

KEYNOTE ADDRESS

By

Honorable Joseph Nyuma Boakai, Sr.

Vice President of the Republic of Liberia

at the

One Day CSOs Whistle-Blower & Witness Protection Colloquium

Hosted By the

Liberia Anti-Corruption Commission (LACC)

Golden Key Hotel, King Gray Community
Paynesville, Liberia

Wednesday, June 21, 2017

Executive Chairman James N. Verdier, Jr. of the LACC;

Distinguished Commissioners of the LACC;

Honorable Members of the Legislature Present;

***Honorable Minister of Justice and other Officials of Government
Present;***

Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary General,

Honorable Farid Zarif;

Ambassador Christine Elder of the United States;

European Union Ambassador Tina Intelmann;

Our Governance Reform Partners;

Foreign Diplomats;

The Media;

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen:

I find it an honor and pleasure to be back with you today to again highlight the critical necessity of protection of whistle blowers whose roles are pivotal in our fight against corruption.

We were last together in late May 2015, when we moderated the High Level Roundtable on Corruption. Even before that, I had the privilege of sharing time with you at your Head Office at ceremonies marking the commemoration of International Corruption Day, when I served as proxy for the President.



I am thus excited to be here today for us to exchange views on the essence of the protection of whistle blowers in our collective cause of rendering the fight against corruption more efficacious.

In all fairness, we have to acknowledge that much has been done in this effort to subdue, if not eliminate, corruption in this country. We remain resolved to break the chain of corruption, thereby refining our governance and financial management systems. Doing this will help to provide good education, health care delivery services, and social protection for all. I do feel embarrassed that every time we face our partners, we are either asking them for favor or thanking them for one we have received.

I outlined to you at the December 2014 International Corruption Day ceremony, as I remind you today, that we have continued to demonstrate this Government's commitment to the fight against this societal malaise.

We enumerated a lineup of steps that we have taken in this pursuit, reinforced by the issuance by the President of two Executive orders (Executive Order No. 38 in 2012 and Executive Order No. 55 in 2013) for members of the Executive Branch of Government to declare their assets in support of our overall drive to ensure that those coming to public service do so with the highest degree of transparency and accountability.

Other notable strides we have registered include our work with members of the Legislature for the passage of the Freedom of Information Act and now the National Code of Conduct which was finally passed in June 2014, a statute that was recently upheld by the Honorable Supreme Court of Liberia.

We have continued to point to the adoption of a National Anti-Corruption Strategy (NAS), led by the Governance Commission (GC), in partnership with Civil Society; the revamping of the General Auditing Commission, the establishment of the Public Procurement and Concession Commission (PPCC), the Liberia Extractive industry and Transparency Initiative (LEITI), and the Internal Audit Agency (IAA).



To this, we should add the Financial Intelligence Unit, the Liberia Revenue Authority (LRA), and the Law Reform Commission (LRC), among others.

Today, we convene here for further work on the whistle blower and witness protection effort. You certainly have been hard at work in pushing this cause to the best your capacity can allow.

In collaboration with other partners and stakeholders you conducted a three day Whistle-blower and Witness Protection Workshop in September of last year. In March of this year, you coalesced with other anti-graft institutions, civil society organizations and the Liberia National Bar Association to host a three day whistle-blower and witness protection workshop which produced the draft whistle-blower and witness protection bill. You even held a validation workshop on this draft bill last April.

Our purpose here today, as set by the Commission, is to solicit the buy-in of members of the Legislature and further raise awareness among civil society and other state actors on this national cause. For my part, I need not stress my support for all measures that will go to emboldening the fight against corruption. You are thus assured of my unreserved commitment in all endeavors you make to tackle this challenge.

As has been noted, vices are more conveniently perpetrated under the cover of darkness or in isolated places. Strenuous efforts are made by evil doers to evade detection and eliminate evidence.

As such, those who manage to witness crime are instantly viewed as threats that deserve only elimination or incapacitation. The extent to which a person witnessing crime feels safe and secure, hence, determines the extent of his or her cooperation in the effort to expose and persecute perpetrators. It should therefore be simple logic for all well intentioned fighters of corruption to lend full support to the institution of measures and safeguards to protect whistle blowers and witnesses.



My urge to our Honorable legislators has been to accord the promulgation of whistle blower and witness protection matters the full and urgent attention that they deserve. I should, in the same breadth, also remind all that our overall fight against this scourge of corruption demands the best of virtues in ourselves as foot soldiers in this fight. Put more pointedly, one who steps forth to fight a vice must himself/herself be inoculated from the habit of indulging in the same misdeeds.

To stand upright as an enforcer of anti-corruption measures one must first be able to live a life free of corrupt practices. We will have to live exemplary lives. Otherwise we risk betraying our purpose and turning to be the proverbial fish that starts getting rotten from the head.

Only if, and when, we demonstrate our commitment to this fight by upholding such lofty moral standards can we meaningfully thank our partners, supporters and collaborators as well as urge them on in this fight.

Let me thus thank all of you as I express my confidence in the high caliber of participants, presenters, and discussants who are here to do justice to the subject matter.

Thank you again for the invitation and may God continue to strengthen us in this worthy cause to refine and redeem our society for the enhancement of our lives.

I thank you.

