

DIASPORA CONSULTATIONS ON THE REVIEW OF THE 1986 CONSTITUTION OF THE REPUBLIC OF LIBERIA- CITIZENS OF MINNESOTA AND ATLANTA GEORGIA, UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

JUNE 21, 2014

The Liberia Constitution Review Committee has honored its commitment to ensure the participation of Liberian citizens at home and abroad in the review of the 1986 Constitution of Liberia as mandated by the President of the Republic of Liberia.

The Committee which adopted the bottom to top method of constitution review has consistently insisted that the inclusion of all Liberians irrespective of social, educational, religious, physical, political and economic differences would make the outcome legitimate, acceptable, owned, jealously guarded and protected by the people.

To assure the implementation of this methodology, the Constitution Review Committee has conducted consultations with Liberians dwelling in communities; held interactive meetings at local tea shops commonly referred to hatai intellectual centers; as well as hospitals, churches, mosque, professional bodies, governmental bodies, electoral districts and the diaspora among others.

Though, from the beginning of the process, the efforts leading to the success of these meetings were challenging and sometimes frustrating, the Committee did not abandon its foundational principles of inclusion, participation, respect for divergent views, consensus building, transparency, and honesty throughout the processes. This is owed to the subsequent responses of Liberian citizens and their delight to be consulted on issues that would shape their nation for the better and transform the socio-economic and structural state of their country.

Also, encouraged by the unwavering financial and professional supports of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP, LIBERIA), the Committee has dared to enter more challenging frontiers with the resilience to overcome past difficulties including eminent ones.

As part of its “all Liberians inclusion agenda,” the Constitution Review Committee sent two consultative teams to the United States of America to hold consultations with Liberians residing there with the hope of capturing their views in the review of the 1986 Constitution.

The diaspora venture has proved to be both a necessity and worthy cause as those Liberians who took interest in the process met with the two teams. Discussions were held with the leadership of Liberian communities in Minneapolis of the State of Minnesota, USA and Atlanta of the State of Georgia USA by the Amelia Ward’s Delegation which included Rev. Dr. Jasper Ndaborlor and D. Wa Hne, Jr. while the other team which included Dr. D. Elwood and Rev. Kennedy Sandy of the CRC as well as Cllr. Weh Dorlaie conducted consultations with Liberian Communities in Maryland and Philadelphia States

Both teams encountered difficulties in getting the meetings off the ground. This was a result challenging circumstances. However, results were achieved and Liberians in those communities were able to share their views with the CRC which have form part of the CRC’s working tools. Besides the below proposals

received on the working visit, Liberian Communities in the USA continue to demonstrate interest in the process.

The below is a summary of issues which Liberians Minnesota and Atlanta States took keen interest in.

The Concerns of the leaderships and participants centered on the following:

- Dual citizenship
- Tenure of elected officials of government
- Decentralization
- Naturalization
- Education
- Inclusion
- Resources
- Corruption
- Salary structures
- Elections Commission among others.

OUTCOME OF MEETINGS:

MIANAPOLIS, MINNESOTA STATE

COMMON ORAL AND WRITTEN VIEWS OF INDIVIDUAL LIBERIANS IN MINNESOTA:

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- a. Dual citizenship should become constitutional.
- b. Presidential term of office should be reduced to 4 years
- c. Vice Presidential term of office should be reduced to 4 years.
- d. Senatorial term of office should be reduced to 6 years
- e. Representatives' term of office should be reduced to 4 years.
- f. There should be election of superintendents
- g. There should be freeze on naturalization.
- h. Anti-tribal sentiments or statements should be made a capital offense.
- i. National identity cards should be used to engage into activities such as travelling, opening of bank accounts, enrolling in college, employment, and business transactions.
- j. Articles 27 and 28 needs to be clarified on the issue of dual citizenship during the review process to state how a person should be considered as dual citizen.
- k. Article 56 should be amended so that those who elect can remove.
- l. There should be ordinances on construction of residences in certain areas.
- m. Declaration of Assets should be made constitutional and binding on all elected officials and political appointees.

COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP POSITIONS ORALLY EXPRESSED:

- a. Dual citizenship should be granted
- b. Tenure of the President, Vice President, Senators and Representatives should be reduced from 6 years to 4 years and from 9 years to 6 years.

- c. Governance should be decentralized.

DESENTING VIEWS FROM OTHER INDIVIDUALS:

- a. Dual citizenship should not be accepted as it could endanger Liberia's security in the future through foreign population domination and loyalty to their mother country.

ATLANTA GEORGIA:

COMMON VIEWS OF INDIVIDUAL LIBERIANS IN ATLANTA GEORGIA ORALLY EXPRESSED.

JUNE 22, 2014

- a. Dual citizenship should be granted.
- b. Reduction of presidential powers through decentralization.
- c. The constitution is not a problem but implementation.
- d. Liberia needs to focus on education as it is the bed-rock for democracy.
- e. The Constitution should be written in local languages.
- f. The people should elect their local leaders.
- g. The local people should be a part of mineral resource negotiation
- h. There should be tribal ownership and protection of lands and they must be a part of land negotiations to foreign investors.
- i. The constitution should look at salaries structures and the institution that should be responsible.
- j. Corruption should be a constitutional offense with penalties.
- k. The Constitution should separate the Church/religion from the state to avoid religious war.
- l. The issue of dual citizenship should be keenly scrutinized. The constitution should seek to give protection to those who are Liberians instead of those who with dual nationalities.
- m. The Constitution established the Election Commission but is unclear who should appoint the commissioners. This should be contained in the provision.
- n. Indirectly selling lands to foreigners through proxies should be stopped.
- o. If dual citizenship should be accepted, there should be a caveat. They should not be allowed to hold elective positions and political appointments.
- p. Liberia should be regionalized with elected governing heads. The country is too small to elect superintendents.

LEADERSHIP POSITION:

- a. Dual citizenship should be granted Liberians in the diaspora.
- b. Decentralization of governance should be done to spread development and reduce presidential powers.

DESENTING POSITIONS FROM OTHER LIBERIANS:

- Dual citizenship should not be accepted.
- Liberia is small for the election of superintendents rather the combining of counties should be done and divided into regions for effectiveness and election of regional heads.