

# **Business and Politics in the Muslim World**

## **West African News Monitoring**

### **Weekly Report 124**

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## POLITICS

### GHANA

#### **EC is expected to register 180,000 new voters in the W/R**

The Electoral Commission is expecting to register about 180,000 new voters during the 10-day Revision of the Voters Register in the Western Region, Mr. Steve Opoku-Mensah, and Regional Director of EC, said on Monday.

Speaking in an interview with the Ghana News Agency (GNA) at Sekondi, he said the Commission registered 185,000 voters during a similar exercise before the Presidential and Parliamentary elections two years ago. Mr. Opoku-Mensah said interest in the District Assembly elections is not as great as in the Presidential and Parliamentary elections, so the number of people that would be registered in the current exercise would not be higher.

He said the revision of the voters register is "not a wholesale exercise and is targeted at those who have just turned 18 years or who could not register in the previous exercises", adding that, the exercise is organized whenever there is going to be an elections, so that nobody would be denied his franchise or the right to vote. Mr. Opoku-Mensah debunked claims that the exercise was taking place at the wrong time because of the World Cup tournament, saying, the registration is a democratic process that all citizens should have interest in it. He said double registration is an offence, and those who have misplaced their Voters Identity Cards should not re-register, but apply for replacement.

Mr. Opoku-Mensah said the revision of the voters register is going on smoothly in the region, and so far the only has been with printers, but technicians have rectified the problem. He said the exercise is taking place at 452 registration centers. Mr. Opoku-Mensah said there have been numerous applications for replacement of voters in many areas.

#### **Volta Region NDC pledges support for President Mills**

The Volta Regional Executives of the National Democratic Congress (NDC) and their Constituency Chairmen have disengaged themselves from a group purporting to propose former first lady, Nana Konadu Agyeman Rawlings as a NDC flag bearer for the 2012 Election. This is contained in a press statement read at the party's regional office at Ho by Mr. Kwasi Aboagye, NDC Volta Regional Chairman, after a meeting with the Constituency Chairmen.

It said that the attention of the party in the region was drawn to media publication that a group was proposing the former first lady as a NDC flagbearer.

The statement said that the action of the group was premature and likely to create unnecessary tension and division within the party adding that the Volta Regional NDC

disassociates itself from the action and any pronouncements associated with it.

It said "We condemn their action", and reaffirms the region's total unflinching support for President John Evans Atta Mills towards actualising the "Better Ghana" agenda.

In a related development, the Volta Regional branch of the United Cadres Front of the NDC, a release signed by Mr. Henry Ametepe, Regional Coordinator, renewed the group's loyalty to the Mills-led administration and for his Presidential candidacy for the 2012 Election. The statement indicated that the Front draws its strength from the humility, commitment and adherence to the principles of probity, accountability anchored on social democratic credential of the NDC. It reminded all those vying for political office that "no amount of detraction or undue interference in the affairs of the party would succeed."

## **Communities Demand Re-Alignment of Electoral Boundaries**

Some communities in the Nkwanta South District demanding re-alignment of electoral boundaries have rebuffed a truce reached between them and the Electoral Commission (EC) to create an electoral area pending resolution of the issue.

The chiefs and people of Agou, Jumbo One and Jumbo Two rejected the "gentleman's agreement" to create an electoral area for them in the short-term while the issue was fast tracked. The communities, who are abstaining from the ongoing electoral registration exercise and previous local government and national electoral processes since 2004, have reaffirmed their stance not to take part in any EC's activity until the re-alignment was effected. The communities have warned the EC to stay clear of the designated area, now christened "no man's land," or face reprisal action. Nana Tamandja, Chief of Agou, said it was unfortunate that the three communities, which are located on the southern fringes of River Kpassa, have been ceded to Nkwanta South and those beyond them including Kamanchu and Ebiteyie are in Nkwanta North.

He said several of their petitions are yet to receive attention. Nana Tamandja reminded the government to expedite action on its commitment to institute a boundary review committee as enshrined in its manifesto, as they have exhausted all patience in the matter. Mr. Nii Afo Dodoo, Nkwanta South District Director of EC with oversight responsibility on Nkwanta North District, told the GNA that the communities continue to agitate to be part of the newly created Nkwanta North District instead of Nkwanta South District.

He confirmed that the communities had boycotted all local government and national elections since 2004. Mr Dodoo said agreements reached with them to create an electoral area to enable them participate in local governance and decentralization again fell through. Mr. Paul Levin Gyato, Nkwanta District Chief Executive, said the issue had become a security threat in the area and the District Security Committee continues to engage the leadership of the communities in dialogue over the matter.

## **Pressure group condemn attack on political appointees in V/R**

One Ghana Network, a Ho-based pressure group, expressed concern about alleged attacks on political appointees in the Volta Region through the media.

It said that the action by a group, calling itself foot soldiers of the National Democratic Congress (NDC) should not be encouraged. At a press conference in Ho on Wednesday, Mr. Eric Afenyo, Convener of the Network, called for an end to the pasting of anonymous letters and posters against the appointees through out the region, saying it was a symptom of "pull him down" attitude. He said that such developments would retard the development of the region as the appointees would not have the zeal and motivation to work towards development.

Mr. Afenyo said that writing of anonymous letters, hijacking of public facilities, violent and baseless demonstrations were at variance with the exercise of the individual's civic responsibilities. He said "What our generation need is industrious, proactive leadership, disciplined and technologically advanced people and not machos and bullies,"

Mr. Afenyo expressed regret that the region was fast becoming a safe haven for agitations, open attacks and threats on personalities. He said that though demonstrations were allowed in the country's Constitution, attempts to malign and cause leaders to be removed from office unjustly must be condemned. Mr. Afenyo commended Mr. Joseph Amenowode, Volta Regional Minister and the Municipal and District Chief Executives for championing the development of the region. Convener of the Network called on the people of the people to unite and harness the region's enormous agricultural and agribusiness potentials.

## **Let's scrap appointment of ministers from parliament**

Participants at a consultative forum on the review of the constitution held at Odumase in the Asante-Akim North Municipality have suggested that the appointment of ministers from parliament should be scrapped.

This arrangement, they said, did not augur well for good governance and should be dumped.

They said parliamentarians, who become ministers, end up neglecting their responsibilities to their constituents.

"To help keep their ministerial jobs such ministers tend to give more time and attention to their ministries, missing parliamentary sittings and rarely visit their various constituencies. The only time you see them is when it is about time for elections." Chiefs, civil society groups, representatives of the political parties, heads of department, assembly members, the security services and students attended the forum.

The participants criticized the huge sums of money paid to article 71 office holders as end of service benefit and want this slashed. Mr. Akenteng Appiah-Menka, a member of

the Constitution Review Commission, said it was imperative for the public to participate in the exercise to ensure its success.

## **COTE D'IVOIRE**

### **Disarmament Process Begins in Northern Region, UN Reports.**

The disarmament and demobilization of 600 former combatants has begun in the northern, rebel-held town of Korhogo, the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI) reports.

The soldiers from the Forces armées des Forces nouvelles (FAFN) who demobilized yesterday are part of a group of 1,200 ex-combatants who are expected to disarm and enter cantonment, and to join an integrated national army.

At a ceremony yesterday the Secretary-General's Principal Deputy Special Representative in the West African country, Abou Moussa, said UNOCI would do its part to make the process a success, and encouraged all the participants to see it through. The process is being monitored by the UN mission and other parties.

Côte d'Ivoire, which became split by civil war in 2002 into a rebel-held north and Government-controlled south, had been making progress toward the holding of elections, which were supposed to have been held as far back as 2005. However, the process has been repeatedly postponed.

While preparations for the polls were on track up until late last year, they were interrupted in January. Political tensions began to mount after voter registration was suspended due to violence and President Laurent Gbagbo dissolved the Government and the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) in February.

A new Government and Electoral Commission have since been established, but the electoral process remains stalled as differences persist on how to tackle the issue of fraud and resume the interrupted appeals process on the provisional voters list.

Acting on the recommendation of the Secretary-General, the Security Council late last month extended the mandate of UNOCI and the French forces which are supporting it, for one month - "in order to give Côte d'Ivoire a chance to walk the final mile to the elections with the full support of the United Nations."

In keeping with the Ouagadougou Peace Agreements, the 2007 blueprint for political reconciliation, the process is now focusing on the remaining priorities - including those related to elections, disarmament and all aspects of the reunification of the country.

As agreed by the parties in 2008, a de facto reunification is to be completed two months prior to the presidential election.

## **GUINEA**

### **Ecowas to Dispatch 200 Election Observers to Conakry**

The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) is in the process of dispatching 200 Election Observers to Guinea Conakry in next few days time.

The presidential elections in Guinea have been scheduled to be held on June 27, 2010. This election is in line with the responsibility of ECOWAS to assist member states in the organisation of elections. "It is my pleasure to inform you that I intend to dispatch an ECOWAS mission in Guinea to observe the elections" said his Excellency James Victor GBEHO, President of the Commission.

"The Mission will be composed of two hundred (200) persons, including member states' representatives, electoral commissions, ECOWAS parliament, civil society, ECOWAS Members of council of wise, the ECOWAS court of Justice as well as experts from the region" he stated. According to the letter dispatched from the commission, the mission will be supported by technical team of the ECOWAS commission responsible for operational coordination and logistics.

## **ECONOMY**

## **GHANA**

### **Swedish Companies trooping to invest in Ghana**

Vice President John Dramani Mahama on Monday hinted that government would work closely with the Scandinavian countries in order to achieve the country's social democratic objectives.

"The Scandinavians have been noted for their focus on the development of the lives of their people and as a social Democratic government we shall work with them to allow our people to benefit directly."

Vice President Mahama gave this hint when Mr. Per Lingarde, Swedish Ambassador to Ghana and Nigeria paid a courtesy call on him at the Osu Castle, to announce Swedish investment plan in Ghana.

He said Ghana was recovering from its economic slump over the years and would therefore expand its economic relations with countries prepared to invest in the country.

The Vice President said Ghana had become a model in Africa because of her political stability and called on potential investors to take advantage of the status quo to invest and yield good returns.

"Already, we are dealing with Norway in the oil industry and hope to

enjoy massive support from Sweden and other countries in that region." Mr. Lingarde said although Swedish companies are in Ghana, more corporate entities are expected in the country by December this year to undertake investments in all sectors of the Ghanaian economy. The Ambassador who is based in Abuja, Nigeria said his visit to Ghana was to hold discussions with the Minister of Trade and Industry to find out the areas of co-operation.

He called on the government to help identify areas of development and co-operation. "Sweden is so happy with the political stability in Ghana and peaceful transition and investment in such a country will definitely yield meaningful dividends for both countries," he concluded.

Accra bourse index suffers further decline

The GSE All-Share Index continued with its downward slip on Monday, going down 85.52 points to close 6,513.45 points from 6,598.97 points on Friday.

Traded volumes closed the session at 144,998 shares valued at GH¢104,907.52 compared with 263,710 shares valued at GH¢94,613.63 at the previous close.

On the broader market, there were six negative price changes. HFC Bank Limited (HFC) dropped GH¢0.01 at GH¢0.47, Ghana Commercial Bank (GCB) declined GH¢0.09 at GH¢1.40, and CAL Bank Limited (CAL) fell GH¢0.01 at GH¢0.25.

Other decliners were Ecobank Ghana Limited (EBG) down GH¢0.01 at GH¢3.29, Enterprise Insurance Company (EIC) declined GH¢0.03 at GH¢ 1.72 and Unilever Ghana Limited (UNIL.GH) dropped GH¢0.55 at GH¢3.40. Market Capitalization closed the session lower at GH¢18,123.35 million from GH¢18,188.55 million at the previous close.

### **Loss of revenue to the State is artificially created- Mills**

Authorities of the Anti-revenue Leakages Special Monitoring Team at the weekend observed that most of the activities that lead to revenue loss to the State are artificially created by people to divert money into their pockets.

Mr. Thomas Mills, Leader of the team said: "Some of the people who have been

mandated to collect revenue on behalf of the nation are protecting their own interests by aiding and abetting acts that leads to revenue leakages.

Mr. Mills made this observation to the Ghana News Agency at Elubo in the Western Region after the team had carried out a special operation that revealed that the bulk of rice imports take place at the area through unapproved routes from neighbouring La Cote d' Ivoire. He said some of the importers who pass through the approved routes connive with revenue collectors to under value their goods. This he said was affecting revenue mobilisation for the country and people doing genuine business in rice importation.

"Local rice producers and the fledgling rice industry is dying a natural death through these activities," he noted. Mr. Mills said the trend had assumed a national dimension hence the need for the revenue authorities to institute tough measures against people whose acts and omissions leads to loss of revenue.

He said any person found culpable must be dealt with, adding that it is the responsibility of all Ghanaians to take interest in safeguarding the revenue that accrue to the State to facilitate the Better Ghana Agenda. "The monitoring team will not compromise with people who pay bribes and not duties and those who collect bribes and not duties. We shall go after them 24 hours a day." The team is a under the Ghana Revenue Authority.

## **US\$10 Billion Korea Deal Questioned**

THE DANQUAH Institute in collaboration with Imani Centre has condemned moves by Parliament to approve a US\$1.5 billion Supplier's Credit Financing Agreement between STX Engineering and Construction Ghana Limited as Lender and the Government of Ghana in relation to the financing of the 30,000 housing units under the Security Services Housing Project. The project is emanating from an agreement signed on the December 9, 2009, between STX Korea and the Ghanaian government for a joint venture to build 200,000 residential units across all 10 major regional capitals of Ghana at a cost of US\$10 billion. Ghana's construction industry was the worst hit last year and that contrary to a 10% growth projection; it experienced a negative 2% growth in 2009. On March 4 this year, Vice President, John Dramani Mahama, led a Government delegation to South Korea to complete agreement formalities on the housing project and signed another MOU on an infrastructure establishment project with STX, targeting Ghana's oil. Per the off taker agreement signed in Seoul on December 9 which is before Parliament, the Ghana Government has agreed to off-take (or purchase outright) 90,000 units, representing 45% of the 200,000 homes which the Koreans intend to build in Ghana by 2015.

Government is required to pay the Korean company, STX Engineering and Construction Ghana Ltd, a 45% advance purchase payment of US\$4.5 billion and also mortgage our oil assets. Under the agreement for the US\$1.5 billion credit facility STX is to build 200,000 houses at \$50,000 each at a total cost of \$10 billion for which the Government of Ghana has committed to an off-take agreement for 90,000 units at a total cost of \$4.5 billion. The first 30,000 units would be constructed at a cost of \$1.525, 443,468.00 (including an insurance premium). The terms for the agreement according to a press statement by the Danquah Institute are 2% Interest Rate, Grace Period five years which does not apply to interest, Repayment in 15 years and Grant

Element of 36.93%, among others. According to the agreement, STX would be exempt from tax for its imports of materials and machinery and corporation tax while STX's expatriate employees will be exempt from income tax. The Government of Ghana will be required to provide land and all permits and also be responsible for STX costs and expenses in executing the project under the "Financing Documents" (including legal, accounting, travel expenses, and other out of pocket expenses) and any VAT on those expenses. It was also spelt out that STX has option to convert debt into oil on execution of the contract. But the Danquah Institute says "We don't need Koreans to do this if this really is the deal. WE CAN DO IT! Ghanaian charity should not begin in Korea. The Government of Ghana should be more Ghanaian in its apparent efforts to offer charity to the private sector." It added "We see this deal as a little more than a generous stimulus package from poorer Ghana for a Korean company which has posted cash-equivalent assets of some \$2.3 billion and debts of \$6.6 billion." The Institute has therefore called on Parliament to pull the brakes on this deal and for the Government to sit down with the local stakeholders and explore with patriotic sincerity and commitment the viable option of offering similar incentives to our local industry players to undertake such a project. At an emergency meeting of stakeholders on June 3, 2010 the forum indicated that on May 4, 2010 the Government of Ghana sought to push through several loan agreements under a certificate of urgency when Parliament was on recess. According to the Institute, STX Group of Korea is a company in liquidity distress and in need of a stimulus package for solvency. The Government of Ghana claims to be hard on funds and cannot therefore rescue local companies in distress. Yet, it can still enter into a credit facility of US\$1.5 billion to rescue a Korean firm. The Institute says the Suppliers Credit Financing Agreement between the Government of Ghana and STX Engineering and Construction Limited (subsidiary of the STX Group, Korea) for an amount of US\$1,525,443,468.00 to construct 30,000 housing units for the security services - with 20,000 units for the Police Service (including 10,240 units), and the remaining 10,000 to spread among the other security agencies, including the Military and the Prison Service is so bad that it requires nothing but a ruthless administering of the final nail in its coffin-like state. The forum welcomed the intention of Government to undertake this huge project to deal significantly with the gross housing deficit in Ghana, estimated at 1 million, with Imani estimating that some 6.5 million Ghanaians are lacking in decent housing but feared the deal was dogged with serious questions and that it seemed to be more an agenda for a better Korea than a better Ghana. It indicated that next month, the President of the Republic of Korea (or South Korea), Lee Myung-bak is scheduled to visit Ghana, as part of an investment-promotion tour to selected African countries. He is coming to Africa as part of his manifesto pledge to build a better Korea which suffered a US\$8 billion current account deficit in 2008. But the forum has questioned the capability of STX to raise the \$10 billion since available records indicate that STX is facing a major liquidity crisis and does not have the balance sheet for this level of exposure. The Institute's major concern is premised on the unavailability of a clause in the agreement what the source of funding is even though the transaction is a supplier's credit agreement. The Institute said the cost of \$50,000 per house is inordinately high considering that the Government of Ghana is providing the land, permits, tax exemptions for imported materials and machinery, corporate tax exemptions, and paying for the costs and expenses of STX saying with these incentives it is clear that these houses can be

constructed for a fraction of the cost. Frank Tackie, the President of the Ghana Institute of Planners, representing also the Ghana Institute of Architects, the Ghana Institute of Engineers and the Ghana Institute of Surveyors, said alternative local building materials, local expertise and better value for money can be achieved if Government had focused on Ghanaian firms, materials and expertise rather than Korea. Sammy Amegayibor, representing GREDA, also lamented how Government has refused to sit down with them to explore the option of getting the Ghana Real Estate Developers' Association to undertake the project because local contractors are more than capable. GREDA says, "We don't need foreign firms to do this deal. If Government is providing all these incentives, including tax and VAT exemptions, free land then why can't Government do the same for us?" According to GREDA, the private sector is already providing two-to-three bedroom buildings at \$50,000. "The real challenge is how to provide affordable housing for the majority of Ghanaians." Also at the forum, Robert Ahomka Lindsey, the former CEO of the Ghana Investment Promotion Corporation, made the point that foreign direct investment is to supplement local initiatives rather than as substitute. He charged local industry players to come together and offer a viable option to both Parliament and Government so that they have a practical alternative to look at. Franklin Cudjoe of Imani stressed on the need to get local players to drive this project. As Kofi Bentil of Imani points out, Ghana has basically agreed to subsequently pledge it's yet to be produced crude oil in exchange for the debt when the country is yet to agree on how the oil revenues are to be spent. The head of the Danquah Institute, for instance points out that at an average cost of \$50,000 per unit, the STX project is "a very, very expensive deal for such a mass construction project." By breaking the project down you see how scandalously over-priced it is for a country where you can pick up a 3-bedroom bungalow for \$45,000. Half of the 30,000 units - 15,240 specifically - comprise of one bedroom apartments; 9,356 two-bedroom apartments; 5,217 three-bedroom apartments; plus 122 three-bedroom and 65 four-bedroom bungalows for senior officers.

## **Concerns Expressed Over Ghana's Oil**

Concerns are being raised about how Ghana will manage its oil revenues as the Jubilee field, its first major offshore deposit, prepares to start producing and exporting in the fourth quarter of this year

Concerns are being voiced about how Ghana will manage its oil revenues as the Jubilee field, its first major offshore deposit, prepares to start producing and exporting in the fourth quarter of this year.

Bright Simons, director of development research at IMANI, an Accra-based public policy think-tank, said in an interview: "We are as concerned with financial prudence, and the management of the proceeds from the resource, as we are about transparency."

London-based Tullow Oil, the operator at Jubilee, expects initial output to be 120,000 barrels a day. With reserves of 800 million barrels of high-quality oil and potential for at least 1 billion more, the Jubilee field could make Ghana the fifth largest oil nation in sub-Saharan Africa after Nigeria, Angola, Sudan and Gabon. The government is confident

that crude exports will boost annual GDP growth to as much as 10% in the next few years. And the IMF predicts that if Ghana uses the windfall wisely, it could reach the status of a middle-income country within a decade.

But critics say that the regulatory framework is being put in place too slowly, and that the process is too opaque. Economists and campaign groups alike warn that if the government's expressions of good intention are not turned into action, the country could be vulnerable to the resource curse.

The government says it will comply with the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI), that oil revenues will be monitored via an account at the central bank. It intends to set up a heritage fund to capture surplus revenues, which should be managed by investment advisors. The finance ministry said earlier this year that both accounts will have "clear deposit and withdrawal rules".

The government also plans to put regulatory responsibility for upstream activities in the hands of a National Petroleum Authority, and turn the Ghana National Petroleum Corporation (GNPC) into a strictly commercial entity.

But Ben Amunwa of Platform, the London-based NGO that monitors the international oil industry, said that the government is moving too slowly. "They have a great deal of work to do, given that the first oil will begin to flow from December this year.

"The revenue management bill has not yet been published and that is an absolute necessity. Any policy that is going to have a democratic basis needs to be debated properly."

On managing funds accruing from the windfall, Simons at IMANI urged the government to take more steps to prove its commitment to accountability. The management of pension funds by parastatals has cast serious doubts on state-led efforts towards financial prudence, he argues.

## **GNPC, Tap Oil and others sign agreement**

Deputy Minister of Energy, Armah Kofi Buah, on Wednesday said government would ensure that companies operating in the oil and gas sector adhered fully to environmental laws governing the sector. Speaking at the signing of a petroleum agreement for oil exploration in offshore Accra-Keta basin in Accra, Mr. Buah said the oil spillage off the Gulf of Mexico should provide a wake-up call to improve enforcement of the environmental laws.

The offshore Accra contract is between Ghana National Petroleum Corporation (GNPC), Australian firm Tap Oil Limited, Challenger, Minerals Incorporated and Afex Oil Ghana, an affiliate of Afex International based in the US.

Tap Oil Limited would control 36 per cent stake in the joint venture while, the GNPC

would control 10 per cent, both US firms involved in the deal would control 27 per cent each. Mr. Buah called on development partners to support the country's efforts to derive maximum benefits from the oil resources and urged them to adhere to the country's laws. During the exploration, the partners are expected to re-process 600 kilometers of 3D seismic data, acquire 850km of 2D seismic data and drill a single exploration well over the next two and a half years. The exploration programme would cover an area of 2,000 square kilometres in deep and shallow water. Nana Boakye Asafu-Adjaye, Managing Director of GNPC, said the partners had both the technical and financial capability to undertake the project through to fruition.

Mr. Peter Stickland, CEO of Tap Oil Limited, expressed the partners' commitment to ensure the success of the project, saying the project team came to the field with different expertise.

## **Ghana to begin oil exploration off Tema coast**

Ghana is set to begin oil exploration off the Tema coast. An agreement to this effect has been signed and the government will later Tuesday hold a public event to commemorate the first joint management committee meeting.

The agreement is between government, the Ghana National Petroleum Corporation and Australian firm, Tap Oil Limited.

It also involves two US firms, Afex International and Challenger Minerals Incorporated.

Tap oil Limited will control a 36 per cent stake in the joint venture while, the GNPC will control 10 per cent.

Both US firms involved in the deal will control 27 per cent. According to a statement by Tap Oil the terms of the Petroleum Agreement are confidential.

It however insists it is consistent with other Petroleum Agreements in Ghana which are considered attractive on a global ranking.

The area to be explored, about 2000 square meters from Tema to Ningo, is estimated to hold as much as one hundred million barrels.

## **STX Company to establish steel and cement plants in Ghana**

STX Engineering and Construction, a South Korean firm, registered in Ghana as a limited liability company, has expressed commitment to establish steel and cement plant in the country to facilitate its Ghana Housing Project.

The Ghana Housing Project is in two parts. The first component is the construction of 30,000 housing units for Ghana Police Service and Ghana Armed Forces under "Securities Services Housing" scheme. A statement issued by Mr. Bernard Kwabena

Asamoah, Chief Executive Officer (CEO), STX Construction in Accra said 170,000 housing units would be constructed for the private sector across the country. STX is pre-financing the Securities Services Housing with a loan of \$1.5 million cedis it has advanced to the Government of Ghana under a Suppliers Credit Facility.

Mr. Bernard said the facility which would span 20 years would attract a two per cent interest rate and a five-year moratorium. "STX is committed to a 30 per cent minimum local content in the execution of the project. It is intended that in the actual project implementation phase, the local content will be significantly higher than the agreed 70 per cent.

"Further, the Korean Government is determined to support the Ghana Housing Project with the Global Infra Fund, which a Korean Government Sovereign Fund set up to finance foreign infrastructure projects with Korean participation.

The CEO said: "Moreover, a \$ 2 Million Official Development Assistance grant is being provided by the Korean Government to support the establishment and inauguration of a Ghanaian Vocation Centre. "The \$ 2 Million is intended for the procurement of equipment to train high technical manpower in Ghana.

"STX is committed to the execution of the Ghana Housing Project and the achievement of the Government's Better Housing Agenda." He said the co-operation of all stakeholders is needed to make it possible for STX to use its expertise and experience to make the dream of the Ghana Housing Project a reality, whilst building bridges of partnership with Ghana's construction industry.

"STX is a leading global company with experience in executing projects in a significant number of countries. Having achieved significant growth in its 10 years of existence STX is now soaring towards a new decade. "With a definite goal, a clear strategy and superb human resources, STX intends to solidify its position as one of the world's leading enterprises. "STX feels privileged to be part of Ghana's success story and is willing to leave a lasting footprint on Ghana's economic landscape. It is our policy to adopt a project execution strategy that shares the benefits of the Ghana Housing Project with the people of Ghana through a committed local content programme," Mr. Asamoah said.

He said STX intends to deliver modern, affordable and safe homes to reduce the housing deficit; development new communities and infrastructure and build the capacity of the local construction industry through the transfer of cutting edge technology.

Mr. Asamoah local design and innovations for the project would be executed through partnership with the College of Architecture and Planning of the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology. STX has many international subsidiaries including: STX Offshore and Shipbuilding, STX Engine, STX Heavy Industries, STX PanOcean, STX Energy and STX Construction.

The STX Offshore and Shipbuilding is the world's fourth largest shipbuilder whilst STX

Construction remains the Korea's number 12 conglomerate subsidiaries, establishing a name as Koreans representative global leader for comprehensive construction, civil works, housing and plant manufacturing."

## **SIERRA LEONE**

### **President Koroma Receives Top-Notch Chinese Investors**

After officially launching the Sierra Leone National Action Plan for the full implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolutions 1325 (2000) and 1820 (2008) at the Miatta Conference Youyi Building in Freetown, where he said the occasion demonstrated his government's determination to ensure that women are not only beneficiaries of development but can also play a critical role in the development of Sierra Leone, President Ernest Bai Koroma last week received in audience at State House a galaxy of 24 top investors from China.

The delegation, which wrapped up its visit to the country yesterday Sunday June 13, was led by the chairman of China Kingho Group, Qinghua Huo. They were in Sierra Leone on the invitation of President Koroma during his recent visit to Shanghai, and include investors in Mining, Tourism, Banking, Agriculture and other related areas.

According to minister of foreign affairs Zainab Bangura, who introduced the delegation to the president, the purpose of the visit was to see and have first-hand information on possible areas of investment in Sierra Leone, and as a result the group will be travelling to various areas across the country.

While welcoming the delegation, President Koroma thanked them for honouring his invitation at so short a time, which he attributed to the strong Sino-Sierra Leonean ties that have existed and endured through the years. He asked them to move across the country freely, explore possible areas of investment, and consider Sierra Leone their home.

He informed them that the country was in the process of transformation, with his government vigorously pursuing the result-oriented 'Agenda for Change' with priority in Energy, Infrastructure, Mining and Tourism for possible investment.

The President took the opportunity to commend the Chinese Ambassador to Sierra Leone, whom he referred to as "a good pillar of support."

Responding, Chairman Qinghua Huo expressed thanks and appreciation to President Koroma for the invitation and for taking time off his busy schedule to see them. He said their presence in Sierra Leone underlines their determination to engage in massive investment and deliver as agreed with the President in Shanghai, and to generally help bring development to the nation.

The delegation's itinerary include visitations to Ferengbeya, Pepel Port, Marampa Mines, Bumbuna Hydro Power Station, Magbass Sugar Complex, Rombey Rice Fields, Rolakoh Rice Fields, Teko Husbandry Station, Gola Forest, Rubber Plantation, Palm Oil Plantation, Rutile Mine, and Tomabom Rice Fields.

## ENVIRONMENT

### GHANA

#### **Ghana needs \$200m to tackle sanitation- Bagbin**

WASH United Ghana, a sanitation oriented non-governmental organisation (NGO) was launched in Accra on Friday with a new innovative approach to the promotion of Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) in the country as its core function.

Minister for Water Resources, Works and Housing, Alban Sumana Kinsford Bagbin who performed the launch disclosed that Ghana needs at least US\$ 200 million per annum over time to tackle head-on sanitation-related problems the country is saddled with.

For this reason, he said the ministry had developed a SWAP (Sector Wide Approach) for the development and execution of its policies for the water, sanitation and hygiene for the country.

“It is now widely accepted that Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) are critical measures of a nation’s standard of living, Mr. Bagbin noted, adding, “To have a healthy and prosperous citizenry, you must first have access to safe and clean environment.” He said although the country would exceed the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) target for water that of sanitation could be missed.

He said the government recognizes the important role of safe drinking water, sanitation and hygiene, “not only as a catalyst for socio-economic development, but also as an ingredient for personal well-being.”

“This is why at the ministry we have rededicated ourselves to the rallying battle cry of “Water to the people, not People to the water,” Hon. A.S.K Bagbin stated.

He said by this guiding principle, the ministry will deliver key benefits such as the prevention of water-borne disease, ensure reduction in mortality and morbidity rates as well as reduce post-natal risks.

He said his ministry would also work at ensuring higher enrolment of especially girls in school by reducing the hours they have to spend looking for water, enhance the dignity of women and their ability to lead as well as bring about an increased productivity by Ghanaian farmers and workforce.

He commended management of WASH United Ghana for the innovative dimension they have brought to the Ministry's commitment in ensuring that Ghanaians had access to adequate water, good sanitation and hygienic services.

“I wish to note however that any campaign aimed at making public and personal hygiene a way of life must necessarily involve sustained public education, not only to create awareness of the problem, but more importantly to go further to change attitudes and negative behaviours regarding public and personal hygiene.

Wash-United whose Ghana launch was timed to coincide with the opening of the 2010 World Cup tournament being hosted by South Africa was established by a German NGO Brot fur die Welt and is operational in about eight African countries.

Ghana Country Coordinator of WASH-United, Rudolf Amega-Etego, observed that about 900 million people lack access to drinking water while 2.5 billion people had no access to improved sanitation.

"Also more than one billion people have absolutely no place to attend nature's call, forcing them to use buckets, plastic bags or nearby bushes and shrubs," he said.

He that preventable diseases caused by polluted water and poor sanitation kills a child under five years every 20 seconds or more than 4,000 daily.

He said that every year, 443 million school attendance days were lost due to sicknesses caused by poor water and sanitation, thereby depriving children the chance of better future.

"Apart from the direct human cost, current crisis in water and sanitation undermines efforts towards overall economic development," he stated, noting that Ghana had serious challenges of providing adequate water for all rural and urban residents.

## IMMIGRATION/ REFUGEE/ IDPs

### SIERRA LEONE

#### **Ecowas Passport out Today**

Sierra Leone's chief immigration officer has disclosed that his department will today commence the issuance of Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) passports to the general public.

Alpha Kholifa Koroma told journalists yesterday that there would be no change of procedures in obtaining the new passport, noting, "The criteria and cost in obtaining it still remain the same."

"The issuance of the ECOWAS passport brings to an end the Sierra Leonean passport," he added.

It could be recalled that the chief immigration officer had informed the general public that his department would start issuing out ECOWAS passports in November 2009.

However, Koroma said the reason for the delay was due to the fact that there were still lots of Sierra Leonean passports in stock.

"We want our passport to be uniformed with other ECOWAS countries. Sierra Leoneans stand to benefit a lot by obtaining it," he noted.

The chief immigration officer maintained that the passport would be safe and well secured and that it has both regional and international significance.

"The ECOWAS passport will be in three colour categories: the green one will be held by ordinary people, the blue will be for civil servants and the red for diplomats. By obtaining it, one automatically becomes an ECOWAS citizen," he explained.

Koroma further informed journalists that the contract to get the ECOWAS passport was signed by the minister of internal affairs, local government and rural development, Hon. Hon. HDaуда Kamara.

He said his institution would work very hard to improve on the control and mechanisms required in obtaining the passport, while urging all and sundry to go for it.

## HEALTH

### SIERRA LEONE

#### **Minister Sells 'Agenda for Change' in U.S.**

Deputy Minister of health and sanitation has presented the promising scenario in Sierra Leone during an international congress meeting held at the Great Convention Hall in Washington DC, in the United States, where discussions on women's development issues were hosted.

Over 6,000 people and more than 30 ministries from different countries across the globe attended the meeting. At a separate focus group forum with colleague ministers, Mohamed D. Koroma, who returned to Freetown on Friday, highlighted the steady progress Sierra Leone is making in terms development and peace consolidation.

Mr. Koroma informed his audience about the success story of the country's post-war achievements on health, infrastructure, education, human resources, and gender empowerment, among other key developmental strides. He also mentioned the road infrastructure that is currently getting a facelift from the government and also how the APC administration is robustly responding to the socio-economic challenges it is confronted with.

"I was able to deliver the president's vision to rebrand Sierra Leone, his policy on attitudinal change as well as the newly launched free health care initiative, which has put Sierra Leone on an enviable position in the sub-region," Koroma told Concord Times in an interview.

He said UN secretary-general Ban Ki-Moon was guest of honour at the Washington conference. During his statement to world leaders, Koroma called on the highly

industrialized nations to double their assistance towards developing countries in the fight against HIV/AIDS, TB, malaria and other killer diseases.

Also part of the Sierra Leone team to the conference was First Lady Sia Nyama Koroma, who presented her starring role in the promotion of women's health during her meeting with colleague First Ladies.

## **CAMEROON**

### **Government Told to Invest on Sickle Cell Anaemia**

The President of the Sickle Cell Disease International Organisation granted a press briefing in Yaounde yesterday.

The second edition of the World Sickle Cell Disease Day will be celebrated on Saturday June 19, 2010. Ahead of the event, the President of the Sickle Cell Disease International Organisation (SCDIO) Edwige Ebakise-Badassu, granted a press briefing in Yaounde yesterday. The meeting was an opportunity for the president of SCDIO to exchange ideas with journalists on the situation of the disease in Cameroon and the world. The meeting also comes ahead of the World Donor Day which is celebrated today.

Speaking during the press briefing, Edwige Ebakise said sickle cell anaemia is disease that is neglected in society. She said sickle cell anaemia should be taken into account as a public health problem in Cameroon. "Government should put money in sickle disease in Cameroon, build sickle cell centers in all the regions of the country and train doctors and other health personnel on the disease," she said. She said the sickle cell disease should be included in the school programme to sensitize the children on the disease. She also used the occasion to call on Cameroonians to donate blood on the occasion of the World Blood Donor Day for blood is essential for the sickle cell patients.

To mark the World Sickle Cell day, the SCDIO will organise a vaccination exercise for children suffering from the disease at the Chantal Biya Foundation in Yaounde and will also give therapeutic education to patients. She also used the occasion to call on the population not to keep their children at home but to bring them for vaccination. Sickle Cell Anaemia is a genetic disease that involves the red blood cells. Rather than being round, many of the red blood cells become sickle shaped when they lose oxygen. When sickle shaped, cells are fragile and break down more rapidly than they can be replaced. As a result anaemia is consistently present. Sickle cells are also rigid and this feature plus their shape results in periodic plugging of blood vessels, thereby preventing the delivery of oxygen to tissues and organs. The anaemia and obstruction of blood flow account for most of the health problems that individuals face with the disease experience.

## **HUMAN RIGHTS/ GENDER/ SOCIAL ISSUES**

### **GHANA**

## **Chinese throw Ivorian Stowaways in Ghanaian sea**

Agents of National Security are investigating a case of cruelty on the high seas in which three Ivorian nationals are alleged to have been thrown into the ocean by the captain of a Chinese vessel.

The incident happened in Ghanaian waters. One of the three alleged stowaways who were believed to have hidden himself in the Chinese merchant vessel from Abidjan drowned, while the other two, Omar Secei, 33, and Djiba Kamarah, 22, who spent more than 12 hours on the sea, were rescued by a Ghana Navy ship, according to National Security.

Secei is said to be in critical condition at the Ghana Ports and Harbours Authority (GPHA) Hospital in Takoradi, with doctors doing everything possible to save his life.

Kamarah is currently helping the police in their investigations, while the body of the deceased, identified as Korrdah Aziz, is yet to be washed ashore.

The vessel, MV Run Ning 3, has, meanwhile, been impounded by the police and National Security.

Kamarah told investigators that he and the others were discovered by the chief officer of the vessel who, together with his men, threw the stowaways into the sea, in spite of their pleas for mercy.

He said Aziz did not know how to swim and got drowned immediately he was dumped into the sea.

"They dumped Aziz first because he was the first to be discovered. Later, the two of us were also discovered and dumped," Kamarah said.

Kamarah said he and Secei "had to swim until personnel of the Ghana Navy on board one of their defender boats rescued and clothed them."

He told the police that he and Secei had compelling evidence to prove that they had been dumped by those on board the Chinese vessel.

"We had a black plastic bag which we used to store food and a hat which we used to clean our footprints in the vessel," he said.

When the Ghana Navy and the police, led by National Security at the Takoradi Port, boarded the vessel, the said plastic bag "and the- hat were found where the victims had earlier said they had hidden them.

Kamarah was able to identify the Chief Officer of the vessel, Jiang Youg Sun, and the cook who masterminded the act, in spite of strong resistance from the crew.

Meanwhile, National Security has ordered the vessel not to move anywhere or the "Ghana Navy" would be sent after it.

## **Pupils urge government to ban corporal punishment**

Some pupils in Accra have called on government to ban corporal punishment as a means of instilling discipline in children. They pointed out that corporal punishment only made especially not-too-brilliant students to drop out of school because they feared when they failed an examination, they would be severely caned. The pupils made the call in a debate jointly organised by management s of Plan Ghana and Actionaid, both international NGOs to mark this year's International Day of the African Child in Accra on Tuesday. The debate has the topic; "Violence against Children, Sexual Violence and Corporal Punishment in Schools".

The Day falls on Wednesday, June 16 and this year's celebration is under the theme: "Budget for Children, Our Collective Responsibility". About 1,000 pupils drawn from basic schools in rural Accra including

Chorkor, Korle Gonno and James Town participated, as well as all project communities of Plan Ghana and Actionaid. The debate was to provide an avenue for them to voice out their feelings on issues that concerned them in school, home, in the public and

communities. Those who spoke for the motion described corporal punishment as the most ineffective way of disciplining a child and had made some of their colleagues to become "stammers" because they were of the view that they would be severely punished when they gave wrong answers. In addition, it led others especially girls whose performance were below average to give in to advance of men teachers and engaged in amorous relationship to avoid being punished.

They contended that the practice was therefore, a disincentive to good academic performance and high student enrolment and called on government to ban corporal punishment to enable pupils to freely express themselves in the classroom. The pupils suggested that teachers should adopt a more practical correctional system, which would encourage pupils to learn rather than discourage them from enjoying lessons in class. However, the other group who opposed the motion argued that some pupils were too stubborn and it was only corporal punishment that could put them on the right track. They noted that corporal punishment instilled discipline among pupil s and made them to be careful in their endeavours. The pupils supported their position with the saying "if you spare the rod, you spoil the child" but called for moderation in meting out corpora l punishment. However, the groups were unanimous that child sex abuse was prevailing in the school setting and was affecting their performance. They called on government to severely sanction teachers who perpetrated sexual abuse against girls to deter others. In addition, government should provide more recreational centers where children could engage in social activities to overcome sexual desires associated with adolescence. Mr. Samuel Paulos, Country Director of Plan Ghana said both Plan Ghana and Actionaid would compile issues raised by the pupils and submit them t o government, policy

makers and other stakeholders for the necessary action. He said even though measures were being taken to ensure children had

access to their entitlements, they were still some factors that hindered their overall development. Mr. Paulos called on government to ensure that all schools had access to facilities that encouraged teaching and learning. He suggested that teachers should be well trained in a manner to respect the rights of the child to end abuse against them. Mr. Paulos reiterated the call on government to ban corporal punishment and replaced with a correctional system where pupils would understand their shortcomings and properly assist to correct them. "They must be allowed to freely express their feelings in schools, public places and communities," he added.

## **Politicians cautioned to desist from interfering in chieftaincy affairs issues**

President of Upper East Regional House of Chiefs, Pe Charles Awia Awampaga II has cautioned politicians to refrain from interfering in chieftaincy matters.

He noted that political interference in chieftaincy affairs was a major cause of chieftaincy disputes in the country.

Pe Awampaga II, who gave the advice at the Regional House of Chiefs meeting, held in Bolgatanga at the weekend, asked politicians to focus on development instead of interfering in chieftaincy issues, adding that chiefs were capable of handling their own affairs.

He appealed to chiefs in the region to conscience the people in the region to participate in the impending population and housing census, and encourage members in their communities who have attained 18 years and above to register in the voters' registration exercise.

Pe Awampaga II, who is also Paramount Chief of Paga Traditional Area, appealed to Government to reconsider its decision to increase utility tariffs and said that many Ghanaians could not afford to pay for electricity and good water.

He said most Ghanaians would go back to the old days of using lanterns in their homes since they could not afford to pay high electricity bills. Chief of Katiu, Katio Pio, Pe Ayikode Zangwio 1V, an 18-year-old student of the Bolgatanga Technical Institute, was sworn into the House by a High Court Judge.

The Upper East Regional Deputy Minister, Mrs. Lucy Awuni called on chiefs to be politically neutral to enable them to win the support of all the people towards the development of their communities. She appealed to the Regional House of Chiefs to come out with documentation on ascension to the various skins in the area to end chieftaincy disputes and litigations.

Mrs. Awuni said that even though Government would not interfere in chieftaincy affairs, it would not allow chieftaincy disputes to pose a threat to life and property, saying "Government will definitely take appropriate steps to ensure the safety of the people and property in any area associated with violent conflicts."

## **LIBERIA**

### **Presidents of Mali, Senegal, and Liberia Meet in Bamako to Discuss Funding for IDA**

President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf says that although Liberia may not meet the deadline set for achieving the Millennium Development Goals in 2015, she is grateful to the World Bank and its partners for positively helping to alleviate poverty on the African continent.

President Sirleaf said she is particularly grateful to the World Bank for helping to tackle poverty in Liberia through the rehabilitation of roads, schools, clinics and hospitals, in support of Government's Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS).

According to an Executive Mansion release, the President made these remarks Wednesday in Bamako, Mali, at a meeting convened to mobilize resources to replenish funding for the International Development Association (IDA) of the World Bank. The meeting brought together the leaders of Mali, Senegal and Liberia.

The Liberian leader said that although the processes of executing its development priorities are somehow slow, she is thankful that the engagement of the World Bank and its partners in the development programs of Liberia are paying off. The once dilapidated appearances of our schools, hospitals, clinics, market buildings and other infrastructure are quickly changing, the President observed. Liberia could not have made it without the support of the World Bank, she added.

The Liberian President also commended the World Bank and its partners for ensuring that such positive developmental initiatives also benefit other parts of Africa, but was quick to add that Liberia in particular would need the Bank to help it build a strong foundation for the Liberian economy.

The President hoped that the actions emerging from the replenishment meeting would be robust; to ensure that development programs earmarked under the IDA remain on track.

The meeting brought together more than 2,000 participants. Among the World Bank's financial experts and executives was former Liberian Planning Minister, Dr. Toga McIntosh Gaywea.

At the meeting, locally grown produce by Malian farmers which are exported to other countries, were on display on a giant screen.

The President and delegation returned home Wednesday night

## **Witness Did Not Hear of Charles Taylor's Involvement in the Recruitment of Sierra Leonean Rebels, Says ECOMOG Peacekeepers and Guinean Soldiers Were Involved in Business Transactions with RUF Rebels**

A Sierra Leonean woman who helped top Sierra Leonean rebels in recruiting and training fighters in Liberia this week told Special Court for Sierra Leone that as far as she knew, Charles Taylor's name was never mentioned as one of those helping to recruit and train rebels to invade Sierra Leone in 1991. The witness also told the court that West African peacekeepers and Guinean military officers were involved in trading diesel, and arms and ammunition with Sierra Leonean rebel commanders during the West African country's 11 years civil war.

Isatu Kallon, commonly called "Mammie Iye," told the court on Wednesday that while she helped Revolutionary United Front (RUF) leader Foday Sankoh to enlist and train rebel fighters to invade Sierra Leone in 1991, not once did she ever hear from Mr. Sankoh or other senior RUF commanders that Mr. Taylor was involved in those efforts.

Prosecutors, meanwhile, have alleged that the RUF rebels received substantial support from Mr. Taylor in recruiting and training fighters for the invasion of Sierra Leone after his National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) rebel group attacked Liberia in 1989. Mr. Taylor has denied these allegations, telling the court that he had no knowledge that RUF rebels were being recruited and trained in Liberia.

The witness on Wednesday said that during a meeting held at her house in Liberia where recruitment of RUF fighters was the main agenda item, she never heard Mr. Taylor's name.

"Madam Kallon, that meeting that Pa Morlai [another name for Foday Sankoh] held in your house, do you know whether during the course of that meeting, the name Charles Taylor was ever mentioned?" asked Morris Anyah, defense counsel for Charles Taylor.

"At that time, no," Mrs. Kallon responded.

Mr. Anyah also asked the witness about her conversation with another senior RUF member, Philip Palmer, whom she said was transporting Sierra Leonean volunteers for training to a place called Sokoto at Camp Naama in Liberia after they had been freed from the hands of NPFL rebels.

“When Palmer came with the truck and the volunteers entered the truck, and when Palmer later on came back two days after, during that two day period of time, did you ever hear Palmer mention the name Charles Taylor?” Mr. Anyah asked.

“No.” the witness said.

“When Palmer spoke of this place Sokoto and he mentioned that it was somewhere near Naama, during that conversation with him, did the name Charles Taylor come up?” Mr. Anyah asked.

“No,” Mrs. Kallon said.

Mrs. Kallon went on to tell the judges that when Mr. Taylor’s NPFL rebel forces attacked Liberia in 1989, Sierra Leoneans in Liberia were harassed until they were rescued by RUF leader Mr. Sankoh. These Sierra Leonean nationals came to like Mr. Sankoh since he had saved their lives.

“There was too much harassment so when the Pa [Sankoh] came, he was able to stop that so they liked him,” Mrs. Kallon said.

On some occasions, Mrs. Kallon said that she also helped Mr. Sankoh to rescue Sierra Leonean nationals who were later recruited into the RUF.

Mrs. Kallon told the court that she used to provide food and soap for the RUF rebels while they underwent training at Sokoto in Camp Naama. She said Mr. Sankoh used to give her money to provide those services to the RUF but the money was never enough and so she had to use her own resources to provide enough food for the trainees.

Asked how she got extra money to provide these services to the RUF, Mrs. Kallon said that “through the business that I was doing.” She said that her husband also used to help with some money.

According to the witness, when she visited the scene to have a first hand look at the people she was providing support for, she found out that the RUF recruits were being trained in a valley at Camp Naama. The NPFL fighters, she said were being trained on a hill at the same Camp Naama.

When asked by Mr. Anyah whether the NPFL fighters ever interacted with the RUF recruits, the witness said that “the time that I went there, no.”

The witness said she also realized that the gate to Sokoto where the RUF rebels were being trained was always closed. She said she asked Mr. Sankoh why the gate was not open.

“He said his ideology that he gave his boys, he did not want them to mingle with the NPFL,” said told the court.

The witness said she could not tell what such ideology was.

On Thursday, Mrs. Kallon explained how Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) peacekeepers did business in Liberia. Mrs. Kallon said she bought diesel on behalf RUF rebel leader, Mr. Sankoh, from ECOMOG forces in exchange for palm oil.

“The people that you did business with, who were those people?” asked Mr. Anyah.

“ECOMOG,” the witness said. “There were boats there, in the river, but during the war, all those boats were under ECOMOG.”

“But when you wanted to do business with it, you’ll take a white piece of cloth and wave it, then they would know that you wanted to do business and they will come,” she explained.

“Are you telling the court that ECOMOG was engaged in business, commercial activities in Liberia?” Mr. Anyah asked again.

“Yes, we were doing business with them,” the witness said.

Asked whether she had “to pay money for the diesel when you bought it,” the witness said “I did not pay money, I sent palm oil.”

When asked to tell the court what she did with the diesel: “I gave it to Pa Foday Sankoh.”

On Friday, Mrs. Kallon testified that she was involved in purchasing arms and ammunition from Guinean military officers for use by the RUF in Sierra Leone. The witness said that her contact in Guinea was a Guinean Army Captain who was based in the Guinean town of Gekedou. The Captain, the witness said, had requested an amount of 16,000 United States dollars for the supply of arms and ammunition contained in a list prepared by RUF rebels. The witness explained to the court that RUF commanders did not have the physical cash to make the payment and so they gave her pieces of diamonds which she sold in order to obtain what was needed by the RUF. Defense lawyer for Mr. Taylor, Mr. Anyah asked the witness to describe the diamonds that were given to her by the rebels and the price at which she sold them.

“They [diamonds] were packaged in a white paper, the papers were doubled, but the smaller pieces were in the majority, there was one large one that weighed seven carats,” Mrs. Kallon told the court.

Asked by Mr. Anyah to tell the court “how many others were there apart from this one seven carat diamond,” the witness said that “I did not count them, when I wanted to sell them, I sold them wholesale.” She added that the diamonds given to her could fit into her one hand.

Mr. Anyah also asked the witness whether she could remember “the type of things that were on the list.”

Mrs. Kallon told the court that “the one they said 20 boxes of AK, the other one, they said 15 G-3, then the other one was a sort of RPG bomb, that’s between 5-10 boxes.”

The witness said she later travelled with the Army Captain to the Guinean capital Conakry to obtain the arms and ammunition. The witness did not say whether she travelled back from Conakry with the arms and ammunition when the court adjourned for the day.

According to Mrs. Kallon, in her initial contact with the Guinean Army captain, which was prior to RUF rebels giving her the diamonds for the purchase of materials, she was able to obtain two cans of ammunition for use in an AK-47 rifle. She said that when she reported this to RUF commander Peter Vandy, the rebel commander informed her that on the other side of the Sierra Leonean border with Liberia, the RUF was transacting successful arms trade with United Liberation Movement for Democracy in Liberia (ULIMO) rebels, a rival faction to Mr. Taylor’s NPFL rebel group. Prosecutors have alleged that Mr. Taylor was the main source of support for RUF rebels during the conflict in Sierra Leone. It has been alleged that diamonds obtained by RUF rebels were taken to Mr. Taylor in Liberia who in turn supplied them with arms and ammunition. Mr. Taylor has denied these allegations, saying in his testimony that there was sufficient evidence to point that RUF rebels were involved in diamond trades with ULIMO rebels as well as West African peacekeepers from Nigeria and Guinea. On Friday, the former president’s 18th witness, Mrs. Kallon sought to establish that she was a key person involved in facilitating the arms trade for the RUF and that the said business was not transacted with Mr. Taylor.

The trial continues Monday.

## **SIERRA LEONE**

### **UN Shuts Down Air Service to Salone, Others**

The World Food Program (WFP) says it is shutting down the UN humanitarian air service in Sierra Leone, Guinea and Liberia due to lack of cash to continue with the operation.

WFP said in a statement Wednesday that ending the humanitarian air service will have terrible consequences for about one-quarter of a million people in west Africa who rely on the service for essential needs. The UN agency said the West African coastal service needs some \$2.5 million to stay in operation until the end of the year.

WFP spokeswoman, Emilia Casella, said the shutdown will have a dramatic effect. "People in the really far-flung parts of Guinea and Sierra Leone and Liberia - they will be

waiting for medical attention that will not arrive," she said. "They will be waiting for educational support, for water and sanitation engineers to help them with their wells. They will be waiting for people who help to train local community leaders because these are countries that are recovering from years of conflict and trying to rebuild."

According to Casella, this kind of progress can be impeded without the support of non-governmental organizations, UN agencies, and voluntary humanitarian organizations that help.

"Even though they are small programs, they are important programs to these countries," she said. "And, right now, Guinea is in a moment of election and this is a delicate time to be stopping that kind of support."

Casella noted the roads in these countries are so bad it can take three to five days to travel 1,000 kilometers. And, to add to the existing problems, the rainy season is starting. She said this will make many of the roads practically impassable for six or seven months.

The UN humanitarian air service flies aid workers, journalists, and others to some of the hardest to reach emergency operations in the world. It currently operates in six African countries, as well as Haiti and Afghanistan.

The West African coastal service was serving about 500 passengers per month. Casella said even if a donor were to come along with the needed cash right now, it would be too late.

She added that once the service is shut down, it will take five to six months to restart it.

## **Ban Ki-Moon Must Encourage Country to Do Better On Maternal Mortality**

Amnesty International welcomes UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's efforts to improve maternal health and his focus on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in his visit to Sierra Leone. Amnesty International strongly believes that "Delivering solutions for girls and women" is a top priority, and that the MDGs cannot be reached without investment in women.

Amnesty International urges Secretary-General Ban Ki Moon to push for a continued emphasis on transparency and accountability in the implementation of the Government of Sierra Leone's free health care policy for pregnant women, lactating mothers, and children under five, and other initiatives to combat maternal mortality.

Amnesty International welcomes policies, initiatives and plans of action put in place by the Government of Sierra Leone and its commitments to improve maternal health. These commitments have the potential of making real the rights of women and girls enshrined

in international and regional instruments, including in the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa.

However, there are gaps which continue to exist in the realisation of these commitments, and in light of the upcoming "Women Deliver" summit on MDGs in New York, Amnesty International urges Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon to help the Government of Sierra Leone give the elimination of preventable maternal death and ill-health the attention it deserves, notably by addressing the following crucial points:

- The need to combat discrimination and end harmful practices

Discrimination against women, notably their low status in the family prevent them from making key decisions regarding their health, and other human rights violations including harmful practices, such as early marriages and female genital mutilation, can aggravate girls' and women's risk of maternal mortality and morbidity. It is therefore important that when addressing maternal mortality and morbidity in Sierra Leone, the government also addresses the need to combat such discrimination and harmful practices and guarantee women's right to decide whether, when and how many children to have, in line with the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa.

- The need to improve access to sexual and reproductive health and rights

New policies and strategies on sexual and reproductive health and rights are needed, in line with the African Union (AU) Maputo Plan of Action. In this plan, AU Member States commit themselves to repositioning family planning as an essential part of attaining the MDGs, addressing the needs of youth, reducing the incidence of unsafe abortions (including by providing safe abortion services to the fullest extent of the law), and delivering quality and affordable services to promote safe motherhood. Amnesty International believes that fulfilling all these commitments is crucial to saving women's lives and ensuring they can exercise their rights to decide whether and when to become pregnant. We call on the Government of Sierra Leone to fulfil its monitoring and evaluation role in order to ensure that the commitments are followed by concrete, effective implementation. Access to information on sexual and reproductive health and rights, quality of family planning services - which must guarantee the right to confidentiality - and affordable contraceptive products, are of the utmost importance.

- The need to improve quality of maternal care

Lifting financial barriers and improving sexual and reproductive health are both important, but reduction of maternal mortality and morbidity crucially depends on guaranteeing the availability and quality of maternal healthcare services. Shortages of blood, skilled medical personnel and supplies, as well as poor health infrastructure, are major contributing factors to maternal death and ill-health in Sierra Leone. The quality of care often influences the outcome of interventions and it also influences a woman's decision of whether or not to seek care. In order to make free healthcare policies

effective, governments need to take urgent steps to strengthen the health systems. This would include training of medical personnel, improving infrastructure facilities, effective referral system, equitable distribution of medical equipment and medicines and effective monitoring and evaluation systems. We call on the Government of Sierra Leone to concretely and effectively address these issues at the national level and ensure that quality maternal care is addressed as a priority concern.

- The need to reinforce accountability and monitoring

Amnesty International calls on the Government of Sierra Leone to acknowledge the need to monitor and investigate possible shortcomings in the national health system. It is crucial that authorities are able to respond to allegations of corruption, demands for bribes, discriminatory treatment, abuse of patients, lack of facilities, non-availability of drugs, systematic malpractice, or other challenges with the support of an impartial facility-level or investigative authority such as an ombudsman. Patients and notably women should be informed on their right to redress and on the available complaint mechanisms. An investigative authority must have a strong mandate, be adequately resourced and be accessible, independent, and transparent and able to recommend remedies to improve delivery of health services. Women as users of sexual, reproductive and maternal health services need to be able to register complaints with and be heard by this authority, which must be able to provide remedy. We believe that all governments must commit to timely district-level investigations into maternal deaths, to use "UN process indicators" to monitor the availability, utilisation and quality of emergency obstetric care, and to improve reporting of deaths, including through civil registration systems. Accurate reporting and data collection is the first step to understanding the scope of maternal mortality and morbidity and can influence the way that services are delivered and accountability mechanisms are structured. We recommend ratification of the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights which would allow women to petition the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights if their right to health is not fulfilled and they are not able to secure justice locally.

The Government of Sierra Leone has already taken major strides to ensure that girls and women do not die preventable maternal deaths and that they can exercise their right to make decisions regarding pregnancy - that progress must continue so that the government's stated commitments become a reality.

## **Ban Ki-Moon Endorses Inquest**

United Nations secretary-general has said in Freetown that President Ernest Bai Koroma should ensure the implementation of recommendations made by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), noting that without justice, peace can only be temporary.

Ban Ki-Moon was reacting to a question from the press on the position of the UN on the proposed institution of an inquest by the President Koroma-led APC government to investigate the killing of former Inspector General of Police, Bambay Kamara and 28

others by the NPRC military junta in 1992. He said the issue transcends political differences in opinion, noting "I have told the President to implement the TRC recommendations; this is your country, your past and your future should be discussed among yourselves. Without justice, peace can be temporary".

The UN scribe, who was concluding his 24-hour visit to Sierra Leone, recalled that the country had gone through a very tragic conflict with so many unconstitutional changes of governments and many sufferings by the people. He voiced the UN's commitment to strengthening government's efforts to provide decent government opportunities.

According to Mr. Ban, Sierra Leone is one of the successful democratic governments that is consolidating peace and rebuilding, haven already seen two peaceful transitions of power.

"This record must be continued; the 2012 election will be a test of the maturity of the country's democracy that will require full participation and unity," he said.

The UN chief said he is optimistic of the future of Sierra Leone, adding that the United Nations will always stand by the country in times of difficulties.

Moreover, Ban Ki-Moon lauded President Koroma's free health care initiative, among other things, noting that Sierra Leone has become a model of peace, development and multilateral for controlling peace. But he observed: "There are more challenges: youth unemployment, job opportunities, roads, education, electricity and maternal and child health."

"The responsibility of progress lies with the government and people but the international community must be part of it, especially when the 2012 election is approaching."

President Koroma thanked the UN envoy, saying his visit accorded him the opportunity to know the progress made so far in the country. He noted that the people of Sierra Leone are grateful for the UN's support during the country's trying times.

Koroma stressed his government's commitment to the consolidation of peace and the building of infrastructures, stating "that is why my government has put in place the agenda for change".

"My government will continue on the part of moving forward, and my government is open and transparent, which is demonstrated by the laws that have been put in place," he stressed.

He however admitted that there are still challenges to be surmounted, especially the youth unemployment but that he was encouraged by the visit of the UN chief.

## **'No Discrimination in the Use of SLBC' - President Koroma Warns**

President Ernest Bai Koroma says there should be no discrimination in the use of the Sierra Leone Broadcasting Corporation (SLBC) facilities and equipments. He made this statement during the commissioning of the SLBC facilities and handing over of its equipments to the chairman Board of Trustees of the station, Prof. Septimus Kaikai.

According to Mr. Koroma, no political party, civil society, paramount chief or any other person or persons should be prevented from using the station's facilities and equipments.

He commended the United Nations Peacebuilding Office in Sierra Leone (UNIPSIL) for donating the sum of US\$800,000 in addition to the US\$2 million that the government provided to ensure the broadcaster covers the entire country.

"The former SLBS now SLBC was in a poor state," President Koroma pointed out, adding that it was his dream to see the station be the envy of the sub-region.

In his commissioning statement, Koroma said the event marked a milestone in the promotion of democracy in Africa. His administration, he maintained, was the only government in Africa that has transformed its only mouthpiece into a corporation.

A transitional management team was set up to facilitate the transformation of the SLBS into a corporation. The president urged members of the Board of Trustees to be committed, as "no voice would be marginalized in the use of the facility".

"I believe this station is going to be used in all districts, towns and villages in a democratic manner," he said, but was quick to stress that fair play and accountability must be upheld.

UN secretary-general Ban Ki-Moon, who also witnessed the commissioning ceremony, said the decade-long civil war plunged Sierra Leone into darkness, recalling that during the peace process the only tool was the UN radio which had sub-stations in all districts across the country.

He reminded the gathering that the UN had conducted two successful democratic elections, thus giving credit to the people of Sierra Leone for their support.

He thanked members of the former UN radio and commended parliament and the SLBC chairman for the successful passing of the SLBC Act.

"Journalists should practice their profession without being criminalised," he emphasized but cautioned that they must also respect the rights of other people.

The UN scribe assured that Sierra Leone will continue to receive unremitting support from the UN.

Information and communication minister, Alhaji Ibrahim Ben Kargbo who chaired the programme, said the transmitters used in Kabala and Pujehun were purchased by UNIPSIL.

He said the SLBC is one of the best in Africa.

## **BENIN**

### **Ban Gets First-Hand Look At Nation's Progress in Attaining Anti-Poverty Targets**

Benin has made significant gains in reducing poverty and expanding primary education, Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon observed on Sunday on a visit to the West African nation, while pledging United Nations support for a range of challenges such as food security and the environment.

The country's efforts to attain the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) - eight targets to slash poverty, fight hunger and tackle other key social and economic problems by 2015 - were the focus of Mr. Ban's visit, part of a five-nation African tour.

At a town hall meeting in Cotonou with UN staff the Secretary-General noted that Benin is doing well in a number of areas, including improving primary education, reducing infant mortality and increasing access to safe drinking water.

However, progress has been slower on sanitation and the environment, gender equality and food security, he added.

Mr. Ban encouraged staff to "think and act and deliver as one United Nations" as they work to help the country tackle its challenges.

On a visit to the Songhai project in nearby Porto Novo, the Secretary-General was able to see first hand an innovative, ecologically sustainable agro-business centre which is providing a network of agricultural entrepreneurs to Benin and to the region.

The centre integrates various elements such as agro-business, renewable energy, manufacturing and technical development, as well as something Mr. Ban referred to as a "spirit of self-help." The project should serve as an example for many in Africa, he said.

"I am going to use my visit to Songhai as a strong message to many people in the world, particularly in the developing world, to follow this very creative, innovative system," he stated. "This is the way you achieve sustainable development."

Mr. Ban has noted that without achieving sustainable development and the MDGs, Africa will not find the promise and prosperity that its people so richly deserve. Progress towards the MDGs varies across the continent, but UN officials have warned that sub-Saharan Africa is the region struggling most to reach the targets.

World leaders are slated to meet at UN Headquarters in New York this September to chart the progress made so far and to determine where efforts need to be focused over the next five years.

Mr. Ban said in remarks to a debate on the MDGs held in Cotonou that his message to the summit will be clear: "We know what to do. We know how to do it. We can succeed.

"Where we are falling short, in Benin or elsewhere, it is not because the goals are too ambitious or because of limited time, but because of unmet commitments and inadequate scaling up of what works.

The Secretary-General wraps up his visit to Benin tomorrow and then heads to Sierra Leone, the last leg on his current tour which also took him to South Africa, Burundi and Cameroon.