

SPECIAL COURT FOR SIERRA LEONE PRESS AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICE



All staff members are invited to attend the Special Court's SEA Sensitisation Day on the Prevention of Sexual Exploitation, Sexual Abuse and Sexual Harassment in the workplace. The event takes place today between 10:30 a.m. and 3:00 p.m. in front of the Personnel Section. (Photo from similar event last May.)

PRESS CLIPPINGS

Enclosed are clippings of local and international press on the Special Court and related issues obtained by the Press and Public Affairs Office

as at:

Thursday, 25 October 2007

Press clips are produced Monday through Friday.
Any omission, comment or suggestion, please contact
Martin Royston-Wright
Ext 7217

Local News

Eleven Years of War in Sierra Leone...US\$5.1 Billion... / *Standard Times* Page 3

International News

Liberia's President Sirleaf Assesses U.S. Visit / *Voice of America* Page 4

UNMIL Public Information Office Media Summary / *UNMIL* Pages 5-6

War Crimes Justice Reform Urged / *Institute for War and Peace Reporting* Pages 7-8

Standard Times (Online)

Tuesday, 23 October 2007

Eleven Years Of War in Sierra Leone...US\$5.1 Billion Down the Drain Due to Armed Conflict

A recent study, "Africa's Missing Millions", is the first time analysts have calculated the overall effects of conflict on gross domestic product (GDP). The report, a joint effort of Oxfam, the International Action Network On Small Arms (IANSA) and Safeworld, shows that on the average, a war, a civil war or insurgency shrinks an African economy by 15 percent.

Liberia, and Sierra Leone are two countries in West Africa that have suffered the ravages of war.

For a break down of the direct impact of war on these two countries, Nightline's Akwei Thompson spoke with Rebecca Peters, the director of IANSA who said:

"The way that this study was done was we measured the difference between what a country's GDP should have been if it had not been affected by armed conflict and compared that with what it actually was. "And so, for example, in the case of Liberia we estimate that Liberia lost about 58 percent of the value of its economy due to armed conflict and that came to about 5.9 billion dollars." This, she said, had a huge economic impact on Liberia,

In the case of Sierra Leone, Rebecca Peters said "we estimate that Sierra Leone lost about 37 percent of the economic development that it should have had during the conflict; it's about 5.1 billion that Sierra Leone is estimated to have lost because of armed conflict."

Voice of America

Thursday, 25 October 2007

Liberia's President Sirleaf Assesses U.S. Visit (Excerpt)

-SNIP-

The Liberian House of Representatives voted down a bill submitted by President Sirleaf, which would have frozen the assets of former officials of former President Charles Taylor on the grounds the bill was unconstitutional.



President Sirleaf said her government was only acting to fulfill a requirement of the United Nations.

“The freezing of assets is not the seizing of assets. The freezing of assets simply says we put a stop on it until you go to the court to establish whether or not the public trust has been violated. But the debate is on in our legislature when they return from recess, the debate will continue. If there are reasons to revise the bill to make it more acceptable while achieving the same objective, then we will go ahead and do that. But we are committed to carrying out this commitment, which we have made to the Liberian people and to our partners in the international community,” she said.

-SNIP-

United Nations  Nations Unies

United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL)

UNMIL Public Information Office Media Summary 24 October 2007

[The media summaries and press clips do not necessarily represent the views of UNMIL.]

International Clips on Liberia

10/24/2007 11:33:27

Liberia's truth commission back to work after nearly a year's break

Source: Agence France-Presse English Wire Date: October 24, 2007

MONROVIA, Oct 24, 2007 (AFP) - Liberia's Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) has resumed taking evidence of atrocities committed over two decades, a task it had to suspend last November, it announced on Wednesday. Dozens of workers last week started deploying anew across the war-battered west African country to document evidence from victims of atrocities in civil crises spanning 24 years until peace in 2003. In a statement, the TRC said since that October 18, "124 statement-takers have been sent throughout the country to get statements from victims of war."

International Clips on West Africa

10/24/2007 04:06:36

Sierra Leone bans scrap metal exports over pillaging fears

Agence France-Presse English Wire via NewsEdge Corporation :

FREETOWN, Oct 23, 2007 (AFP) - Sierra Leone, battling to rebuild its infrastructure, on Tuesday banned trading in scrap metals after hundreds of kilometres (miles) of power transmission cables were stripped down for export to Europe. Collection and export of scrap metal has in recent years become a lucrative business in the war-scarred and impoverished west African state, where gangs of youths risk their lives snapping off overhead high-voltage electrical cables and carting them away for export overseas.

Local Media – Newspaper

Liberia Celebrates United Nations Day

(Daily Observer and Daily Observer)

- Official ceremonies marking the 62nd Anniversary of the United Nations Day, today, 24 October 2007 will take place in several parts of Monrovia.
- Students from several parts of Monrovia and its environs are expected to assemble at the Antoinette Tubman Stadium this morning to parade throughout the principal streets of the city, as part of several other activities marking the celebration of the United Nations Day.
- The parade will be climaxed at the Centennial Memorial Pavilion in Monrovia, where an official ceremony would be held.
- Vice President Joseph N. Boakai will make a special statement during the ceremony, while the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, William Bull would deliver the UN Day Address.
- In his special message, the UN Secretary-General, Ban Ki-Moon noted that the world is changing in the United Nations' favour, as more people and Governments

understand that multilateralism is the only path in their interdependent and globalizing world.

- According to him, global problems demand global solutions, and doing it alone is not a viable option, "Whether we are speaking of peace and security, development, or human rights. The demands on our Organization are growing everyday," he added.

President Sirleaf Dedicates 2007 Freedom Award to Liberian Children

(The Inquirer)

- President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf on Tuesday night received the 2007 National Freedom Award in Memphis, Tennessee. Mrs. Sirleaf dedicated the award to the children of Liberia who she said deserve a chance to smile again. The President said her commitment to create more opportunities for the Liberian child remains unwavering.
- "It is a struggle for the freedom of our children, so that no child goes to bed hungry; so that our children can go to bed, knowing that they are safe; that our children go to school to learn and be whatever they want to be," the President told a jammed packed audience at the Temple of Deliverance edifice in Memphis, Tennessee on Tuesday.
- According to a dispatch, quoting Presidential Press Secretary Cyrus Wleh Badio, who is travelling with the President, the Liberian leader expressed satisfaction that her inaugural promise to make the Liberian child smile once again is being realized. She attributed the modest success to peace and security the country now enjoys, as well as the international goodwill the government continues to receive.
- President Sirleaf expressed thanks to the National Civil Rights Museum for selecting her as one of three recipients for this years Awards. "I am exalted by the experience in Memphis; I go back to thousands of the young people of my country, who are in there own struggle for survival, peace, and justice, knowing that we have an obligation to meet their needs," the President emphasized.

Local Media – Radio Veritas *(News monitored today at 1:45 am)*

Public Gives Mixed Reactions to UN Day Celebrations in Liberia

- Radio Veritas exhibited an exemplary coverage of today's ceremonies to mark the observance of United Nations Day. On its current affairs phone-in programme, 'Topical Issues,' Radio Veritas sampled the views of Liberians, most of whom recognized the relevance and continued to cherish UNMIL and the United Nations system for its role in restoring and maintaining peace in Liberia.
- A few Liberians, according to the station, said despite the progress made so far in Liberia, the UN needed to reform its bureaucracy, address the issue of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (SEA) involving its personnel and prepare the population for an eventual troop reduction in Liberia.
- The SRSG Mr. Alan Doss has repeatedly said that 'UNMIL will retain a robust presence at least through the year 2010 and possibly beyond.'
- The theme for the observance of this year's celebration is 'Global Health: A Critical Component to Development.' On the subject, others said the UN continues to demonstrate the theme in Liberia by helping to keep the population healthy as well as contributing to the development of the country.
- The United Nations was founded in 1945 to replace the League of Nations, in the hope that it would intervene in conflicts between nations and thereby avoid war. The organization began with 50 countries signing the United Nations Charter.

Institute for War and Peace Reporting

Wednesday, 24 October 2007

War Crimes Justice Reform Urged

Activists call on government to end military's monopoly on war crimes trials.

By Sonia Nezamzadeh in The Hague and Desire-Israel Kazadi in Kinshasa (AR No. 140, 24-Oct-07)

NGOs are urging the authorities in the Democratic Republic of Congo, DRC, to pass proposed legislation which would allow civilian trials of war crimes suspects, who at present can only be prosecuted in military courts.

Congolese lawmakers have drafted a bill called the law of implementation, which integrates several elements of the International Criminal Court's Rome Statute - that sets out the jurisdiction, structure and functions of the ICC - into DRC national legislation.

A draft of the law was sent to the national assembly for approval in September 2005. But it has lingered there ever since, despite at the time being welcomed as an important step forward by a number of parties - including the government officials who sponsored the bill, Kinshasa and Ituri-based civil society organisations and several legal experts.

Christian Hemedi Bayolo, coordinator for the National Coalition for the International Criminal Court, NC-ICC, in DRC, is calling for the urgent adoption of the implementation law.

"The laws which are currently enforced are deeply insufficient and [don't conform] with the Rome Statute with regard to... crimes of genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity," he said.

At present, war crimes suspects can only be tried in military courts, but these are far from satisfactory - plagued as they are by inconsistent procedure, judicial misconduct and resource shortages.

Military courts have tried several cases relating to abuses in the Congolese conflict. In February, 13 soldiers were convicted of massacring civilians in Ituri. And in April 2006, seven officers were found guilty of mass rape - the first time rape was tried as a crime against humanity in the Congo.

At the moment, the DRC's legal system allows for the Rome Statute to be directly applied only in military trials.

Benjamin Yogolelo, a journalist based in DRC, told IWPR that the law of implementation is of "capital importance", since it would permit Congolese law to try perpetrators of international crimes in civilian courts.

"The adoption of such a law would contribute to the reduction of impunity," he said.

In efforts to push the issue into the public domain, NGOs are now publishing editorials on the benefits of adopting such a law.

“Everybody agrees that this is something they have to do, and then you wonder why it doesn’t happen,” said David Donat-Cattin of Parliamentarians for Global Action, PGA, a New York-based international organisation of more than 1,300 free elected legislators from more than 114 democratic countries.

Donat-Cattin said that opponents of the bill have successfully stalled it for years. “We are finding a lot of resistance,” he said.

While he was reluctant to give specific details on where resistance was coming from, he pointed in the general direction of the country’s leadership. “It’s [coming] from those who should be supportive of this legislation,” he added.

Government critics say that one of the key reasons why parliamentarians have blocked the passage of the bill is to protect themselves from possible prosecution.

“Nearly one-third of the people elected [to parliament] have been involved in the atrocities [in DRC] directly or indirectly,” claimed Donat-Cattin. “So, it’s very difficult for a parliament full of alleged war criminals to legislate on something that might affect [them].”

A source from the League for Peace and Human Rights, LIPADHO, a Kinshasa-based NGO, said, “Of course, such a law would be a good thing, but [justice] is not a priority for the Congolese government.”

Another reason cited for parliamentary resistance to the bill is that its adoption would scrap the death penalty. Under the Rome Statute, the maximum sentence the ICC can hand down is life imprisonment. Many MPs want to retain capital punishment as a judicial option.

Even if the proposed legislation is passed, however, some observers question whether DRC’s civilian courts are capable of handling complex war crimes trials.

Donat-Cattin, though, believes that the country’s lawyers and judges would meet the challenge, and stressed the importance of introducing legislation that gives them the potential to do so.

“There is no single country that [is fully] equipped to handle... [such] difficulties on the ground. One should not underestimate the capacity of an independent judiciary to take up exemplary cases,” he said.

“One should not give up on the idea that you should have good laws, whether or not a developing country has the resources to carry out trials. Good laws don’t cost anything. To adopt good legislation doesn’t cost a dollar or euro. It’s a matter of political will.”

Sonia Nezamzadeh is an IWPR reporter in The Hague and Desire-Israel Kazadi is a journalist based in Kinshasa.