The experience this group will bring on board will be immeasurable. We believe that we need to be notified that the president is on medical vacation.

“In doing this, we were conscious of the security, political and power balancing in this country. The unity of this country is of utmost importance.

“We are humbled by your humility. We are anxious to put this impasse behind us so that we can make progress.”

The motion in the Senate was pushed through by the National Interest Group (NIG), a group of senators who insisted that the constitution must be respected.

NIG leader, Senator Bala Mohammed, said in a telephone interview that the passage of the motion was a victory for justice and equity over parochial and selfish interests.

He declared that members of the NIG placed the interest of Nigeria above personal interests. He said: “The outcome of the motion we passed in the Senate is a triumph of justice and equity over parochial paranoia over people who are selfish and don’t want things done the proper way.

“This is a national issue and, naturally, power should flow to the number two man, even if it is not an issue of the constitution. It is a lesson for us that we should not relegate ourselves and that there should be an end to the mutual suspicion in power circles.

“Our motion was free of any parochial feelings and we believe that the issue of power rotation and power permutation is an internal affair of a party; it is not the plan of the constitution.

Meanwhile, President Yar’Adua has been given a 48-hour ultimatum to resign as president, or risked being impeached by the National Assembly.

The ultimatum came on the heels of the revelation, on Thursday, in Port Harcourt, Rivers State, that about 200 members of the House of Representatives had agreed with the move to swear in Vice-President Jonathan as acting president.

Speaking at a roundtable organised by the United Niger Delta Energy Development and Security Strategy (UNDEDSS) on Thursday, the National Publicity Secretary of Afenifere, Mr Yinka Odumakin, said Nigeria could not be yoked to a sick president.

Odumakin noted that President Yar’Adua’s aides had treated Nigerians with disrespect, thereby costing the president the sympathy of Nigerians.

“They have made this man to forfeit the sympathy he could have got from the people, Nigerians are sympathetic people.

“Yar’Adua’s aides have taken us for a ride, they have treated us less than human beings, they have devalued us and that’s why today, we have gone beyond Yar’Adua. Jonathan should be made the president of this country, not acting president any more.

“We commend the Senate for what it did yesterday, though belated. We are asking that, if within 48 hours it has not received a letter that Yar’Adua has resigned, the Senate should start impeachment proceedings against him. The House of Representatives should also take a position on this matter,” Odumakin said.

Also speaking at the event, a member of the House of Representatives, Honourable George Daika, said about 200 members of the lower chamber had signed the motion asking for the swearing-in of Vice-President Jonathan as acting president.

Daika, a former Speaker of the Plateau State House of Assembly, lamented the current unimpressive structure of leadership in the country, adding that there was the need to fill the vacuum created by the absence of the president, due to his state of health.

The roundtable, which was graced by social activists in the country, had Alabo Tonye Graham-Douglas as chairman, while dignitaries like King Alfred Diette-Spiff,

Ambassador Segun Olusola, Professor Kevin Etta, as well as the President of UNDEEDSS, Professor Pat Utomi, were in attendance.

In a related development, a retired justice of the Supreme Court, Justice Kayode Eso, has told ailing President Yar'Adua and those shielding him to stop insulting Nigerians and bow to the dictate of the constitution by writing to the National Assembly to authorise his deputy to act as president.

The retired justice gave the remarks in an interview with newsmen, on Thursday, at the first annual lecture in honour of Mr. Benjamin Adeyemi, as part of activities marking his 80th birthday, at the Jogor Centre, Ibadan, Oyo State.

Eso, who described the ongoing constitutional crisis as uncalled for, said Section 145 of the 1999 Constitution was clear enough on what should be done when a situation like the current one happened.

“What is happening is not a big issue. People are not following the constitution. The constitution is made for reasonable people, who will understand the English written in it. The hullabaloo being witnessed is an indication that Nigerians are being insulted by President Yar'Adua,” Justice Eso said.

The octogenarian, while responding to a question on election tribunals, berated the judiciary for allowing election petitions to drag endlessly, adding that “it is absolutely disgraceful that election petition cases, which should have been concluded six months after the elections, are still going on right now.”

On the recent eruption of violence in Jos, Plateau State, Justice Eso enjoined the government to do away with the toga of deception and stamp its authority decisively on sensitive national matters, adding that “in Nigeria, it was always talk, talk and talk; no act or action.”

Also at the event, the chairman of the Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC), Justice Emmanuel Ayoola, said rather than castigating the president, the gaps created in the constitution, especially in Section 145, should be amended.

According to him, “there are gaps in the constitution. For instance, Section 145 does not deal with what to do when a president is sick and unconscious. He won't be able to transmit any letter. The constitution has to be amended, but not in a hurry.”

The ICPC boss expressed the confidence that President Yar'Adua would allow the constitution to guide his action on the current crisis.

He urged Nigerians to be dispassionate in their analyses on how to find a solution to the imbroglio.

Responding to the alleged looting spree by some ministers in the absence of the president, Justice Ayoola said it was regrettable to think that once President Yar'Adua was not in Nigeria, the whole country should go to sleep, adding that an individual did not make the nation.

He added further that there were accountability mechanisms like the Public Procurement Office and the auditor-general in place to ensure that public officers abided by the rule of spending public funds.

Justice Ayoola, who stressed that awareness about the evil of corruption had been overwhelming, said the commission had entrenched integrity mechanism in the nation in the last 10 years of its existence, adding that the zero tolerance stance of the body would not be compromised.

Earlier, the celebrant, Mr. Adeyemi, had charged Nigerians to cultivate positive disposition towards the environment, saying that improper waste management posed a grave danger to future generation.

### 3. Nigeria court backs sick president

**A Nigerian court has dismissed calls for a temporary head of state be appointed until Umaru Yar'Adua, Nigeria's president, returns from Saudi Arabia where he is undergoing hospital treatment.**

The Nigerian Bar Association had demanded the vice-president's powers be extended, accusing Yar'Adua of acting unconstitutionally in failing to inform parliament of his absence.

But Dan Abutu, the federal court judge, ruled on Friday there was nothing illegal about Yar'Adua's failure to write to parliament about his absence when he left for treatment on November 23.

"The failure to transmit a written declaration to the national assembly before proceeding on vacation is not unconstitutional," he said.

Abutu also ruled that Goodluck Jonathan, the vice-president, could not assume the role of acting president without Yar'Adua making such a written declaration.

The senate, former heads of state, ex-ministers, the bar association and the opposition have all called on Yar'Adua, who is being treated for a heart condition, to formally notify parliament of his absence and allow Jonathan to become acting president.

Abutu ruled two weeks ago that Jonathan could perform executive duties but not be acting president.

## **'Crucial ruling'**

Andrew Simmons, Al Jazeera's correspondent in Nigeria, said the decision has helped to clarify the confusing political situation there.

"It has clarified one of the areas - it means the vice-president can act with executive powers of the president but would not be termed formally as the acting-president.

"It might sound like a small point but it is a crucial one, particularly for the ruling party.

"There is an election next year and many people feel there is a lot of power play going on, they feel it is important that the power is not formally handed over as it would allow Goodluck Jonathan to be his own man and make his own changes.

"It also points out that the constitution is slightly ambiguous, but it's not for the judge here to rewrite it. There is still a lot of concern because the president hasn't made it clear what he wants done here."

Only the cabinet, which consists of Yar'Adua's own appointees, has the power to force the president to hand over powers.

It has twice passed resolutions saying it believes he remains fit to govern.

Yar'Adua is receiving treatment for a serious heart condition in Jeddah and his absence has raised fears of a constitutional and political crisis in Africa's most populous country.

- **Guinea-Bissau: UN anti-crime agency help set up police academy in Guinea-Bissau.**

**The United Nations anti-crime agency is supporting efforts to rebuild a safe and stable Guinea-Bissau by facilitating the construction of a training centre for the West African nation's security forces.**

Guinea-Bissau, which faced a brutal civil war during the late 1990s, has become the hub of a new cocaine trafficking route from South America via West Africa to supply the growing demand for illegal drugs in Europe, according to the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC).

"There is an urgent need to tackle organised crime – in the broader context of security sector reform – and to strengthen administration of justice and the rule of law," the agency stated.

The UNODC Regional Office for Brazil and the Southern Cone has facilitated an agreement between Brazil and Guinea-Bissau to create a police academy, which will not only boost the latter's forces but also support its government to implement the National Plan to Fight Drugs and Crime.

Last November, a senior UN official warned the Security Council that while the prospects for political stability in Guinea-Bissau appear to be good, they are threatened by drug trafficking and organised crime.

“Although there seems to be a downward trend in the trafficking of cocaine through West Africa over the past few months, drug trafficking and organized crime remain a significant challenge for stability in Guinea-Bissau and the sub-region,” said Joseph Mutaboba, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon’s representative in the West African nation.

The Council had urged the government to take the necessary actions to combat drug trafficking and organized crime, and to ensure that the security sector is effective, professional and accountable.

The new three-year project, with an investment of \$3 million from the Brazilian Agency for Cooperation, will build the technical capacity of local police and help regulate the police force according to internationally recognised standards.

UNODC will work with the Brazilian Federal Police Department, which will coordinate activities for the new police academy, to be located in the capital, Bissau. The two groups have been working together since 2008 to train foreign security officials, including 158 officers from Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, Uruguay and African Portuguese-speaking countries.

The new agreement, noted UNODC, is another example of successful South-South cooperation, through which developing countries help each other to find solutions to common challenges and share good practices.

- **Côte d'Ivoire: 1. Hope in new Ivorian election timetable.**

**Côte d'Ivoire has made significant gains in recent months towards holding its long-awaited presidential elections, and if the remaining issues are resolved, the polls could be held this spring, the top United Nations envoy to the West African nation has said.**

The elections were originally scheduled for as far back as 2005 but have been repeatedly postponed. Last scheduled for 29 November 2009, they are now slated for March.

“The Ivorian electoral process has made remarkable progress in a peaceful environment,” Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon’s Special Representative Choi Young-Jin reported to the Security Council.

Mr Choi, who heads the UN Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI), cited a number of recent achievements, including the successful completion of the processing of voter registration in November.

This led to the publication of the provisional electoral list by the Independent Electoral Commission, also in November, with about 5.3 million people confirmed on the list and around 1 million who still need to be confirmed.

The appeals process, which allowed the non-traced people to have their status verified, was completed on 9 January, resulting in over 500,000 people who are additionally traced. This would give the basis for a definitive electoral list of 5.8 million people.

At the same time, Mr Choi warned that a contentious problem emerged when the Commission cross-checked one list of 1 million non-traced people and produced a second list of 429,000 traced people. The dispute surrounding the second list has yet to be resolved, and it may be several weeks before the electoral process gains speed again.

Once the definitive electoral list is established, as planned, in February 2010, only six more weeks are needed to arrive at the presidential election. “This timetable would lead us to spring 2010 for the presidential election in Côte d’Ivoire,” said Mr Choi.

The Special Representative added that, beyond the dispute on the electoral list, one possible obstacle to this timetable is the reunification of the country – which was split into a rebel-held north and Government-controlled south by civil war in 2002. As agreed by the parties in 2008, a de facto reunification is to be completed two months prior to the presidential election, but progress on this has been slow, he said.

In his most recent report on Côte d’Ivoire, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon called on all parties to press ahead with the remaining preparations for the West African nation’s presidential polls, including progress on the issue of reunification.

He added that successful and peaceful elections in the first quarter of 2010 would pave the way for charting the future engagement of the UN in Côte d’Ivoire to support the peace building and recovery process.

## **2. Côte d’Ivoire's UN mandate extended to end of May.**

**The UN Security Council has extended the mandate of the United Nations mission in Côte d’Ivoire (UNOCI), and the French forces supporting it, for another four months to help support the staging of free, fair and transparent elections in the West African nation.**

Originally intended to be held as far back as 2005, the polls have been repeatedly postponed. Last scheduled for November 2009, they are now slated for March.

The Council, in a unanimously adopted resolution, urged the relevant Ivorian actors “to ensure the publication of the final voters list, to announce the official date of the first round of the presidential election and to meet their commitments in full.” The UNOCI’s mandate was also extended through 31 May.

To reinforce security ahead of the elections, the 15-member body expressed its intention

to raise UNOCI's current troop level of 7,450 by up to 500 additional personnel for a limited period of time when the final voters list will be made public.

Last week the Secretary-General's Special Representative in Côte d'Ivoire, Choi Young-Jin, told the Council that the publication in November of the provisional electoral list was among the significant gains made in recent months towards holding the elections.

At the same time, he cited a number of issues that remained to be resolved before the polls can be held this spring. Among them is the reunification of the country – which was split into a rebel-held north and Government-controlled south by civil war in 2002.

As agreed by the parties in 2008, a de facto reunification is to be completed two months prior to the presidential election, but progress on this has been slow, Mr Choi reported.

The Council has also yesterday urged the Ivorian parties to make further concrete progress, before and after the elections, to advance the process towards reunification, as well as the disarmament of former combatants of rebel Forces Nouvelles.

## **Economical/Energy:**

- **Nigeria: 1. ECOWAS Aid-For-Trade Review Meeting In Abuja.**

**A two-day ECOWAS Aid-for-Trade meeting held on Wednesday, 27th January 2010 in Abuja to review experiences as well as consider cases of good practice in the implementation of a number of Aid-for-Trade related programmes and projects.**

The Aid-for-Trade initiative seeks to help developing countries to build the trade capacity and infrastructure they need to enable them benefit from trade openings.

The meeting will also examine the outlook for donor funding of bankable projects and review mechanisms for monitoring and implementation of Aid-for-Trade.

West Africa already has mechanisms for coordinating donor funding and collaborations, including determination of priorities.

At a workshop held in Dakar in June 2007 to address the Aid-for-Trade subject, participants agreed on the modalities for a regional programme on Aid-for-Trade as well as identified some priorities which are grouped into three categories.

These are human capacity building in the public sector, capacity building in the private sector and priorities related to supply-side constraints.

With emphasis now placed globally on implementation, participants are expected to agree how the Abuja January 2010 review meeting can act as a catalyst towards accelerating the implementation of Aid-for-Trade programmes in line with ECOWAS

Vision 2020, which was adopted in June 2007.

Within the framework of the guidelines provided by the World Trade Organization's Task Force, ECOWAS has initiated activities in sectoral areas in line with Aid-for-Trade objectives which aim to build on and strengthen existing integration programmes. They include the implementation of the ECOWAS Agricultural policy (ECOWAP), the West African Common Industrial Policy (WACIP), the West Africa Power Pool (WAPP) and the ECOWAS Customs Union.

In addition, ECOWAS has, in collaboration with the Economic and Monetary Union of West Africa (UEMOA), begun the formulation of the Economic Partnership Agreement Development Programme (EPADP) which seeks to maximize the opportunities arising from the EPA as well as minimize potential costs through five strategic axes within the framework of the West Africa-European Union Partnership.

## 2. Oil: Nigeria loses N6.3bn monthly to pre-shipment contract.

**Assigning a private company by the Nigerian government officials to monitor pre-shipment of crude oil and gas export is a colossal loss to the country and is against the law of the land, an industry expert has warned.**

The Managing Director of Telemetry Nigeria Limited Engineer Yabaji Y. Sani said Nigeria is currently losing about \$42million (about N6.3bn) every month to pay the contractors who add no value to the oil and gas export monitoring in the country.

He said the contractor, Cobalt International Services Limited is taking away 0.1 per cent on Freight on Board (FOB) amounting to 2,000 barrels of crude oil per day (pd), based on the daily export of 2 million barrels per day (bpd).

He said for over a year now the shipment of crude and gas from terminals has not changed. "The contractor is yet to put a single device that can detect the crude oil and gas for effective monitoring," he said.

Sani, who was among the team that recently inspected the oil and gas terminals and well heads in the Niger Delta and Lagos, said the contractor has not introduced anything different from the conventional method used by Department of Petroleum Resource in the past, "using pen and sheet of papers". He said: "The worst is that the contractor has not involved the Weight and Measures Division of the Federal Ministry of Commerce, which amounts to violation of the Pre-Shipment Inspection Act".

He said: "Section 16 (3) of the Pre-shipment Act CAP, P25, LFN 2004 empowers the Weights and Measures Division of the ministry to carry out functions relating to the calibration of crude oil prior to export in collaboration with government appointed inspection."

Several calls made by our reporter to the telephone line made available at the Cobalt International website were unattended, but information from the site gives step-by-step

guidelines for oil and gas export among which is that Cobalt International will issue a Clean Certificate Of Inspection (CCI) in respect of the export within 3 working days following the inspection, which the exporter should collect from the Divisional Office of Cobalt International in Lagos. And the exporters should also provide Cobalt International with a copy of the Commercial (Final) Invoice.

The federal government appointed the Cobalt International Service Limited in November 2008 to monitor the shipment of crude oil and gas from the country.

The government circular entitled: "Pre-shipment Inspection of crude oil exports" said: "Further to the CBN circulars referenced TED/AD/117/2004, TED/AD/126/ 2004 and TED/FEM/GEN/FPC/011/07 dated 11th October and 8th November, 2004 and 26th January, 2007, respectively, Authorized Dealers and the general public are hereby notified that the Federal Government of Nigeria has ratified the appointment of Messrs Cobalt International Services Limited for the Pre-shipment Inspection of oil exports in Nigeria with effect from November 1, 2008.

Yabagi said in an interview with Daily Trust that based on their findings from the inspection tour, the activities of the pre-shipment agent is not enough guarantee to safeguard the oil resources of this nation. He said if the intention was to monitor and check the rampant oil theft at the terminals, the government need to rethink because, no any device to monitor such actions by the culprits was installed.

Daily Trust recalls that the Department of Petroleum Resources (DPR) branch of the National Union of Petroleum and Natural Gas Workers Union (NUPENG) and Petroleum and National Gas Senior Staff Association of Nigeria (PENGASSAN) regarded the contract as unacceptable to them as it amounted to colossal economic waste to the country. Both unions noted that pre-shipment inspection function was already being statutorily performed over the years by the Department of Petroleum Resources.

### 3. MEND armed movement ends unilateral ceasefire.

**Nigeria's main armed group has called off a three-month-old ceasefire in the Niger Delta and threatened to unleash "an all-out assault" on Africa's biggest oil and gas industry.**

The Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (Mend), responsible for years of attacks on oil facilities, said on Saturday it could no longer trust the government to negotiate demands for greater control of the region's natural resources.

The threat comes as Umaru Yar'Adua, Nigeria's president, has been out of the country receiving medical treatment for more than two months and his absence has raised fears of a constitutional and political crisis in the country.

#### **'All-out assault'**

"It is sufficiently clear at this point in time the government of Nigeria has no intentions of

considering the demands made by this group for the control of the resources and land," Mend said in a statement.

"All companies related to the oil industry in the Niger Delta should prepare for an all-out onslaught against their installations and personnel."

The truce was declared in October last year but it was breached in December when the fighters attacked a major pipeline operated by Shell and Chevron.

Attacks by Mend on Nigeria's oil and gas industry in the past few years have prevented the country from producing above two-thirds of its capacity, costing it about \$1bn a month in lost revenues.

The instability has at times helped increase world oil prices.

Violence has subsided in the Niger delta since Yar'Adua's last year offered the fighters an unconditional amnesty if they laid down their arms.

### **Pardon offer**

Thousands of them did surrender in exchange for a pardon, a monthly stipend, education and job opportunities.

Al Jazeera's Andrew Simmons, reporting from the Nigerian capital, Abuja, said negotiations with Mend were ongoing as the group sent out its statement calling off the ceasefire.

"Remember that Mend is a big umbrella organisation. Sometimes statements don't necessary relate to actions on the ground. This is sometimes used as a pre-emptive strike."

He said a meeting was due next week, with the key issues being the distribution of the oil revenues and the reintegration of fighters.

"Al Jazeera understands that the stumbling block is the issue of reintegrating these fighters into normal life ... how they're going to be retrained with skills for holding on to jobs, and how they're not going to go back into criminality."

Mend has been weakened with the departure of senior field commanders who accepted the amnesty, but oil infrastructure in the Niger Delta remains vulnerable to attacks.

The slow progress in implementing the post-amnesty programme has been made worse by the absence of Yar'Adua, who left Nigeria to receive medical treatment in a hospital in Saudi Arabia more than two months ago.

The fighters say they seek a greater share of oil revenue for locals and have since 2006 staged bold attacks on oil facilities in the Niger delta and beyond.

#### 4. Nigeria's 12% inflation rate defies market survey.

**Nigeria's inflation rate recorded a decline in December last year, dropping by 0.4 percent from what was obtainable for November, data from the National Bureau of Statistics [NBS] has shown.**

This comes as a surprise to many in view of the rising cost of food and other consumer items that usually herald the yuletide season.

The data showed that although there was an increase in the urban and rural All Item Index by 0.1 and 0.5 percent respectively, compared to November's, this did not however affect the drop in the inflation rate which has fallen to 12 percent year-on-year in December from 12.4 percent the previous month.

The escalation in prices of food items which form the bulk of the inflation was the reason for the increase in the rise as there was 13.6 percent year-on-year food items from 13.5 percent in November, the report indicated.

Attributing the rise to increases in the prices of some food items like: Yam, garri, meat, sea foods, onions, fresh tomatoes and vegetables, the report, however, showed that there was a balance as the rise in the prices of food items was considerably countered by the decline in the prices of some staples like, sorghum and millet.

But contrary to the data from the NBS, an independent survey by Daily Trust showed an increase in food items, even as both traders and buyers attributed the price increase to several factors, including high cost of transportation occasioned by fuel scarcity and low harvest.

Apart from transportation cost, a cross section of respondents who spoke to Daily Trust at some markets in Abuja attributed the hike in food prices to other issues such as government relegation of the Agricultural sector, bad road network across the country as well as high foreign exchange.

A female trader at the Wuse market, Abuja, who wouldn't want her name in print said: "We [traders] spend huge sums of money to transport our goods and products from different parts of the country to Abuja for sale. Therefore you cannot expect us to sell at a loss."

Quarterly records from the Bureau [NBS] previously showed that the country witnessed a rise in its inflation rate throughout the year even as quarterly figures showed that All Items index increased at the end of every quarter.

- **Liberia: Forestry Sector Makes Significant Gains.**

**The Government of Liberia is making great strides in Liberia's reemerging economy with some US\$5,001,307 made from forest concession companies.**

In a recent release from the Forestry Development Agency (FDA) the monies were placed in Government's revenue representing payment against Annual Contract Administration fees, area fees and land rental as required by the 2006 National Forestry Reform Law.

Many of the forest concession companies have already started undertaking pre-felling requirements including the signing of a social agreement with the affected forest communities, preparation of a Forest Management Plan which must be approved by the FDA and an Environmental impact assessment which must be approved by the Environmental Protection Agency, the release stated.

The release went on to state, "The Managing Director of the FDA, John T. Woods, has commended the companies for their effort in meeting their obligations under the contracts, and urged them to be good investors by continuing to honor the terms of their contracts".

Forest concession companies listed were Alpha Logging and Wood Processing Company, Liberia Tree and Trading Company, EJ and J Logging Company, Euro Liberia Logging, Geblo Logging, B&V Logging, among others.

- **Senegal: Experts on black-eyed peas to meet in Dakar.**

**Experts from around the world are expected to present the state of the art in cowpea research, building upon technological advances to move the science of cowpea forward, with the ultimate aim of identifying myriads of opportunities for cowpea growers to gain higher incomes, greater food security, and lead healthier lives.**

The experts from across the globe will converge in the city of Dakar, Senegal from 27 September to 1 October 2010 for the 5th World Cowpea Research Conference. For five days, participants will tackle research issues related to enhancing the profile of cowpea as a viable income generating and food security crop.

The conference will cover a wide gamut of topics ranging from cowpea genetic improvement and use of molecular tools, to human nutrition and processing and enterprise development.

Cowpea (*Vigna unguiculata* L. Walp.), also commonly known as "black-eyed peas", is an annual legume and is one of the most ancient crops known to man.

Worldwide, cowpea is grown on about 10.1 million hectares, with annual grain production at approximately 4.99 million tons (FAO 2008). The largest production is in

Africa, with Nigeria and Niger predominating. The largest areas under cultivation are in Central and West Africa. Brazil, Haiti, India, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Australia, the US, Bosnia, and Herzegovina also have significant production.

All parts of the plant that are used for food are nutritious, providing protein, vitamins (notably vitamin B) and minerals. It is also a highly variable crop, cultivated around the world not only for its seed but also as a vegetable, cover crop, and fodder. The cowpea haulm is a great source of quality livestock feed. Cowpea is also used as a green manure crop, for fixing nitrogen, or for soil erosion control.

However, every stage of cowpea's life cycle has at least one major insect pest. The crop is susceptible to a number of fungal, bacterial, and viral diseases as well as parasitic plants such as Striga and Alectra. And since cowpea is grown mainly in the dry savanna areas where irrigation is practically non-existent, the irregular rainfall which is characteristic of the region adversely affects the crop's productivity.

Since 1970, the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA), in collaboration with various partners in developing countries and advanced research institutions, has been working to develop and distribute improved cowpea seeds and new germplasm lines to over 60 countries. IITA maintains a collection of about 15,000 accessions of cultivated cowpea and 1,500 accessions of cowpea wild relatives.

Through the years, considerable progress has been made worldwide in cowpea breeding, and a range of varieties has been developed with resistance to several pests and diseases and higher yields with lesser inputs. Improved varieties have also been developed for grain and fodder.

Among the most promising technologies developed are varieties resistant to Striga, Alectra, aphids, and bruchids; improved storage techniques using solar drying; and the use of botanical pesticides in the field and in storage.

With the range of expertise expected to attend the conference and share knowledge and information, organisers believe that the event will also increase the public's awareness and appreciation of cowpea, hopefully leading to more support to scientists to carry out cutting-edge research to further develop the crop thereby realizing its potential.

The conference is organized by IITA in cooperation with the Dry Grain Pulses Collaborative Research Support Programme (Pulse-CRSP), Purdue University, and the Institut Senegalais de Recherches Agricoles (ISRA).

- **Burkina Faso:** Burkina Faso device strategies to adapt to climate change.

**Burkina Faso farmers are devising strategies to adjust to the changing weather patterns following a disappointment from the Copenhagen to help poor nations minimize the effects of global change in developing nations.**

The country is re-introducing the traditional soil protection techniques which include digging pits - compost-filled planting pits which hold water, helping deep-rooted vegetables grow; building up grass and rock barriers around crops to protect them from soil erosion; and cultivating manure in septic tanks to use as fertilizer.

Burkinabe farmers said the annual support amounting to \$10 billion pledge by developed world to help poor farmers was insufficient, saying the effects of climate change are more severe.

In recent years the rains have begun and ended later than usual in Burkina Faso, continuing into October though September is traditionally harvest time, with the rains also increasingly heavy, leading to soil erosion and flash floods.

Desertification, long a problem in the north, has reportedly spread to the southern part of the country.

Agriculture officials said farmers risk having their crops rotting in the fields due to heavy rains and flooding, stating that over 40 percent of the cowpea crop and much of the sorghum harvest rot in the fields.

Through its National Action Adaptation to Climate Change programme, the government has channelled \$3 million to help people adapt in the farming, livestock, forestry and water resource sectors.

The World Bank's agricultural production and food security support to Burkina Faso is estimated at \$54.5 million from 2010-2015. Last year the Bank spent \$5 million on distributing quick-harvest sorghum, maize and cowpea seeds.

New varieties of cowpeas can be harvested in 45 days, down from 80, according to agricultural experts; sorghum and maize down to three months from four or five.

- **Ghana:** Ghana hosts Africa Investment Forum.

**The capital of Ghana, Accra, will host investors and government leaders from over 30 countries at the Africa Investment Forum on 8-10 February this year.**

The Africa Investment Forum provides a platform for countries to profile investment opportunities in sectors including energy, agriculture infrastructure and manufacturing to an international audience of 500 Business Leaders, just as the continent prepares for renewed growth in the wake of the global downturn. President of Ghana, John Atta Mills, who will open this year's Forum, described it as "one of the longest standing Business

Events on the Continent” with a reputation for making “practical contributions to the economic development of many countries”.

Dr Mohan Kaul, Director General of the CBC, said “I am delighted that the 7th Africa Investment Forum is to be held in Ghana for the first time. As Africa’s latest oil and gas producer the international focus on the country has intensified over the last year, and I believe this Forum will help turn the excitement and interest into new partnerships and business deals.”The Forum, organised by the Commonwealth Business Council (CBC) and the Ghana Investment Promotion Center (GIPC), will focus on the theme “Accelerating Intra-African Trade and Investment”.

The organisers have said that confirmed presenters include Investment Promotion Agencies from Ghana, Mozambique, Namibia, Tanzania, Togo and Mpumalanga (South Africa), each of whom will bring projects and have people on hand throughout the Forum to meet with potential investors. Keynote speakers will include amongst other Hifikepunye Pohamba, President of the Republic of Namibia, Mahmoud Mohieldin, Minister of Investment, Arab Republic of Egypt and a host of other key players in both the public and private sector of the continent. The Africa Investment Forum runs from the 8 – 10 of February 2010, at the Accra International Conference Center, Accra Ghana.

- **COTE D'IVOIRE:** Banana Producers Turn to Regional Markets.

**Twelve thousand people working on Côte d'Ivoire's banana plantations face uncertainty as the European Union begins implementing a new agreement governing tariffs on bananas.**

An agreement finalised in mid-December aims to comply with regulations governing non-discrimination between member states of the World Trade Organisation. The agreement provides for lower European tariffs on bananas from Latin America. The tariffs will drop from the present 176 euros per tonne to 114 euros per tonne by 2017.

This will make bananas from Latin American producers - mostly grown and exported by powerful multinationals like Dole and Chiquita - more competitive against bananas from growers in African, Caribbean and Pacific countries .

Mathias N'Goan Aka, president of the country's association of banana producers, expects banana exports - presently 230,000 tonnes a year - to fall by 14 percent.

But on the large banana plantations around Azaguié, in southern Côte d'Ivoire, role players in the banana sector are not waiting with their arms crossed to see what happens next.

Doulaye Savadogo, who cultivates a hectare of bananas, argues that given the situation, one must turn to the domestic and sub-regional markets. "In Burkina Faso where I'm from, the banana is a very popular commodity. It has even become one of the staples," he says.

Banana production is a matter of "big money," Savadogo tells IPS. "That is why there

aren't many of us. Even here, you realise that it is Westerners who have the largest plantations. To grow bananas on one hectare takes about 15 million CFA francs (some \$33,300)," he says.

At the Gouro Adjamé market in Abidjan, women are unloading 10 tonnes of bananas from a truck.

Isabelle Lou Kouhelou specialises in the banana trade in this market, which serves Côte d'Ivoire's commercial capital. Local consumption of bananas is high, she tells IPS.

She believes that Côte d'Ivoire could sell its produce to the Sahel countries of West Africa, although she has concerns about how the fruit would be kept fresh.

With her limited experience selling in Burkina Faso, Mali, Senegal and Niger, Lou Kouhelou believes that Ivorian bananas could sell better than what's already available there and be able to compete in the new market. She is able to buy a bunch of 20 bananas for 300 FCFA (about \$0.07) in Soubré in the south-west, and resell at 2,000 FCFA (about \$4.50) in the inland countries far to the north.

But she laments the difficulties of road and rail transport in the region. She says government intervention will be necessary to support an initiative to conquer the sub-regional market.

Analysts are concerned by the oversupply of bananas on the world market, fearing that the competition may be hard on African producers, less organised than their counterparts in Latin America.

Guy Alain Gauze, the Ivorian WTO representative at a symposium on the industry in Grand Bassam in October 2009, has called for the creation of a research centre to study the evolving European market.

This research centre, according to Gauze, would eventually enable the action needed to safeguard the exports of ACP countries.

Further, the symposium joined producers and exporters in suggesting restructuring the whole production chain for fruit, of which banana is the chief export in Côte d'Ivoire.

Participants also stressed the need to offset the social costs of adapting to new conditions of access to the European market, and the establishment of a strategy of product diversification in the sector.

"We need solid policy around the restructuring of fruit industries, which are reliant on the strengthening of productive capacity and improved quality - in line with the standards and regulations of the international market - as well as more extensive agricultural research and the promotion of domestic, sub-regional and regional consumption," advocates Gauze.

He also suggests "the diversification of export markets with a focus on African markets,

especially those of oil-rich North Africa, and the creation of added value through training by small and medium-scale industrial concerns."

- **Sierra Leone:** Following the Visit of Robert B. Zoellick windfall for Youths.

**The visit of the World Bank President, Robert B. Zoellick left smiles in the faces of the President, Dr. Ernest Bai Koroma and his people as he did not just come and go clapping hands and making vain promises. Rather, he dished out a whopping sum of twenty million United States Dollars (US\$20) for the creation of jobs for young people in Sierra Leone.**

The World Bank President made this pronouncement during a press conference held at the State House past Wednesday, 27<sup>th</sup> January 2010.

His visit to Sierra Leone which was his first port of call in his seven-country-tour of Africa was to, according to him, learn about how these countries have coped in the face of global economic crisis and to see how the World Bank can complement the efforts of these countries in order to improve prospects for economic growth and expanded opportunity.

President Zoellick also assured his host, President Koroma and government that he would meet with his colleagues in the donor community to see how they can offer more support to the country.

He commended the Ernest Koroma led government for the completion of the Bumbuna Hydro project and spoke about the possibility of establishing a bigger dam in the country in the near future. Earlier, the President, Dr. Ernest Bai Koroma, on behalf of his government and people, welcomed the World Bank President.

"The visit of the World Bank President is an indication of the level of cooperation we have with him. I am sure at the end of the day he would have a clear picture of World Bank intervention in the country," President Koroma stated. This was President Zoellick's first visit to Sierra Leone.

## **Health:**

- **Liberia:** 1. Malaria Is The Number One Killer In Liberia

**Many hospitals, health centers and clinics across Liberia are in a battle against what health workers describe as the 'number one killer' that affects every Liberian whether young or old and that is the fight against malaria.**

"Malaria," health workers say is a very unique disease as it can only be transmitted to a human being by the bite of a mosquito and though not all mosquitoes carry the malaria every one that gets bitten by a malaria carrying bug would get malaria. Though there is

treatment for malaria all health workers agree that prevention is better than cure and the only sure way of protecting man from this deadly killer is to use mosquito-treated nets to prevent and protect the entire family from getting bitten by this deadly killer. “Liberia,” health practitioners say is a breeding ground for mosquitoes because of the poor sanitation situation in the country. “Mosquitoes breed in dirty stagnant waters around communities,” the health workers said.

Health workers also averred that pregnant women and children under five are the most vulnerable affected by this deadly killer and the only way to combat this deadly killer that does not discriminate, white, black, man, woman, young or old malaria would likely get you, but you can protect yourself and your family from getting victimized by first using treated mosquito nets when you are at your most vulnerable time of the day, sleeping. Liberians living in the rural parts of the country also must understand the importance of this message to prevent themselves and their families from malaria the deadly killer and in accordance with the “Presidents Malaria Initiative” the National Traditional Counsel (NTC) recently held a 'Malaria Prevention Advocacy Meeting' to have chiefs from all parts of Liberia to join hands in the fight against this deadly killer.

Chiefs from across Liberia met in Kakata, Marigibi County and held a workshop so that this message of prevention, the message to have around your communities clean can be delivered by the Chairman of NTC, Chief Zanzan Korwah. Chief Korwah told the participants that they must carry the message back in the interior so that the high level of deaths that occur every year from the deadly killer malaria can be reduced and hopefully eradicated. He continued, “We are taking this message to five counties in order for all our people to know how to prevent and protect themselves from this deadly disease.” In the fight against this deadly killer the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) donated some 40,000 treated mosquito nets to the NTC to help the group spread this message to prevent and protect you from malaria in all parts of the country especially the interior parts of Liberia.

Speaking on behalf of USAID, Kaa Williams said, “Many mosquito nets were distributed throughout the country and are now underneath the beds of those Liberians that benefitted. Liberia is in a battle in these recent times against traditions that have been proven unrealistic in today's world, International organizations and some local ones are fighting to bring Liberia out from war to post war back to normalcy. So diseases common to treat and prevent can be no more in Liberian communities; like, diarrhea and the number one killer in the country, malaria.

## 2. Deputy health minister: No Swine Flu in Liberia

**Deputy Health and Social Welfare Minister, Dr. Bernice Dahn, has disclosed that there is no Swine Flu virus in Liberia. “Up to date, there is no sign of the virus in the country,” she said. According to her, there is also no need to be panic because Liberia is free from the pandemic.**

Dr. Dahn made the disclosure last Thursday when she addressed the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNIML) regular press briefing in Monrovia.

She said the Liberian Government has put into place series of mechanism to battle the virus in the instant where the Swine Flu or A (H, M,) happens to surface in the country, stressing “the Ministry of Health is on top of things”.

Speaking further, the Deputy Health Minister stated that the ministry has already set up a task force to help the Liberian Government mobilize funds where the needs arise.

The Deputy Health Minister further disclosed that the epidemic and Lab Committees of the task force set up by the ministry are working hard to ensure that people affected with the virus coming into the country are identified and treated so as to avoid the disease spreading.

Dr. Dahn revealed that the World Health Organization (WHO) has provided funding for combating the Swine Flu if it surfaces in Liberia.

She further revealed that ministry has some vaccines available as well as one thousand masks for use by health workers in the country.

She said Geneva has promised some additional doses of vaccines while the Liberian Government is about to procure more, noting, “we have planned training for health workers in the country to deal with the virus”.

The Health Ministry Official indicated that the training would take place in the various regions of the country to ensure that health workers are well placed to withstand the challenge of the Swine Flu.

For his part, the Country Representative of the World Health Organization (WHO) Dr. Nestor Ndayimirije, said for the fact that the Flu had spread in twenty three countries in two weeks is an issue of concern.

He said since the outbreak of the pandemic was announced on April 24, 2009, one thousand eight ninety three cases (1,893) including twenty one death have been reported.

He used the occasion to announce the donation of one thousand Tarmid Flu to the Ministry of Health.

According to him, Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) has been brought in the country to be used by health workers on their jobs.

Meanwhile, Dr. Ndayimirije revealed that people with the virus must be separated from their family members to ensure that it does not spread to others. He gave the symptoms of Swine Flu as cough, running nose, and fever among others.

- **Nigeria: 1. Nation to Be Polio-Free This Year**

**WORRIED over its enlisting as the only country in Africa that is among polio endemic countries along side with India, Pakistan and Afghanistan, Federal Government on Tuesday said it has put modality in place to free the country from the virus infection this year.**

Minister of state for health Dr. Idi Hong who disclosed government readiness at the unveiling of Dan Maraya Jos as Rotary Polio Ambassador and the Release of Radio

Commercial in Support of Polio Eradication in Nigeria in Abuja Tuesday said the country will be using the new bivalent polio vaccine which is proven to be more effective in eradicating the virus from the country before the end of the year 2010.

He expressed disappointment that Nigeria is battling with polio at the time other countries are making progress in other areas to improve on their economies, pointing out that until the virus is totally eradicated with other diseases that pose serious threat to the lives of the people, the country will not meet the health related Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

Hong, who said efforts made by the present administration in flushing out the virus from the country has yielded promising result, noted that the country needed to sustain the temple in order to pave way for its total eradication from the society.

He, however, called on the relevant stakeholders to contribute their quota in the fight against the pandemic, assuring that ending the scourge of the virus in the country was possible in the year 2010.

According to him; "we have all it takes to end polio virus in the country before the end of this year. We are going to achieve the feat and have a polio free country. This administration has greater concern for the future of its children and must pursue their course. And for us to attain this height, we must also sustain the efforts of the past".

Speaking, the Executive Director of National Primary Health Care Development Agency (NPHCDA) Mohammed Ali Pate said the January 30th to 2nd February first round of National Immunization Plus Days (NIPDs) when mothers and caregivers will be asked to bring out their children for immunization, will represent an unprecedented opportunity to secure a polio-free- Nigeria.

Pate noted that in 2009, 388 polio cases were recorded in the country, while the last six months of the year saw a drastic decline with only 28 recorded cases. He stated further that in November 2009, there were just two cases, adding that none have been recorded so far in December and January this year.

Pate stressed that the 2010 round of the immunization would redouble efforts to protect the country's children in every corner of the nation from the paralyzing virus, adding that "new innovation, promising epidemiology and support at all levels can be a combination for success".

According to him, during the NIPDs, for the first time, Nigeria will be using the new bivalent oral polio vaccine in tackling the two types of the remaining wild poliovirus in the country (type1 and type2).

He said that through the Abuja commitments, the executive governors have committed to provide active leadership of polio eradication activities in the various states, including

directing local government areas Chairmen to ensure that all children under five are reached and vaccinated during the exercise.

Stating that the unwavering support of the northern traditional leaders to provide oversight during IPDs has increased the number of children reached with oral vaccine in high-risk states, Pate said the singer Dan Maraya Jos was joining the urgent effort to stop polio as he was named the rotary international's ambassador for the polio eradication.

## 2. FG Boosts Fight against Malaria.

**The Federal Government has commenced the distribution of Long Lasting Insecticidal Nets (LLINs) in Bauchi State, marking the beginning of series of activities that would lead to the distribution of over two million nets within the state.**

The ceremony, which was flagged off by the Minister of Health, Prof. Babatunde Osotimehin was a major step forward in the scaling up of Malaria Prevention Intervention in Nigeria which is an integral part of the plan geared towards improving the health indices of Nigerians in line with the Seven Point Agenda of the President and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

The minister noted that the distribution of the LLIN represents one of the key components of an integrated approach to prevent and control the spread of malaria.

According to him, malaria is responsible for the highest mortality rate in the country and as such 'it is the collective responsibility of Nigerians to attack that which takes away the lives of our children'.

Osotimehin said the Federal Government is committed to playing a vital role in this fight against Malaria by providing free drugs and kill mosquitoes through the nets and environmental management.

He said , "specifically, other strategies embarked upon to control malaria include house-to-house spraying, spraying of breeding sites of mosquitoes, environmental management, intermittent preventive treatment for pregnant women and prompt, effective treatment supported by behavioural change communication'

In order to improve on the past distribution campaign mechanism especially low coverage by Local Government Areas, the Federal government and Roll Back Malaria Partners have mobilised resources to ensure sufficient free nets and distribution using a coordinated planning and implementation approach known as "the Universal Coverage Strategy" which is in line with the National Strategic Plan.

Flagging off the campaign in Alkaleri Local Government Area of the state, Governor of Bauchi State, Mallam Isa Yuguda, appreciated the gesture of the Federal Government which 'should stamp our malaria totally from his state as the number of nets earmarked for Bauchi State would almost cover the entire population of the State.

He therefore appealed to his people to ensure they use the nets, and maintain clean environment, so as to make Bauchi state the first state to eliminate malaria.

Earlier in her remarks, the National Coordinator of the National Malaria Control Programme, Dr. Folake Ademola -Majekodunmi said the Federal Ministry of Health in collaboration with the Roll back Malaria Partners had mobilised fund and procured the LLIN for distribution to beneficiaries in the country.

According to her, preliminary report showed that over 15 million LLIN were distributed to beneficiaries between May and December, 2009 in nine states of the Federation.

In the current distribution plan, over 2 million nets procured with funds from World Bank Malaria Control Booster Project have been allocated to Bauchi State for distribution to beneficiaries.

Majekodunmi, therefore called on beneficiaries to spread their nets for 24hrs after they have collected it before they hang and sleep under it.

## **Human rights:**

- **Ghana:** Sim Card Registration against Human Liberties.

**The plan by the Mills-led National Democratic Congress government to acquire telecommunication monitoring equipment to monitor calls in the country is against human dignity and privacy. It also constitutes unnecessary control and curtailment of the rights of the citizenry.**

These were the sentiments expressed by Gabby Asare Otchere-Darko and Franklin Cudjo, Executive Director of Danquah Institute and Executive Director of IMANI Center for Policy Education respectively when they addressed participants at a seminar on Liberalism and Liberal Solutions on Thursday.

The seminar, attended by the young intelligentsia, was part of activities marking this year's "Liberal Thursday." The seminar was organized by Friedrich Nuamann STIFTUNG.

In the view of the liberal thinkers, it is not appropriate for the government to compel the telecom operators to "send all signaling through the 'black box' owned by the government, which will monitor all call traffic."

"The exercise will place a limit on individual liberties and human dignity since our privacy will be invaded without any just cause. The exercise is not important because we are not at war," Franklin Cudjo contended.

Gabby Asare Otchere-Darko, a legal practitioner, challenged the legal basis for the demands by the National Security to carry out the SIM registration exercise, which will

permit unrestricted access to citizens' details as far as their interactions on phone are concerned.

According to Ace Ankomah, also a legal practitioner, if the registration is allowed, "government will know who we are, who we call, and how often we call, and the time we are calling."

Both Mr Otchere-Darko and Mr Cudjo accused the ruling National Democratic Congress and the main opposition New Patriotic Party of what they termed "ideological rhetorics", explaining that both parties have never shown any serious commitment to their respective social democratic and liberal democratic ideological positions. The situation, according to Mr Cudjo, has been occasioned by sheer populism.

Gabby, however, agreed that there would not be absolute commitment to ideologies, since that could promote anarchy (in the case of absolute liberalism) and needless restrictions of the citizenry (in the case of absolute social democracy). "There is always a point of convergence," he underscored.

Other speakers at the seminar were Yofi Grant, Executive Director at DataBank, and Pius Enam Hadzide, aspiring NPP National Youth Organiser, who respectively spoke on the topics Liberalism and Market Economy and Introduction into the Liberal Ideology.

Mr Grant, extolling the virtues inherent in liberalism, explained that "liberalism allows people to exploit their potentials to create wealth and use it in a way that positively affects the lives of others." He added: "wealth is good; when you create wealth, you create opportunities for others."

He attacked the ideology of Social Democracy, insisting it is not appropriate for the nation. "Why should a little country like Ghana share the little we have for all? Why don't we create more before we share?" he asked.

"The world has changed faster in the last 10 years than the previous 200 years, all due to liberalization," Mr Grant underscored.

Pius Enam Hadzide urged his colleague-NPP youth activists to learn more about the party's ideology so that they will always be in the position to defend it when it comes under attack.

"Everybody in Ghana, including members of the NDC, always wants to own property. That is the idea behind the principle of property owning democracy. But we have allowed our political opponents to attack and bastardize this noble principle espoused by J. B Danquah, which they also believe in, because we are not in the position to defend it," he lamented.

- **Nigeria:** 1. Probe Muslim massacre

**International rights group, Human Rights Watch has called on Nigeria's vice president to probe the massacre of more than 150 Muslim in central Nigeria. The mass killings follow the Muslim and Christian clashes more than a week ago in Jos city.**

Human Rights Watch said the killings, allegedly by groups of men armed with knives, machetes, and guns, were in the town of Kuru Karama, 30 kilometers south of the city of Jos in Plateau State in central Nigeria.

Senior West Africa researcher at Human Rights Watch said Corinne Dufka said the authorities should act on those behind the crimes and should protect both the survivors and those at risk of renewed violence.

HRW said witnesses interviewed said that groups of armed men attacked the largely Muslim population of Kuru Karama on 19 January. "After surrounding the town, they hunted down and attacked Muslim residents, some of whom had sought refuge in homes and a local mosque, killing many as they tried to flee and burning many others alive. The witnesses said they believed members of the armed groups to be Christians," organization said in a statement.

Community leaders from Jos and journalists who visited the town under military escort later in the week told Human Rights Watch that they saw bodies, including several charred corpses of young children and babies, strewn around town, including dozens stuffed down wells or in sewage pits.

According to a Muslim official who visited the town to arrange for burial of the bodies, 121 have been recovered so far, including the bodies of 22 young children. The official told Human Rights Watch that corpses are still lodged in 16 wells. Journalists and community leaders who visited the town said that nearly all of the homes and the three main mosques were burned and destroyed.

The latest outbreak started in Jos on January 17 and quickly spread to neighboring communities, including Kuru Karama. There are conflicting reports of what triggered the Jos violence.

Nigeria is deeply divided along ethnic and religious lines. The violence in Jos on 28 November 2008 left hundreds dead.

## 2. Fresh evidence of bloody clashes in Nigeria.

**Charred remains and corpses dumped in wells were retrieved from a village close to the central Nigerian city of Jos on Friday in some of the worst evidence yet documented of this week's ethnic and religious clashes.**

The grim revelations will add to fears that the death count across Jos and its outskirts is far higher than that recorded so far by humanitarian agencies, whose estimates are below 200. In this particular village, residents say that more than 100 people were killed.

The violence has pitted the region's predominantly Christian Berom majority – designated the region's "indigenous" inhabitants – against other groups, chiefly the minority Hausa, who are mainly Muslim.

The clashes began on Sunday and abated on Wednesday with the imposition of a 24-hour curfew that was later partially relaxed.

Goodluck Jonathan, Nigeria's vice-president has placed the military in charge of Jos. The violence has added to the sense of crisis in the country, whose ailing president, Umaru Yar'Adua, has been in Saudi Arabia receiving medical treatment for two months.

A handful of residents who ventured back briefly to the Muslim settlement of several hundred homes, known in English as Kuru Jantar III, found the deserted town almost totally destroyed.

Christian youths had attacked on Tuesday, several residents said. "Women and children – they put them inside [houses] then burned them," said Adamu Sule, 57, a village elder. Others were killed with machetes or shot, residents said.

"They want the land back," Mr Sule added. The commercial success of Hausa immigrants to Jos, compared with the majority, is frequently cited as one of numerous factors underpinning the animosity.

Workers from Jos's central mosque said they had on Thursday retrieved almost 100 bodies from the village.

At least a further 15 had been consigned to a mass grave in the village, while others were thought to be in outlying fields, where residents said they were too scared to venture.

Jos witnessed similar outbreaks of violence in 2001 and 2008. Africa's most populous nation is split between a largely Muslim north and a broadly Christian south. Thousands have died in religious violence since the military handed back power to civilians in 1999.

The Financial Times, among the first foreign media to reach the scene, saw at least six corpses, including the burned remains of a child and a baby.

Abdullahi Aboubakar Wase, 52, wept as his wife's corpse was pulled from a well and placed in a mass grave. He said two of his children had also been killed.

The toll in the village alone comes close to the 160 the Red Cross said on Thursday that it had recorded among both Muslims and Christians across the city.

Christian organisations and Berom leaders have claimed that their people have also been killed in large numbers by Muslims. These claims have been impossible to verify due to tight security in Jos, which is under the control of the army.

The Red Cross estimates that about 18,000 people have been forced from their homes in Jos. The homeless are sheltering in schools and military bases. Many say they are short of basic supplies.

● **Liberia:** Taylor's son rejects Liberians' torture claims.

**The son of former Liberian President Charles Taylor on Friday rejected as "propaganda" claims by Liberians and the U.S. government that he oversaw widespread torture and human rights abuses while head of an elite paramilitary unit in his father's government.**

Charles McArthur Emmanuel, also known as Charles "Chuckie" Taylor Jr., said in a closing statement in a multimillion-dollar lawsuit filed by five Liberian torture victims that very little corroboration exists to back up their allegations - even though he was convicted of torture in a U.S. criminal trial and sentenced to 97 years in prison.

"This is all very questionable," said Emmanuel, acting as his own lawyer in the civil case. "This notion that I'm this human rights abuser, this poster boy for human rights abuse, is deceptive and propaganda."

Emmanuel, 32, also insisted that he has no money or assets if the five Liberians win judgments that could easily total millions of dollars each. Lawyers for the Liberians have suggested that Emmanuel and his father have numerous overseas accounts and as well as access to diamonds that could satisfy such a ruling.

"I am not attached to President Taylor's assets or any accounts that he has. We are totally separate," said Emmanuel, a U.S. citizen born in Boston while Taylor was a college student there in 1977.

U.S. District Judge Adalberto Jordan, who previously issued a judgment against Emmanuel in the lawsuit, said he would determine the issue of damages against by the end of February.

The five Liberians suffer lasting physical and emotional scars from their torture, which included being held in filthy pits of chest-high water, suffering sexual abuse, being shocked with electric devices and having their genitals mutilated, according to testimony and court documents. Such acts and worse, including murder, were typical of the Antiterrorist Unit known as the "demon forces" that Emmanuel commanded after joining his father in Liberia in 1997.

In his statement Friday, Emmanuel said Liberia's bloody civil conflict was "terrible and unfortunate" for people on all sides.

"No family was spared from tragedy. We were all affected," he said.

Emmanuel's criminal prosecution was the first and only under a 1994 law allowing U.S. prosecution for torture and atrocities committed overseas. Emmanuel was tried in Miami because he was arrested here in 2006 for a passport violation.

The five Liberians who filed the lawsuit are represented by the Human Rights USA organization. One of their attorneys, Troy Elder, told the judge it was important to order Emmanuel to pay a significant amount of money to the victims and send a signal to West Africa and the world that torture cannot be tolerated.

"We're here for a trial on damages. We heard from some severely damaged people in this case," Elder said.

Former President Taylor is being tried before a United Nations tribunal in The Hague, Netherlands, on charges of war crimes and crimes against humanity for allegedly overseeing murder, rape and mutilation of thousand of people during neighboring Sierra Leone's 10-year civil war.

## **Immigration/Refugee/Displaced:**

- **Liberia:** 21 Liberians Deported From U.S.

**At least 21 Liberians predominantly males are currently in the country after being deported from the United States of America for allegedly committing crimes against the laws of that country.**

The deportees arrived in the country yesterday via the Roberts International Airport (RIA) and were received by the Liberian government through the Bureau of Immigration and Naturalization (BIN). Accordingly, the deportees served their various punishments for crimes they committed in the United States and according to the US laws, deportation proceedings follow the years of sentence. Deputy BIN Commissioner Archie P. Williams confirmed that out of 24 expected deportees only 21 were turned over to the BIN. Commissioner Williams said that the deportees though they are Liberians but needed to undergo various screening procedure which according to him involved the UNPOL, Liberia National Police (LNP) National Security Agency (NSA) and the BIN.

According to him, the screening process did not necessary mean that the fellows had committed crimes in Liberia, but as he said, it is intended to update records on them and keep them on records. Days before their arrival, the BIN said that the deportation proceedings came following reports that the deportees reportedly violated the laws of the United States of America. Immigration authorities identified some of the crimes ranging from robbery, assault, resisting arrest, shoplifting, sexual assault, rape, forgery, sex offenses against children, drug possession of cocaine, marijuana, and stealing vehicles amongst others. Unlike the past, the immigration confirmed that the deportees will be turned over to their immediate relatives and family members who were in attendance yesterday to be received by their families.

Commissioner Williams during his briefing urged Liberians to accept and welcome their brothers as there are planned programs intended to assist deportees quickly get integrated into the Liberian society. When asked as to whether some of the crimes identified could pose security threat to the state, Commissioner Williams said yes, but noted that state securities have put into place operation that would keep track on their activities. He said some of the deportees are skilled people and could easily be integrated. With those who have no family members here, Commissioner Williams said the government will seek involvement of national and international NGOs. In December 2008, 23 Liberian deportees from the United States of America upon arrival in Liberia were sent to the Correctional Palace in Grand Gedeh County.

The deportees, according to the charge sheet from the U.S. government, were deported for various crimes ranging from cocaine possession, attempted assault on government officials, impersonation, and burglary to other criminal offences. Immigration boss, Chris Massaquoi indicated at that time that the deportees were sent to the Correctional Palace for rehabilitation and counseling. Commissioner Massaquoi said government was took the measure to ensure that the deportees were properly screened before being integrated into the society. Only one female was among the 2008 deportees. The most unfortunate individual in the recent deportee lineup is being sent home for Immigration violation-(Overstay), while other crimes like Indecent Exposure and Disorderly conduct were named. No female is reported in the listing of the deportees. In August 2007, the Government of Liberia announced that 25 Liberians were deported to the country from the United States after serving their respective jail sentences for various crimes committed in that country. Again in March 2008, 30 Liberian refugees were deported from Ghana. Former Information Minister Lawrence Bropleh said at that time the first batch of nine women and twenty-one men arrived in the country. It was not actually clear as to what led to the right-away deportation.

- **Gambia:** 1. U.S.\$66,000 Medical Items for Disaster Victims.

**Officials from the World Health Organisation (WHO) Gambia office yesterday presented medical items worth US\$66,000 (sixty-six thousand dollars) to the vice president and minister for Women Affairs, Her Excellency Aja Dr Isatou Njie-Saidy for onward transmission to disaster victims.**

Presenting the items, Dr Thomas Sukuwo, resident representative of the WHO in The Gambia said the donation was their contribution to the disaster victims. According to him, the items were purchased with the funds they solicited to mitigate disaster problems. He revealed that they are aware that close to 14,000 people were affected in the country as a result of rains and flash floods. "We believe that the medicines will be prepositioned in the health facilities close to these people so that they can benefit from it," he said.

Sherign Modou Joof, the national regional coordinator, Western Region disaster management committee, commended the WHO for the support and said they have been partners in many areas. He further expressed hope that the partnership will continue. "As

we speak today, we have got the act, policy and strategies in place to prevent the occurrence of such disasters. We would really want to partner with the WHO and the Red Cross in ensuring that we have a contingency plan in place for disaster issues," he said. He then expressed appreciation to the WHO for the support to the health sector and assured them that the items would reach the target beneficiaries.

Jato Sillah, the minister of Forestry and Environment said the whole world is prone to disaster and that the world should join hands together to work on how best we can mitigate disaster. He stated that the disaster committees across the country have already got the framework in place and would need the collaboration of everyone. For her part, the vice president, Aja Dr. Isatou Njie-Saidy thanked the donors for being partners in development. "When you see your partner in problem and you share the pain and come to his or her aid immediately, this is real friendship that we are looking for and is what President Jammeh has always been saying," she said.

She described WHO and the International Committee of the Red Cross and the Red Crescent as true partners of the Gambia government. She also spoke on the intervention areas of WHO in the health sector, adding that they have decentralised and strengthened their helping hands to different sectors. VP Njie-Saidy also commended the ICRC for its support to The Gambia government and the Gambia Red Cross Society noting that the latter has also been doing very well in the country, despite the difficulties and constraints. "We as a government value so much our cooperation with the development partners, like the ICRC and the WHO.

Usually when disaster strikes the country especially the recent floods, the first people who came on board usually are the health sector," she added. The ceremony was moderated by the minister of Local Government and Lands and attended by several senior government officials including the minister of Health and Social Welfare, Dr Abubacarr Gaye.

## 2. 'Gambia One Million for Haiti' Support Project Initiated.

**Private sector support for the people of Haiti has been initiated in the Gambia following the 12 January earthquake which rocked that country's capital, Port au-Prince, leaving death and destruction in its wake.**

The project, which is a spontaneous response from a core of businesspeople from the Gambia private sector, was introduced to the vice president and minister of Women Affairs, Aja Dr Isatou Njie-Saidy during a courtesy call by heads of private companies in the country Wednesday at her office at State House in Banjul. Nana Grey-Johnson, the media consultant of the group, said the project was initiated as a private initiative to contribute their quota towards helping the people of Haiti.

He explained that as part of the initiative, they have organised a series of programmes on radio stations and GRTS TV, as a means of generating funds for the project. He disclosed

that money generated from the week-long programme will be channelled through the vice president to the Gambian Mission in New York for official delivery to the UN secretary general and the Office of the UN Under-Secretary General for International Disaster Relief.

Other activities of the campaign for Haiti, Grey-Johnson said, include circulation of letters to all registered businesses with The Gambia Chamber of Commerce and Industry (GCCCI) to prepare them for "Donation Day Session" to be organised at the Senegambia Beach Hotel, during which cash and cheques are expected to be received and recorded. He said the event would also feature a week-long blitz of television, radio and newspaper advertisements of the project. He further stated that the total package generated from the programme will be delivered to the vice president for onward transmission to the beneficiaries.

## **Editorials:**

### **• Aiding Haiti Earthquake Survivors**

A catastrophic earth quake of the magnitude of eight degrees in the Richter scale hit Haiti's capital Port au Prince on Tuesday January 12 at a depth of 13 km or 8.1 miles. The earthquake left in its wake great calamity and destruction that the whole world witnessed firsthand in a world that has shrunk to a village thanks to information technology and satellite TV. Eight days later as relief efforts were being marshaled and organized to ensure that they get to the needy and injured before it is too late another earth quake of the magnitude of 6.1 on the Richter scale struck the nation again on Wednesday January 20 to cause further havoc and calamity amongst Haitians. So far the death toll has been put at over 200,000 people whilst Haiti's prime minister Jean-Max Bellerive announced on 18 January that over 70000 bodies had been buried in mass graves. About 1.5 million Haitians are now homeless. Most major landmark buildings including presidential palace, the national assembly building, the Port au Prince Cathedral and the main prison in the capital and its environs either collapsed or were significantly damaged or destroyed by the quake.

Relief materials in terms of food, water, clothes and medicines have since started arriving in Haiti although there are complaints that they are not being distributed or delivered fast enough. This is to be expected in the prevailing chaos that followed the quake which killed or affected fatally key officials and institutions that should have coordinated the relief efforts. Most hospitals in the area were destroyed as well as the UN headquarters of the UN Stabilization Mission in Haiti. The mission's chief, his deputy and police commissioner were confirmed killed by the calamity.

One must, however, commend the USA and its President Barack Obama for the speed of response and concern it showed the suffering people of Haiti in bringing in US marines accustomed to dealing with such disasters and emergencies to provide urgent

aid in terms of logistics, transportation, medicines and medical personnel. As at now there are at least 16,000 US troops in Haiti for the relief effort. We also commend all the countries that have sent relief materials and donations .It all goes to show that at the end of the day we are all human beings bonded by our common humanity and we should be our brother's keeper in the face of unexpected and inexplicable disasters and calamities such as this tragic earthquake that has brought Haiti as a nation to its knees.

We, however, frown at reports that indicate that some well known relief agencies are more interested in marketing their names and presence in Haiti and are delaying delivery of urgent relief materials while seeking media attention. Such action is bound to backfire and tarnish the reputation of such bodies as genuine relief agencies and compassion brands. We call on all involved to ensure that the relief materials get to those who urgently need them and that the process is not cannibalized or commercialized by greedy people who always want to make money out of the calamity and misery of others. We stand by the people of Haiti in this their hour of grief and assure them that they have the sympathy and pity of a watching world as they face a tragic but natural calamity that no one will wish even his enemy.

- **To heal Haiti, look to history, not nature**

long before the great earthquake struck the country like a vengeful god, the outside world, and Americans especially, described, defined, marked Haiti most of all by its suffering. Epithets of misery clatter after its name like a ball and chain:

Poorest country in the Western Hemisphere. One of the poorest on earth. For decades Haiti's formidable immiseration has made it among outsiders an object of fascination, wonder and awe. Sometimes the pity that is attached to the land - and we see this increasingly in the news coverage this past week - attains a tone almost sacred, as if Haiti has taken its place as a kind of sacrificial victim among nations, nailed in its bloody suffering to the cross of unending destitution.

And yet there is nothing mystical in Haiti's pain, no inescapable curse that haunts the land. From independence and before, Haiti's harms have been caused by men, not demons. Act of nature that it was, the earthquake last week was able to kill so many because of the corruption and weakness of the Haitian state, a state built for predation and plunder.

Recovery can come only with vital, even heroic, outside help; but such help, no matter how inspiring the generosity it embodies, will do little to restore Haiti unless it addresses, as countless prior interventions built on transports of sympathy have not, the man-made causes that lie beneath the Haitian malady.

In 1804 the free Republic of Haiti was declared in almost unimaginable triumph: hard to exaggerate the glory of that birth.

## **Country built by slaves**

Hundreds of thousands of enslaved Africans had laboured to make Saint-Domingue, as Haiti was then known, the richest colony on earth, a vastly productive slave-powered factory producing tons upon tons of sugar cane, the 18th-century's great cash crop. For pre-Revolutionary France, Haiti was an inexhaustible cash cow, floating much of its economy. Generation after generation, the second sons of the great French families took ship for Saint-Domingue to preside over the sugar plantations, enjoy the favors of enslaved African women and make their fortunes.

Even by the standards of the day, conditions in Saint-Domingue's cane fields were grisly and brutal; slaves died young, and in droves; they had few children. As exports of sugar and coffee boomed, imports of fresh Africans boomed with them. So by the time the slaves launched their great revolt in 1791, most of those half-million blacks had been born in Africa, spoke African languages, worshipped African gods.

In an immensely complex decade-long conflict, these African slave-soldiers, commanded by legendary leaders like Toussaint Louverture and Jean-Jacques Dessalines, defeated three Western armies, including the unstoppable superpower of the day, Napoleonic France. In an increasingly savage war - "Burn houses! Cut off heads!" was the slogan of Dessalines - the slaves murdered their white masters, or drove them from the land.

On Jan. 1, 1804, when Dessalines created the Haitian flag by tearing the white middle from the French tricolor, he achieved what even Spartacus could not: he had led to triumph the only successful slave revolt in history. Haiti became the world's first independent black republic and the second independent nation in the Western Hemisphere.

Alas, the first such republic, the United States, despite its revolutionary creed that "all men are created equal," looked upon these self-freed men with shock, contempt and fear. Indeed, to all the great Western trading powers of the day - much of whose wealth was built on the labor of enslaved Africans - Haiti stood as a frightful example of freedom carried too far. American slaveholders desperately feared that Haiti's fires of revolt would overleap those few hundred miles of sea and inflame their own human chattel.

For this reason, the United States refused for nearly six decades even to recognize Haiti. (Abraham Lincoln finally did so in 1862.) Along with the great colonial powers, America instead rewarded Haiti's triumphant slaves with a suffocating trade embargo - and a demand that in exchange for peace the fledgling country pay enormous reparations to its former colonial overseer. Having won their freedom by force of arms, Haiti's former slaves would be made to purchase it with treasure.

The new nation, its fields burned, its plantation manors pillaged, its towns devastated by apocalyptic war, was crushed by the burden of these astronomical reparations, payments that, in one form or another, strangled its economy for more than a century. It was in this dark aftermath of war, in the shadow of isolation and contempt, that Haiti's peculiar

political system took shape, mirroring in distorted form, like a wax model placed too close to the fire, the slave society of colonial times.

At its apex, the white colonists were supplanted by a new ruling class, made up largely of black and mulatto officers. Though these groups soon became bitter political rivals, they were as one in their determination to maintain in independent Haiti the cardinal principle of governance inherited from Saint-Domingue: the brutal predatory extraction of the country's wealth by a chosen powerful few.

The whites on their plantations had done this directly, exploiting the land they owned with the forced labor of their slaves.

### **Triumph of servitude**

But the slaves had become soldiers in a victorious revolution, and those who survived demanded as their reward a part of the rich land on which they had laboured and suffered. Soon after independence most of the great plantations were broken up, given over to the former slaves, establishing Haiti as a nation of small landowners, one whose isolated countryside remained, in language, religion and culture, largely African.

Unable to replace the whites in their plantation manors, Haiti's new elite moved from owning the land to fighting to control the one institution that could tax its products: the government. While the freed slaves worked their small fields, the powerful drew off the fruits of their labor through taxes. In this disfigured form the colonial philosophy endured: ruling had to do not with building or developing the country but with extracting its wealth. "Pluck the chicken," proclaimed Dessalines - now Emperor Jacques I - "but don't make it scream." In 1806, two years after independence, the emperor was bayoneted by a mostly mulatto cabal of officers. Haitian history became the immensely complex tale of factional struggles to control the state, with factions often defined by an intricate politics of skin color. There was no method of succession ultimately recognized as legitimate, no tradition of loyal opposition. Politics was murderous, operatic, improvisational. Instability alternated with autocracy. The state was battled over and won; Haiti's wealth, once seized, purchased allegiance - but only for a time. Fragility of rule and uncertainty of tenure multiplied the imperative to plunder. Unseated rulers were sometimes killed, more often exiled, but always their wealth - that part of it not sent out of the country - was pillaged in its turn.

In 1915 the whites returned: the United States Marines disembarked to enforce continued repayment of the original debt and to put an end to an especially violent struggle for power that, in the shadow of World War I and German machinations in the Caribbean, suddenly seemed to threaten American interests. During their nearly two decades of rule, the Americans built roads and bridges, centralized the Haitian state - setting the stage for the vast conurbation of greater Port-au-Prince that we see today in all its devastation - and sent Haitians abroad to be educated as agronomists and doctors in the hope of building a more stable middle class.

Still, by the time they finally left, little in the original system had fundamentally changed. Haitian nationalism, piqued by the reappearance of white masters who had forced Haitians to work in road gangs, produced the noiriste movement that finally brought to power in 1957 François Duvalier, the most brilliant and bloody of Haiti's dictators, who murdered tens of thousands while playing adroitly on cold-war America's fear of communism to win American acceptance.

Duvalier's epoch, which ended with the overthrow of his son Jean-Claude in 1986, ushered in Haiti's latest era of instability, which has seen, in barely a quarter-century, several coups and revolutions, a handful of elections (aborted, rigged and, occasionally, fair), a second American occupation (whose accomplishments were even more ephemeral than the first) and, all told, a dozen Haitian rulers. Less and less money now comes from the land, for Haiti's topsoil has grown enfeebled from overproduction and lack of investment. Aid from foreigners, nations or private organizations, has largely supplanted it: under the Duvaliers Haiti became the great petri dish of foreign aid. A handful of projects have done lasting good; many have been self-serving and even counterproductive. All have helped make it possible, by lifting basic burdens of governance from Haiti's powerful, for the predatory state to endure.

### **'Stupid death'**

The struggle for power has not ended. Nor has Haiti's historic proclivity for drama and disaster. Undertaken in their wake, the world's interventions - military and civilian, and accompanied as often as not by a grand missionary determination to "rebuild Haiti" - have had as their single unitary principle their failure to alter what is most basic in the country, the reality of a corrupt state and the role, inadvertent or not, of outsiders in collaborating with it.

The sound of Haiti's suffering is deafening now but behind it one can hear already a familiar music begin to play. Haiti must be made new. This kind of suffering so close to American shores cannot be countenanced. The other evening I watched a television correspondent shake his head over what he movingly described as a "stupid death" - a death that, but for the right medical care, could have been prevented. "It doesn't have to happen," he told viewers. "People died today who did not need to die." He did not say what any Haitian could have told him: that the day before, and the day before that, Haiti had seen hundreds of such "stupid deaths," and, over the centuries, thousands more. What has changed, once again, and only for a time, is the light shone on them, and the volume of the voices demanding that a "new Haiti" must now be built so they never happen again.

Whether they can read or not, Haiti's people walk in history, and live in politics. They are independent, proud, and fiercely aware of their own singularity. What distinguishes them is a tradition of heroism and a conviction that they are and will remain something distinct, apart - something you can hear in the Creole spoken in the countryside, or the voodoo practiced there, traces of the Africa that the first generation of revolutionaries brought with them on the middle passage.

Haitians have grown up in a certain kind of struggle for individuality and for power, and the country has proved itself able to absorb the ardent attentions of outsiders who, as often as not, remain blissfully unaware of their own contributions to what Haiti is. Like the ruined bridges strewn across the countryside - one of the few traces of the Marines and their occupation nearly a century ago - these attentions tend to begin in evangelical zeal and to leave little lasting behind.

What might, then? America could start by throwing open its markets to Haitian agricultural produce and manufactured goods, broadening and making permanent the provisions of a promising trade bill negotiated in 2008.

Such a step would not be glamorous; it would not "remake Haiti." But it would require a lasting commitment by American farmers and manufacturers and, as the country heals, it would actually bring permanent jobs, investment and income to Haiti.

Second, the United States and other donors could make a formal undertaking to ensure that the vast amounts that will soon pour into the country for reconstruction go not to foreigners but to Haitians - and not only to Haitian contractors and builders but to Haitian workers, at reasonable wages. This would put real money in the hands of many Haitians, not just a few, and begin to shift power away from both the rapacious government and the well-meaning and too often ineffectual charities that seek to circumvent it.

The world's greatest gift would be to make it possible, and necessary, for Haitians - all Haitians - to rebuild Haiti.

Putting money in people's hands will not make Haiti's predatory state disappear. But in time, with rising incomes and a concomitant decentralization of power, it might evolve. In coming days much grander ambitions are sure to be declared, just as more scenes of disaster and disorder will transfix us, more stunning and colorful images of irresistible calamity.

We will see if the present catastrophe, on a scale that dwarfs all that have come before, can do anything truly to alter the reality of Haiti.