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Liberia's Ambassador to the U.S. Calls on Liberians to Unite for the Good of the Country

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by Gabriel I.H. Williams

Washington, D.C.: Liberia's Ambassador to the United States, H.E. George S.W. Patten, Sr., has called on Liberians to unite and work together for the good of the country.

Speaking to members of the Liberian community at a town hall meeting on April 26, 2019 in the City of Brooklyn Park, Minnesota, U.S.A., Ambassador Patten said that unity of purpose is essential to ensure sustainable development and progress in Liberia.



[1]
Ambassador Patten Speaking at Brooklyn Park event in Minnesota

The town hall meeting was held under the auspices of the Organization of Liberians in Minnesota (OLM), the umbrella Liberian community organization in the State of Minnesota.

"In order for more businesses to develop and prosper, in order to create more jobs and reduce poverty, it is imperative for Liberians to unite and focus on the process of nation-building," he said.

According to a dispatch from the Liberian Embassy in the United States, Ambassador Patten cautioned that despite political and other differences, Liberians must unite to sustain the peace and stability of the country.

"We, as Liberians, must try to change our attitude toward our country and show love for our country," he said, adding that division will only tear the country apart and hamper progress. He also added that it is of critical importance that all Liberians work together to ensure that Liberia remains peaceful.

During the town hall meeting, which was characterized by questions and answers, Ambassador Patten also called on Liberian entrepreneurs and professionals of diverse background to invest in Liberia and to be positively engaged in the development of the country.

Ambassador Patten was in Minnesota on his first visit to engage with the Liberian community, as well as to further enhance the relationship between the Republic of Liberia and the State of Minnesota, especially in the

areas of trade and investment, agriculture, transfer of knowledge and skills, among others.

Among highlights of his three-day visit, Ambassador Patten met with Minnesota Governor Tim Walz at the Minnesota State Capitol, during which he lauded the State of Minnesota and Governor Walz for the strong support to the Liberian community in Minnesota, especially in the effort to finding a solution to the immigration challenges faced by many Liberians on Deferred Enforcement Departure (DED).

He used the opportunity of the meeting with Governor Walz to appeal to the State of Minnesota to undertake a trade mission to Liberia with a focus on health, education, tourism, agriculture, and job creation. He also expressed the need to further strengthen and expand sister-city relationships between cities in Liberia and Minnesota.

In response, Governor Walz welcomed the proposal for a trade mission to Liberia, noting that there are many areas in which the Republic of Liberia and the State of Minnesota can partner, which would be mutually beneficial to both sides. Governor Walz described the Liberian community in Minnesota, which is estimated to be about 40,000, as a critical part of Minnesota economically and professionally, and he assured that his administration would do all that is necessary to develop close partnership with Liberia.

Ambassador Patten also had a meeting with members of the growing Liberian business community in Minnesota, during which he noted that the government of President George Manneh Weah is focused on efforts to bring about infrastructural and economic development. Accordingly, He said, the government is focused on road reconstruction, agricultural development, health and education, in order to improve the conditions of the Liberian people.

He emphasized that from the beginning of his administration, President Weah has been working assiduously to bring about the enabling environment for Liberians in the Diaspora to be actively involved in the development of the country, such as the initiative to bring about dual citizenship and creating economic incentives for Liberian entrepreneurs to invest in the country.

He called on all Liberians with the requisite skills and entrepreneurship to return home to contribute to the development of the country and for improved economic activities for more job creation.

He urged Liberians to exercise patience, as the government takes relevant measures to stabilize the economy, which has been in decline since the Ebola epidemic.

The business forum, which was held under the auspices of the Liberian Business Association in the Diaspora and the Honorary Consulate of Liberia in Minnesota, was also attended by Hon. Wilson K. Tarpeh, Minister of Commerce and Industry.

Also speaking at the business forum, Minister Tarpeh said he was surprisingly delighted and impressed to see that Liberian entrepreneurs in Minnesota are doing well, and therefore, they can contribute significantly to the development of the Liberian economy.

He emphasized that Liberia was ready for business, and that Liberian entrepreneurs in the Diaspora should take advantage of the conducive business climate in Liberia. He assured that the government will work with Liberian entrepreneurs in the Diaspora, as the government seeks to promote more Liberian involvement in the economy of Liberia.

Ambassador Patten also attended a luncheon hosted by the Minnesota Consul Corp, during which he announced that Liberia is ready for business. He added that the Liberian Embassy in Washington, D.C., and the Honorary Consulate of Liberia in Minnesota stand ready to work with investors who are prepared to go to Liberia to explore investment possibilities.

Ambassador Patten was also a guest at the well-attended and impressive 3rd Annual African Women Business Symposium, hosted under the auspices of the Liberian Business Association in the Diaspora and the Honorary Consulate of Liberia in Minnesota, during which he encouraged Liberian and other business entrepreneurs to

see Liberia as an attractive destination for business.

The keynote speaker at the 3rd African Women Business Symposium was Her Excellency Dr. Arikana Chihombori-Quao, Ambassador of the African Union to the United States, who expressed the need for Africans and peoples of African descent to harness their resources for the common good of Africa and the African race.

Members of the Ambassador's delegation in Minnesota included Liberia's Consul General in New York, Hon. Rudolph Sherman; Liberia's Honorary Consul to Minnesota, Hon. Jackson George; and the Minister Counselor for Press and Public Affairs at the Embassy of Liberia in Washington, D.C., Hon. Gabriel I.H. Williams.

The President of the Liberian Business Association, Mr. James M. Strother, traveled from Liberia to participate in the business events.

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