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U.S.-based Liberian Groups Meet with Vice President Boakai in New York; Outline Several Issues of Concern Including the Need for Reconciliation and Progress

(NEW YORK, U.S.A. – Friday, September 18, 2015) Vice President Joseph Nyumah Boakai has held discussion with United States-based Liberian groups with keen focus on promoting reconciliation and fostering progress and development in Liberia.

According to a dispatch, the meetings were held in New York on Friday, September 18, 2015. The Liberian Vice President led a high-level government's delegation to the U.S.-Liberia Trade and Investment Forum organized by the Developing Market Associates (DMA) in collaboration with the Governments of Liberia and the United States of America.

Vice President Boakai met separately with the leadership of the Grand Gedeh Association in America and a conglomerate of Liberians in the U.S. under the banner, "The Patriots", at the Marriott Marquis Hotel in New York City. The meetings were held at the separate requests of the two organizations.

At the meeting with the Grand Gedeh Association in America, the group's president, Fred Gwyan, indicated that they are glad that Liberia has enjoyed 10 consecutive years of peace and stability, but noted that much more was required to consolidate the peace and promote unity and reconciliation.

He stressed that both he and President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf have been opened and receptive to Grand Gedehans both in Liberia and the USA as reflected in meetings that have taken place with them whenever they were in the USA at their request.

Mr. Gwyan however told the Liberian Vice President that the prolonged detention of some of his compatriots for mercenary activities in Côte d'Ivoire was a concern to his association and diminishes the benefits of the 10 years of consecutive peace for citizens of Grand Gedeh County.

He then appealed to Vice President Boakai to deliver a special message to President Sirleaf seeking executive clemency for their kinsmen and expressed the hope that the granting of executive clemency to the detained Grand Gedeh citizens will help promote and foster peace, unity and reconciliation in Liberia and enable them to fully benefit from the dividends of the current peace being enjoyed by Liberians.

Mr. Gwyan further pointed out that they are aware of the legal process and do respect the decision of the Liberian court system; but believe that granting clemency to their kinsmen is good for Liberia's healing process and for the relationship between the people of Grand Gedeh County and the Government of Liberia.

Mr. Gwyan also raised concern about job opportunities for Grand Gedehans at the level of ministers, deputy ministers, assistant ministers, as well as high levels of public corporation and autonomous agencies. He is of the opinion that Grand Gedehans are not currently enjoying full participation in the national pie.

He also used the opportunity to express appreciation to President Sirleaf and Vice President Boakai for their leadership and for the current peace in Liberia.

For his part, the Liberian Vice President thanked the leadership of the Grand Gedeh Association in America for the visit and reflected on an invitation extended to him after the 2006 elections to address a convention of the association in Iowa at that time. He pointed out that Liberians are one people and that it was unfortunate that war and conflict have divided Liberians as a people.

He informed the U.S.-based Grand Gedehans that the government of President Sirleaf had nothing personal with them and pointed to a number of Grand Gedehans who have served in many capacities in government including cabinet ministers. He also informed them that Liberia has for the first time in many times existed without political prisoners and assured the delegation that their concerns will be delivered to President Sirleaf upon his return and promised that the government will continue to pursue reconciliation and peacebuilding initiatives.

Members of the Grand Gedeh delegation attending the meeting included its president, Fred Gywan; secretary general, Rancy Wright; daughter of the late President Samuel Doe, Celue Doe; Committee Secretary, Ralph Jolo; chair of ways and means committee, Victoria Coleman and Constance Y. Glay.

In a related development, the Liberian Vice President also met with a conglomerate of Liberians based in the United States of America under the banner, “The Patriots”. The “Patriots” are a stakeholders group with membership across the United States of America that has as its objective, the election of Vice President Boakai as President of Liberia during the 2017 general and presidential election.

The spokesperson, Gayah Fahnbulleh, informed Vice President Boakai that they have followed his work and history and believe that Liberia needs his experience, maturity and professionalism in 2017 as the country will be at the crossroad and in dire need for a leader who will move the country forward.

They expressed their willingness and commitment to work with the “Joseph Nyumah Boakai Movement”, a citizens group based in Liberia that is also committed to the election of Vice President Boakai in 2017.

Vice President Boakai thanked the group for the visit and the pledge of support him and assured them that together, they can make Liberia maintain its rightful place in global affairs and elevate the country’s development profile.

He also urged them to remain focus and committed to achieve the goals for which they exist.

Some prominent Liberians present at the meeting at the meeting included Mr. D. Karn Kalor, Richmond Draper, Sando Wayne, Scott Davis, Sahr Johnny, Joseph Tolbert, among others.

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