

Anti-Corruption Day Message
In Observance of 2024 International Anti-
Corruption Day
Delivered
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Monrovia City Hall Ballroom
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Honorable N. Oswald Tweh, Minister of Justice and Attorney General, Republic of Liberia; Madam Christine Umuotoni, UN Resident Coordinators; members of the Diplomatic Corp; bilateral and international partners and organizations; other representatives of Government, heads of integrity institutions, the National Integrity Forum; civil society organizations; commissioners and hardworking staff of the LACC; members of the 4th Estate, students; distinguished ladies and Gentlemen:

I am deeply honored to offer a few words of remarks at this in-door program marking the official observance of 2024 International Anti-Corruption Day. Although this is my second IACD message, it is notwithstanding a special one because the theme of this year's celebration is not only significant, but also obligatory. Like in the context of parents and children, this year's theme: "Uniting with Youth Against Corruption: Shaping

Tomorrow's Integrity" is inundated with presuppositions:

The theme presupposes:

- 1.) That prior to 2024, adult anti-corruption actors and stakeholders have largely excluded youth;
- 2.) That young people have all along charted their own anti-corruption campaigns without adults or with limited interest, support and participation of adults as state and non-state actors;
- 3.) That there is a recognition of a potential integrity gap for future leaders; and
- 4.) And most importantly, there is a realization of dereliction of duty by this generation of leaders to emerging leaders to accompany us on this momentous journey of integrity-based leadership.

As we acknowledge the error of the past, I admonish us all to generate impetus from the words of Martin Luther King, when he said, "the time is always ripe to do right". It is time high time the global anti-corruption community resolved to close ranks with youth in combatting and preventing corruption, and call on leaders of today to pass on the baton of leadership to the next generation of leaders with legacies of integrity, transparency, accountability and good governance.

The 2024 Global Theme: “Uniting with Youth Against Corruption: Shaping Tomorrow’s Integrity” presupposes that prior to this year, adult anti-corruption actors and stakeholders have largely excluded youth in planning and implementing anti-corruption interventions. The theme acknowledges young people as an important population segment and actor in the fight against corruption worldwide. This acknowledgement has special significance for Liberia, with youth constituting more than sixty-three (63%) percent of the population. Notwithstanding this stats, one would ask to what extent are youth involved in Government, and decision-making processes at national and subnational levels. Are young people prepared to advocate for their place at the table of national decision-making as actors with adult stakeholders? Are there leadership development programs to prepare youth for leadership roles now and for the future?

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, Stakeholders in the fight against corruption, as we unite with youth in the fight against corruption in shaping tomorrow’s integrity, the natural starting point is education. Education plays a powerful role in shaping the values of young people and their perspectives of the world. The objective of such education should transcend mere academic achievements and focus on learning life skills like honesty, accountability, and fairness. Schools and

educational programs that concentrate on critical thinking and problem solving help young people understand the importance of integrity in decision-making.

Presuppositions two and three are essentially admission of guilt for limited interest and/or support to youth-led initiatives, and in some sense, their denial by adult to meaningfully participate in the governance and development planning programs of their nations. It is obvious that there is a potential integrity gap between today's leaders and future leaders.

In this regard, ladies and gentlemen, I recommend we employ mentorship in shaping tomorrow's integrity in the leadership development programs of nations, institutions and organizations, as well as at households and community levels.

Mentors play a significant role in shaping the character of young minds. Young people naturally look up to adults for guidance, and mentors who demonstrate integrity through their actions inspire youth to follow their lead. Hence, a teacher, parent, coach, or community leader, consistent modeling of honesty, respect, and accountability leaves a lasting impression on young people.

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, my fellow compatriots, mentorship program that focus on

leadership development must particularly be impactful. These programs should give young people the opportunity to observe how mentors handle challenges, admit mistakes, and prioritize fairness in decision-making.

Presupposition four (04) realizes the apparent dereliction of duty by this generation of leaders to emerging leaders to accompany us on this momentous journey of integrity-based leadership. This is certainly not a mistake we wish to make, as the consequences are enduring, disastrous and catastrophic. Already, we are losing our young boys and girls to drugs and crime; our young girls to prostitutions, and our boys have left schools to ride motorbike as breadwinners. If we are not careful to reverse this trend, and include and involve youth in the National Development Plan, Arrest Agenda for Inclusive Development; the consequences of the current breed of leaders abandoning our responsibilities to the youth of this Country will be long, embarrassing and shameful.

The LACC willing and available to work with the Ministry of Education to enforce the implementation of the 2011 Education Act and, as well as collaborate with the Ministry to weed out corrupt teachers and administrators from the education system. In the same vein, I challenge national government to incentivize

teachers and administrators, and improve education services throughout Liberia.

Additionally, mentorship is a crucial part of youth development. In this regard, the Commission is willing and available to work with the Ministry of Youth & Sports to organize a mentorship program that pairs youth with prominent public figures in government and the private sector, who have track records of integrity. Our young people need such individuals to inspire and motivate them in their pursuit of integrity, excellence and leadership development, and ultimately shape them for tomorrow's integrity.

To the international community, it time we matched program funding with outcome. It is a standardized practice to measure development interventions by the changes that occurred as a result of projects or program implementation. It is high time we placed premium on Monitoring and Evaluation and demand value for money in development interventions. As development partners of Liberia, the LACC is willing and available to work with you to include M&E Framework in all development projects to enable us jointly monitor and evaluate them upon completion, identify strengths and challenges, as well as lessons learnt. This will enhance planning of future projects and improve outcome.

To our political leaders, your rhetoric is not enough; we need actions. You must embody, exemplify and demonstrate integrity in the discharge of your duties and responsibilities. Remember, the spotlight is on you. The youth of Liberia looks up to you for honesty, accountability, and fairness. You dare dash not their hope.

Liberia's Arrest Agenda for Inclusive Development is on the horizon. The strategic objectives are appetizing and it imbeds the hope and aspirations of the Liberian people from 2025 to 2029. We laud the President's technology project for youth, and anticipate that the training will translate into absorptive capacity and employment opportunities for the youth of Liberia in the coming months.

This generation of Liberian leaders is under obligation to pass on the baton to emerging leaders of tomorrow. The transition must be smooth and meaningful, knowing that our successors are not only competent academically and professionally, but they are also imbued with integrity values that can withstand leadership challenges and criticisms of political oppositions. As we gradually practicalize generational change, we cannot afford to ignore the education and effective mentorship for our future leaders. Hence, we must be intentional and nationalistic about our obligation to the youth of Liberia.

To the youth of Liberia, I charge you to fight for your place at the table of national decision-making. Insist on your representation and participation in policy making and development planning processes. Avoid the gratification that comes from proceeds of corruption

Corruption is the greatest enemy to Liberia progress and our shared prosperity. Liberians from all walks of life must unite against corruption. I call on all Liberians at home and abroad, young and old, rich or poor, educated or illiterate, Christians or Muslims, African traditional Religion, social and economic status, Americo-Liberians or natives; we are all victims of a collective national indictment.

After more than one hundred and seventy-seven years of independence, we are still struggling to supply pipe-borne water to residents of Monrovia; after 177 years, we can barely provide stable electricity to undergird economic activities and enhance industrial development. After 177 years, the vast majority of our citizenry still live on less than One United States Dollars a day. After 177 years, we are still constructing primary roads to connect to our county capitals. After 177 years, we cannot feed ourselves even with vast rain forest and fertile soil.

Fellow compatriots, friendly governments, partners, distinguished ladies and gentlemen, in view of the

foregoing, *Uniting with Youth Against Corruption: Shaping Tomorrow's Integrity* is not an option but a national imperative.

Fellow Liberians, ladies and gentlemen:

With heart and hand,

Our Country's cause defending,

We'll meet corruption with valor unpretending

In Union strong, success is sure

We cannot fail

With God above, our rights to prove,

We will over all prevail

Thank you