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Office of the Acting Chairman

STATEMENT BY THE COMMISSION AT THE SIGNING OF MEMORANDA OF UNDERSTANDING WITH THE LEADERSHIP OF WAR VICTIMS OF LIBERIA AND THE LIBERIA PEACEBUILDING OFFICE

Distinguished Representatives of the Government of Liberia;
The Leadership of War Victims of Liberia;
The Leadership of the Liberia Peacebuilding Office;
Representatives of Civil Society Organizations;
Members of the Media;
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen:

It is with great pleasure and a profound sense of responsibility that we gather today to witness the signing of two separate Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) between the Commission, the Leadership of War Victims of Liberia, and the Liberia Peacebuilding Office.

Today's occasion represents more than the signing of institutional documents. It is a demonstration of our shared commitment to advancing the cause of justice, promoting peace, protecting human rights, and ensuring that the experiences and concerns of victims of Liberia's civil conflict remain central to our national reconciliation efforts.

The decision by the Commission to sign separate MOUs with these two institutions is deliberate and significant. While both partnerships contribute to our broader national objectives of peace, justice, and accountability, each institution brings a distinct mandate, experience, and responsibility to the process.

The MOU with the Leadership of War Victims of Liberia recognizes the indispensable role of victims in the pursuit of justice and national healing. War victims are not merely beneficiaries of interventions; they are important stakeholders whose voices, experiences, and concerns must inform policies and decisions intended to address the consequences of our country's violent past. This partnership will strengthen communication, promote coordinated interventions, and provide a platform for identifying and responding to the continuing needs of victims.

Indeed, our collaboration is already producing practical results. The Commission has recently worked with the Leadership of War Victims of Liberia and provided interventions to facilitate medical assistance for four war victims in Nimba and

Montserrado Counties. Although this intervention may appear modest in comparison to the enormous needs of war victims across the country, it demonstrates that our commitment goes beyond statements and institutional engagements. It is a practical expression of our determination to respond to the suffering of survivors and to work with victims' organizations in identifying and addressing their immediate needs.

On the other hand, the MOU with the Liberia Peacebuilding Office establishes an important framework for institutional cooperation in strengthening peacebuilding and human rights protection. Through this partnership, both institutions will support and complement each other's efforts in promoting peace, respect for the rights and dignity of all people, monitoring developments that threaten peaceful coexistence, and reporting on early warning signs of violence, human rights violations, and other forms of abuse.

We recognize that sustainable peace cannot be achieved through the absence of armed conflict alone. It requires institutions that are responsive, communities that are protected, citizens whose rights are respected, and mechanisms capable of identifying and addressing tensions before they escalate into violence. We therefore see this MOU as an opportunity to strengthen information-sharing, coordination, monitoring, and joint action in the interest of national peace and stability.

Let me emphasize that these MOUs are not being signed for publicity or ceremonial recognition. They are well-intentioned commitments and a demonstration of genuine collaboration. Their value will not be measured by the photographs taken today or the documents exchanged, but by the practical results they produce in the lives of victims, the protection of human rights, and the strengthening of peace in Liberia. We expect each institution to take these commitments seriously and translate them into meaningful actions.

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen:

While we celebrate this important institutional milestone, we must also recognize the broader national responsibility to address the unresolved consequences of Liberia's civil war.

Let me take this opportunity to congratulate the Government of Liberia, particularly His Excellency President Joseph Nyuma Boakai, Sr for the launch of the Liberia Peace, Reconciliation and Memorial Museum. This is an important step toward preserving our national history, honoring those who lost their lives during the war, promoting historical awareness, and ensuring that future generations understand the painful experiences that shaped our country.

Memorialization is an essential component of transitional justice. It gives recognition to the suffering of victims, preserves the truth about our past, and reinforces our collective determination never to return to the violence that devastated our nation.

However, as we celebrate progress in accountability and memorialization, we must not lose sight of another equally important obligation: reparations for victims and survivors of the civil war.

Since the conclusion of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), successive governments have not taken meaningful steps to address the outstanding issue of reparations for victims. This remains a serious gap in Liberia's transitional justice process. While efforts to pursue criminal accountability and memorialize those who lost their lives are necessary and commendable, they must not come at the expense of addressing the continuing agony of survivors.

Many victims are still struggling with serious health challenges, physical and psychological trauma, economic hardship, poverty, and the absence of adequate support to rebuild their lives. For these individuals, the war did not simply end with the signing of peace agreements. Its consequences continue to affect their health, livelihoods, families, and dignity every day.

We must therefore be honest with ourselves as a nation: honoring the dead without addressing the suffering of the living leaves an important part of our transitional justice obligations unfulfilled. Criminal accountability, truth-telling, memorialization, and reparations are complementary pillars of justice. Progress in one area should strengthen, not replace, our responsibility to act in the others.

Of particular concern is the fact that the current national budget contains zero allocation for reparations to war victims, despite the Commission's efforts to advocate for an appropriation. This situation is regrettable and calls for urgent reconsideration by the relevant authorities. Reparations should not remain a promise indefinitely postponed or an issue that receives attention only during public discussions and commemorative events.

Our Call to the National Legislature

In light of these realities, the Commission is calling on the National Legislature, particularly the leadership of the House of Representatives and the Senate, to demonstrate the necessary political will by making a dedicated allocation of **at least US$150,000** as an initial step toward addressing reparations for war victims in the 2027 National Budget.

We recognize that the needs of victims are enormous and that this proposed amount will not resolve the full scope of their suffering. However, it will represent an important starting point and send a clear message that the Government of Liberia recognizes its responsibility toward those who suffered during the civil conflict. More importantly, it will move the issue of reparations from rhetoric to concrete action.

We urge our national leaders to recognize that justice delayed for victims is justice denied in their daily struggles. The survivors of our civil war deserve more than sympathy; they deserve meaningful action, recognition, and support.

Conclusion

As we sign these two MOUs today, let us recommit ourselves to building partnerships that deliver real results. Let the collaboration with the Leadership of War Victims of Liberia translate into tangible support for survivors, and let our partnership with the Liberia Peacebuilding Office strengthen peace, human rights protection, monitoring, and early warning mechanisms across the country.

Above all, let us remember that sustainable peace requires justice, and justice requires that no victim is forgotten or abandoned.

The Commission remains committed to working with all relevant institutions, the Government of Liberia, civil society, victims' organizations, and international partners to advance these objectives.

May these MOUs mark the beginning of stronger cooperation, genuine institutional accountability, and meaningful progress toward a Liberia where the rights, dignity, and suffering of every victim are recognized and addressed.

I thank you.