



**Question:**

Mr. Minister, Liberia has made considerable progress since the end of its civil war in 2003. Aware that we recently celebrated ten years of peace, what do you think about the progress so far?

**Answer:**

Evidently, Liberia has made significant progress. I underline the word Liberia because the Government, the people, and our partners have all contributed to this progress.

Collectively, we have made progress. The fact that we have celebrated 10 consecutive years of peace, and the Liberian child that was born within this 10-year period doesn't have the experience of war, is significant. War is a very distant concept now. Sometimes when you achieve something significant, you forget its significance, until somebody

who knew your past situation reminds you that you have made significant progress. On the whole, it is not just peace we celebrate; we celebrate progress on many fronts – the consolidation of the culture of democracy being most prominent. That within this 10-year period, we have had two successive democratic elections, and we have an independent Legislature whose members originate from diverse political parties, including a significant number of independent candidates, means a lot for our country. We also have three independent branches of Government that complement and countervail each other regularly. There is no automaticity between presidential proposals and legislative approval or concurrence. It tells you the extent to which Liberia's democracy has come, and also the degree of openness that exists. We also have an independent judiciary.

Liberia has progressively become a very open society. That openness is substantiated by the sheer number of newspapers, mainstream and community radio stations, phone-in radio discussions where people from all walks of life can call and vent their spleens on critical national issues. When one compares what we have today with what existed in the '70s, there is certainly much to celebrate. Back then, you had virtually one independent radio station, ELWA, the New Liberia Newspaper and probably a few others. Many independent newspapers, including the Daily Observer and others that some of you are veterans of, came on the stage in the '80s. You know all too well how the space was suffocated in the '80s and '90s, but we now have an environment that is conducive for freedom of speech and of the press; we have the Freedom of Information Law; an Ex-

# Liberia On The Right Trajectory For Peace And Prosperity

-Foreign Minister Ngafuan Speaks

## A Transcript of Sando Moore's Interview with H.E. Augustine Kpehe Ngafuan, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Liberia

ecutive Order to protect whistleblowers; and Liberia is a signatory to the Table Mountain Declaration, among others. We have instituted so much to protect this democracy, which gives cause for celebration.

Also, we have come a long way in transforming and positioning this country on the path of economic growth and development. Imagine a country that was broken. I can remember when I came to Government, then as the Budget Director, the country's budget was around US\$80 million for a country with a debt burden of nearly US\$5 billion at the time. All the economic indicators were very negative, sadly negative. Everything was going south. To transform that reality was a herculean task. And to have the almost US\$5 billion debt cancelled, providing us the space to take up new loans for development, is also an achievement

worthy of celebration in our recent history.

On the infrastructural front, anyone can remember how roads in Monrovia were infested with potholes. For example, beginning from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, near the Main Campus of the University of Liberia to 12th Street, we know how long it took to drive to very short destinations across this city and other parts of the country. In fact, the situation was so bad that some people jokingly said that our many pothole-infested roads were one of the main culprits in the miscarriages of women. Now, see the smoothness of that road. You can drive from here (Monrovia) to Buchanan in so short a time. Still in the realm of infrastructure, it is important to point out that more than 220 schools have been built across the country since 2006. The state-of-the-art newly constructed Fen-

dall Campus of the University of Liberia makes some of us former students of the University want to reverse the hands of the clock and become students once again just to have the chance to learn in such facilities. Sando, one more thing: I spent a decade pursuing a Bachelor's degree at the University of Liberia not because I ever failed a course, but the many episodes of war and lack of government support was such that if we had one semester a year, we were very lucky. Today, because of peace and an almost certain stream of Government support, we have been witnessing two Commencements every year at the UL. Primacy is also being placed on the health and well-being of the Liberian people. The Jackson F. Doe Memorial Hospital in Tappita, and the Telewoyan Hospital in Voinjama, among other healthcare delivery centers across the country, have been refurbished

and are very active.

Immediately following the end of the conflict, most of the people were clustered in displaced camps, depending on relief food. They have returned to their farms and are doing a whole lot. It is vital to note that the World Food Programme (WFP) is now buying food from Liberian farmers.

Also, the image of our country has been restored internationally. From being regarded as a pariah state – a country that was deemed more than a decade ago as one of the 10 worst places to live and do business on earth – today our country is regarded as a respectable partner in the comity of nations; our President is a Nobel Laureate, and she hobnobs with the movers and shakers of the world; the Liberian flag is fluttering high and proudly at the United Nations, at the African Union, at ECOWAS, and everywhere across the globe. Today, unlike sometime during our difficult past, to show the Liberian passport brings you pride and not suspicion and shame.

I could go on delineating successes, as progress can be cited in many other areas. The problem now is, when people are used to success, they want more success. It is what I call “the paradox of excellence.” When an instructor get used to your scoring A’s, sometimes he or she does not take kindly to your scoring B or C, even when most other members of the class are scoring F’s and D’s. The Liberian people are the instructors and the government is the student. The progress that has been achieved thus far has only whetted and increased our people’s appetite for more progress. So there should be no gainsaying that significant progress has been made. What is happening is that the pace of progress at present is not as fast and huge as the ever-rising expectations of the populace. In summary, we can say we have made much progress, but we still have much more to do.

**Question:**

Mr. Minister, you were a noted student activist and leader, and, interestingly, a moderate who, over the years, has worked in a number of crucial national positions such as Director of Budget, Minister of Finance and now Minister

of Foreign Affairs. What have been the challenges?

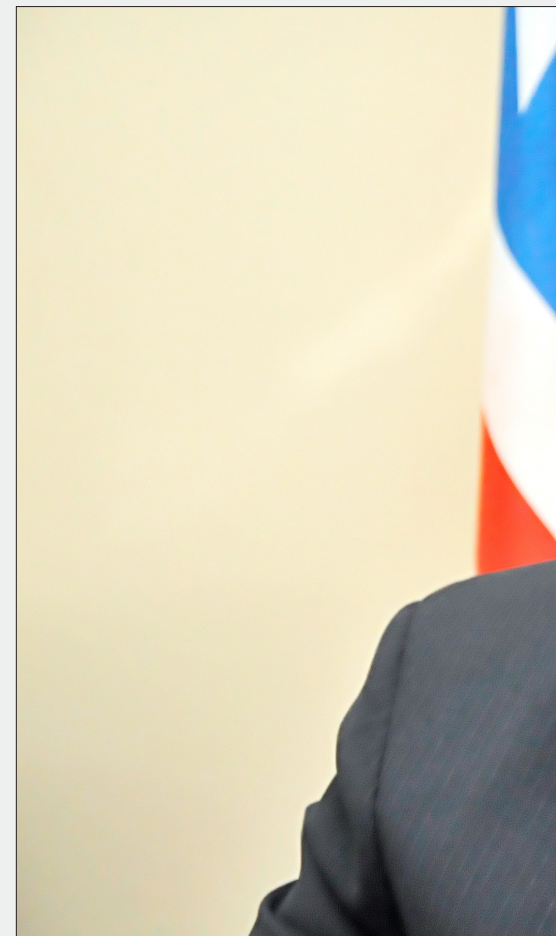
**Answer:**

I have faced many challenges – personal, professional, etc. Particularly in the realm of government, one challenge I have faced has been the doubt and cynicism that have attended my appointments. In retrospect, when I was appointed Budget Director, I was just age 35 knocking on 36, which made me the youngest in the Cabinet of President Sirleaf. The average age of members of the Cabinet at the time was 50, and to have been given the opportunity to manage the complex instrument called the budget, many thought that I was not experienced for the job. Some wondered whether a young man like me could do it. Many people did not want to consider the professional preparations that I had undergone. They were merely zeroing in on my age. But, thanks to Madam Sirleaf, she does not look at age but substance; and for me, being doubted at each of these positions has been one of the reasons why I have achieved whatever success people cite today. I also saw myself as an ambassador for the young people. At the time many young people were not in the Cabinet, and I felt that my performance would open doors for others to come in. I did not want anyone to cite my under-performance as the reason why they could not give any young person an opportunity.

I can tell you that one of my proudest moments came when I was walking down Broad Street one Saturday afternoon, and a young fellow from the banking sector came to tell me thank you. I said, “For what?” And he said, “You don’t know, you really don’t know what you have done for me. You have not given me anything, but you have given me a chance.” I said, “How come? You are in the banking sector and we have not met for quite a long time.” He said, “Look, let me tell you something, because you are a young man in government whose success is well known, even by my bosses. My bosses used the fact of your success as a young man to boost their confidence to give me a highly coveted and prestigious post in our bank. They told me they were giving

me the opportunity and wanted me not to make them shame as you did not make Ellen Johnson Sirleaf shame. That is, I stood in the shadow of your performance and integrity to land an opportunity, and your citation inspired confidence in my ability to deliver.”

Coming back to the issue of challenges, being at the helm of decision making of an economy where the resource envelope is far outstripped by the legitimate expenditure demands of spending entities and the Liberian people, is one challenge that is difficult and agonizing. I remember when we were crafting our first budget in 2006; the estimated revenue projection was a little above US\$100 million, whilst requests from the ministries and agencies were above US\$500 million. How do we rationally and objectively trim the legitimate ambitions of spending entities to size, whilst ensuring that strategic national objectives are met? I remember I famously called this challenge “prioritizing the priorities.”



How do you tell your colleagues and other stakeholders that, yes, I agree that your plan is proper and in the best inter-

est of the country, but, unfortunately, at this point in time, our resources cannot accommodate your plans. I knew that people were not going to be happy, but the magic of success is not only being honest and fair as you make these tough decisions, you must also be perceived as honest and fair by all the stakeholders.

With regard to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which is not a donor darling like ministries in the social sector, our critical challenge has been the inadequacy of resources to robustly implement our goal of development diplomacy. Resource constraints, however, have not stopped us from delivering on targets, though they have affected the desired pace of delivery. Something that has caused me serious psychological anguish has been when I had to part ways with people I considered as true friends because of a serious clash in values – especially values that border on honesty and integrity.

Presidential and General Elections?

**Answer:**

I think the elections of 2005 and 2011 should be considered as transitional elections. The real test of the vibrancy of our democracy comes in 2017. On the one hand, Madam Sirleaf's role has been to transition the country. On the other hand, whether the country remains on the democratic path or not will be determined by how we behave in 2017. And let me say this: The sharp boundaries that divided political parties and political actors in 2005 and 2011 will get somewhat blurred as like-minded, positive forces coalesce across political, ethnic, geographic, and other lines to ensure that the country makes progress. I see alignments and realignments. People will coalesce more around certain concerns or issues, and political frameworks faithful to the advancement of such interests will then emerge. Each of the political parties, in their individuality, has their strengths

up of new institutions, and I anticipate many new political flavors as well. There will be new features, new forces, and new alignments and realignments. One thing we can be sure of is that 2017 will be very competitive and exciting. That's how I see 2017.

**Question:**

There will be a leadership vacuum after the tenure of President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf. Are you considering any possibility to contest for President?

**Answer:**

Well, the question of my ambition for 2017 has continued to dog me lately. But as I told your colleagues who have asked me this question before, I want us to shift the debate from the personal ambitions of individuals to the collective ambitions of Liberians. In short, what ambitions, for instance, does the young woman in Tappita, Nimba County, the old lady in Zleh Town, Grand Gedeh County, the yanna boy on Randall Street, and the generality of Liberians in and out of the country have for their country? The people's ambition is more important than the ambition of individuals. Ultimately, elected officials should be agents of the people, while the people are the principals – not the other way around. If we focus on the people's ambition for our country, we will then get the right set of agents, leaders, to actualize the people's ambitions. If we shape the debate this way, I too will have ambition, just as the Chief in Sanoyea, Bong County, or the successful businessman living in Mamba Point.

When Liberians harbor ambitions for their country, then standards or expectations as to the credentials of those who can deliver the Liberian people's ambitions will be set. So, as the real bosses, the Liberian people, hire their next first agent (President) to deliver on the people's ambitions, the Liberian people should begin focusing on the Terms of Reference (TOR) for the job. After that, they can start popularizing the qualifications, credentials and character of the person they intend to hire. Or take it like this: the Liberian people should regard themselves as a person intending to get



**Question:**

How do you, Sir, see the political landscape of Liberia in view of the 2017

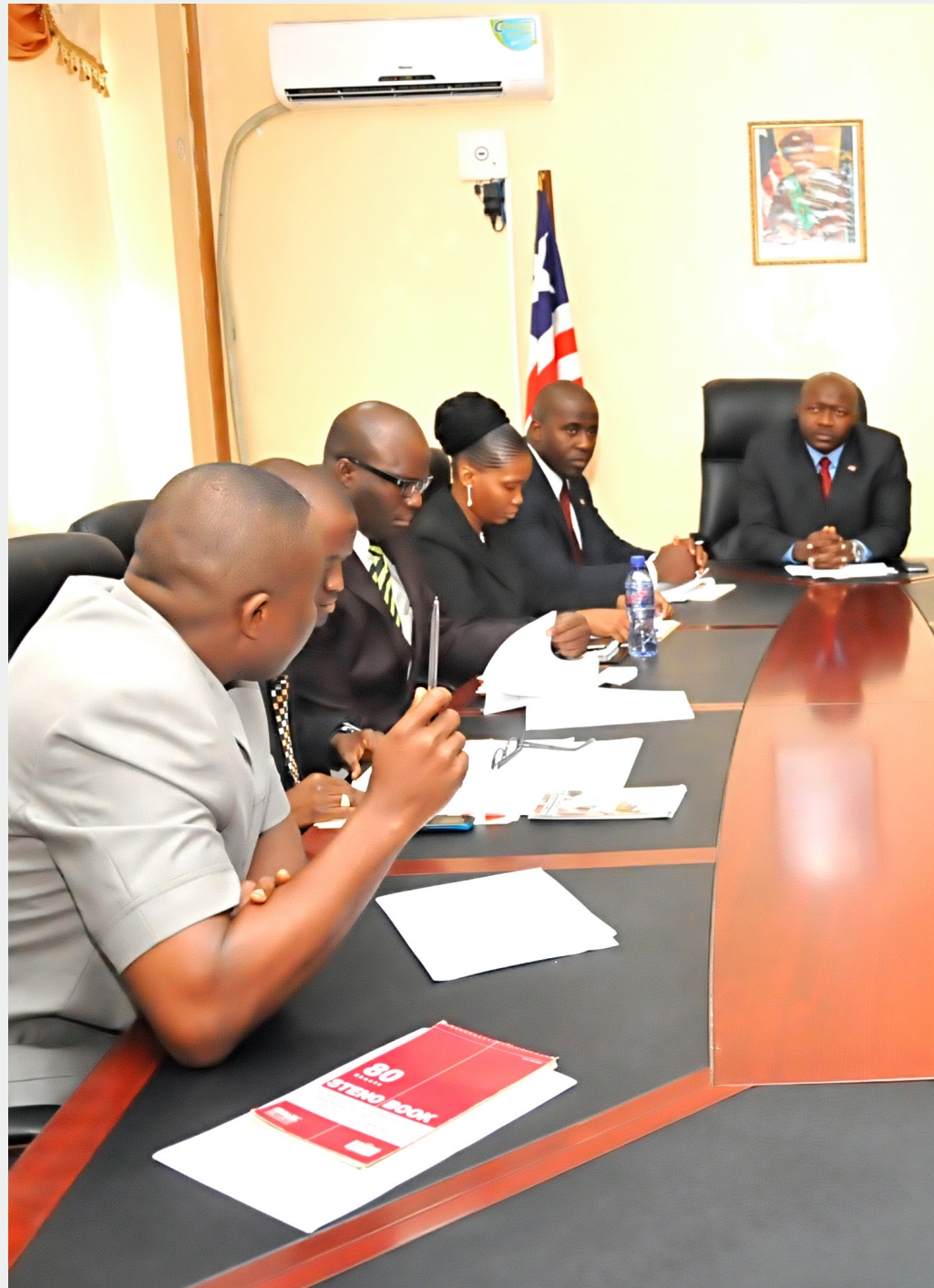
and weaknesses, and I just feel that there will be a lot of reaching across the political aisle. We will witness the sprouting

a particular type of suit, maybe because of a particular type of occasion. Do they want a coat-suit or a traditional African gown? Not all tailors know how to sew very well just any kind of suit. So if you want a good coat-suit (the people's ambition), then you find the best coat-suit tailor. If you want a very good African gown, you go where most people go, on Camp Johnson Road, where you will find one of the country's best traditional gown tailors. In short, if Liberians begin to think like this, we will discipline the political field and the number of presidential wannabes will be drastically streamlined. But if the Liberian people have no ambition for the presidency – no standards, no TORs, no expectations and that anything goes – then the political field will get overly crowded because the Liberian people would have proven that they are cheap, not expensive, and at such, anyone with a few bucks or a freakish stroke can buy them or win their support. In other words, let us also shift the debate from what someone wants to be, to what they are capable of doing for their country. If someone becomes President, he/she satisfies his/her ambition. If someone does or delivers, he or she satisfies the people's ambition.

You ask me for my ambition. My ambition is to see a Liberia, post-2017, that will build upon the gains scored thus far under President Sirleaf, not a Liberia in which all the positives of the present regime will be reversed, thereby putting the country on the rapid track to the bottomless pit. I want a Liberia, post-2017, that will be more prosperous – with improved literacy and social services for all. My ambition is to see more of our people lifted from the dark chambers of illiteracy, and given quality education. I am here today, as Minister of Foreign Affairs, because of the power of education. My parents were very poor. My late father did not even finish high school; my mother is a market woman, and she still sells in the Gardnersville market. I, once upon a time, survived as a wheelbarrow boy in Gardnersville market. Were it not for education and scholarships and what have you, I would not have made it. Consequently, I feel very good that there are lots of young people out there who aspire

to becoming Minister of Foreign Affairs and Minister of Public Works tomorrow or whatever; we have a responsibility to make it a little easier for them. The difficulties I experienced walking from Gardnersville to UL to school, I don't think we need to replicate them for the young people of today.

or she may be, no matter his or her ethnic, political or other background, will be recognized and enlisted in a national drive for sustainable development. My ambition is to see a reconciled, united Liberia. My ambition is to see a peaceful and stable Liberia; a Liberia that is just, transparent, and God-fearing. So this is



Foreign Minister Augustine K. Ngafuan, at the head of the table, in meeting with senior staff of the Ministry.

My ambition for 2017 and beyond is to see a Liberia in which democracy will have deeper depth and wider breadth; a Liberia where the positives of each Liberian, no matter how low or how high he

my ambition. What specific role I play in actualizing my ambition for my country, that will be determined first and foremost by the Grace of the Almighty and by time.

For now, I have a job to do for the Liberian people: that is to serve well as their Minister of Foreign Affairs. And, as I have always done with all my previous responsibilities in this Government or before, I am and will dedicate all the fibers of my being to the task at hand and leave the future to be sorted out by

sion of my dear nation. To do so would be the ultimate betrayal of the people, which I am not prepared to do.

**Question:**

You were the Budget Director when former Finance Minister Antoinette Sayeh left. The Daily Observer published names of those who were, in some quar-

I mentioned your name and also that of Prof. Wilson Tarpeh. You became the Minister of Finance, and you performed. When you were appointed as Foreign Minister, many people thought the President had erred; because you were from Budget and Finance, how would you perform at Foreign Affairs? Two distinct areas, but to everybody's utmost surprise, you are performing. Suppose the Liberian people ask you, whether tomorrow you can cross a bigger bridge; that is, if they decide that in 2017, you must lead them?

**Answer:**

It is good that you have chosen to carry me through memory lane as regards some of the issues that attended my appointment as Minister of Finance. There were speculative articles as to the "would-be's". Let me divulge that Madam Sirleaf called me one Saturday evening and told me that she was going to appoint me as the Minister of Finance. After that, it took a month before the announcement came out. The interesting thing is that I knew that I would be Minister of Finance a month before the announcement. At the time, people were speculating. The challenge then was not to inform even my closest friends, for I enjoyed the drama. It was very interesting.

Well, I can understand why, coming on this side, some people said, "He's from the financial side, how can he perform on the political side?" Let me go back. When I was appointed Budget Director, some of the critics said, "This guy is a political guy; how can he perform on the financial side?" Many people did not know that I had been trained as a financial person. I have a solid Bachelor's degree in Accounting and Economics, an MBA in Finance and Accounting, and several certifications from some substantive institutions, including the Federal Reserve Bank of New York, Harvard University and others. However, those things were not in the public domain for people to have known them. All they knew was that I was a political guy.

When I was appointed Minister of Foreign Affairs, they then said, "This is a financial guy. How come he's been appointed on the political side?" They had



the grace of the Almighty God. But one thing is clear and unequivocal: Just as I was active in 2005 and 2011, I will not be inactive in 2017. I will not be indifferent and passively sit and watch the retrogres-

ters, considered suitable to be the Finance Minister, which did not include you. I remember telling Mr. Best that there are other people who are fit for the position, and he asked me to call names.

then forgotten that I was also a political guy. In fact, as a student leader, I dealt with some of the challenges and complex situations a typical Foreign Minister would encounter. We had to go through countless complex issues that required political acumen to adequately handle. It also required skills, especially negotiation skills, as one tried to address the interests of students while at the same time ensuring that the concerns of the faculty and the administration were taken into consideration. I earned a certificate from Sacramento University in 1999 in what is Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR). Despite the fact that I was a student leader in the '90s, technically I was preparing for this job.

Additionally, I have gone through lots of workshops and training programs. I have represented the country more intensively at international fora in the capacities of the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Foreign Affairs. The Minister of Finance does not only focus on the domestic economy and revenue generation; he or she also engages the external world on issues regarding the economy – specifically the World Bank, IMF, ADB, U.S. Treasury, etc. In my former capacity as Minister of Finance, one of my main tasks was to navigate the country through the Highly Indebted Poor Country (HIPC) process and ensure debt cancellation. We did significantly well, travelling from country to country, negotiating with hard-nosed counterparts, trying to make the case for Liberia. Through these international travels and high-level meetings, I was indirectly imbibing the skills necessary for the conduct of foreign affairs. Let me say this also: While at Finance, I never ever would go to any country without enlisting the support of the resident Liberian Ambassador. If you check some of my pictures at the Ministry of Finance, in some of my negotiations, the person you will see near me is a Liberian Ambassador, whether I was in Washington, D.C. or elsewhere. So, technically, I was aware of the challenges at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs even before I came here. On the specific question concerning 2017, as I said earlier, I will not be inactive in 2017. I believe strongly in the grace and



guidance of God, because it is God's grace and guidance that have brought me thus far. What I do next, where I go next, how far or how high I go next, will be sorted out by the same Almighty God that has always guided my path through thick and thin.

**Question:**

Mr. Ngafuan, certainly in national leadership in post-war Liberia, continuity plays a very significant role. In view of the fact that the Government has made so much progress, how do you think Liberians can enjoy continuity in the next leadership?

**Answer:**

You know, the more progress we make as a country, the more years of peace we achieve, the higher the stakes for whatever political decision we make as a country. In fact, I made a speech last year in London to Liberians in the UK, while celebrating July 26. One of the things I said, about our country, especially in view of the discovery of oil and the verification of its commercial viability, is that as the stakes get higher, political decisions need to be made in a more meticulous and more visionary manner, because the consequences of bad decisions will be colossal. The consequences of good decisions will also be colossal in a positive way. As we rebuild, political decisions must be made thoroughly. And as I said in London, because the discovery of oil has raised the stakes in our country, whenever we Liberians enter a voting booth, we should turn to our heads; or else we will make our country turn on its head because of our reckless, carefree, and

selfish political decision. If this happens, we will yearn for a past that we thought was not that good. Sadly, that may be the only time when we will recognize that we have made some colossal mistakes embedded in the political choices made.

So, I believe in continuity along the path of progress. I don't believe in what is called stale continuity. We should continue to be democratic, we should continue to commit to peace and stability in this country, and we should continue to be committed to economic progress, working tooth and nail to take our people from poverty to prosperity. Hence, continuity of the vision is what matters. Also to ensure continuity, we need to build strong institutions, and enact forward-looking laws now that outlast individuals and regimes. Eventually, there could be new players; but when new players emerge in an environment of strong institutions and strong laws, it will be difficult for them to reverse the country or veer off on a wrong path. We must continue to innovate, continue to find better ways to do old things. We must be open and prepared to explore uncharted territories, but always remaining true to core principles.

**Question:**

What have been some developments at the Foreign Ministry as it relates to improvement of embassies in Liberia and other issues of national interest?

**Answer:**

Thank you very much. It is good that, over time, a number of significant countries have opened or reopened their embassies here in Liberia, with resident ambassadors: Great Britain, Brazil, Sweden, Qatar, and many others accredited resident ambassadors to Liberia in 2012. In fact, the British Embassy was reopened in Monrovia last year, since the height of the Liberian civil war. Kuwait is considering opening an embassy in Monrovia very soon. As more of this is happening, it is a vote of confidence in the progress of our country. The more these countries come here, that's a positive sign for Liberia. We, too, have been engaged externally. We are in the process of establishing our Mission in Brasilia, Brazil. We are expanding

our diplomatic frontiers. Recently, we were in Dubai, UAE; we are in a process that will soon lead to the accreditation of ambassadors and the conclusion of a Joint Commission on Bilateral Cooperation. We also have resident Liberian ambassadors in Qatar and Kuwait. There are resource issues, but we are trying to navigate through the difficulties. There are lots of positive partnerships. During 2013, we concluded diplomatic arrangements that consolidated our relationship with the United States, Japan, and the EU. With the U.S., we launched the U.S.-Liberia Partnership Dialogue, which is a platform meant to institutionalize the relationships between the two countries. As President Johnson Sirleaf said, when she made remarks at the launch of the Dialogue in Washington, D.C., the intention of the Partnership Dialogue is to have a firm foundation of Liberia-U.S. relationship, no matter who is in the White House or in the Executive Mansion. I led the Liberian delegation to the first edition of the Dialogue in Washington in May 2013, and we hosted the second edition in Monrovia in March. Through the Dialogue, we are consolidating partnership with the U.S. Government in the

areas of Agriculture and Food Security, Energy and Power Infrastructure, as well as Human Development.

One significant thing that has occurred, especially over the period that we have been here and that we consider as one of our biggest diplomatic successes, was dealing with what could have been an explosive issue that related to Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire. Through good diplomatic engagements within what we called a Quadripartite Framework involving the Governments of Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire, as well as the two peace-keeping outfits – UNMIL and UNOCI – we were able to agree on a host of measures that stabilized the border, triggered the return of refugees, and the launch of a confidence-building initiative dubbed the Joint Council of Chiefs and Elders Meeting (JCCEM). The first JCCEM meeting brought chiefs and elders from Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire together in Zwedru during the latter part of 2013, with President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf and President Alassane Ouattara in attendance. The next edition of the JCCEM will soon be held in Côte d'Ivoire.

Positive and tangible partnerships led to the conclusion of a US\$60 million

agreement for the construction of the Ministerial Complex in Liberia that will house more than ten government ministries; and the conclusion of a US\$50 million agreement with the Japanese Government for the expansion of Somalia Drive to a four-lane highway. We have properties abroad that we are sourcing the necessary resources to renovate and/or upgrade. We have initiated actions on our property in New Rochelle, New York, in Accra, Ghana, and in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, among others.

**Question:**

What has been the most forceful decision that impacted on you?

**Answer:**

Mr. Moore, to be honest, I am reserving the answer to that question for my autobiography or my memoirs which I will definitely publish sometime in the future. So whenever I release it, scour through the book, and I assure you that you will find the answer to this question. For now, allow me to keep you and your readership in suspense.



Minister Ngafuan being gowned in Nimba County.





## Profile of H.E. Augustine Kpehe Ngafuan Minister of Foreign Affairs & Dean of the Liberian Cabinet.

### *Early Life and Education*

Augustine Kpehe Ngafuan is a respected Liberian professional, intellectual and political actor with several meritoriously achieved accolades to his credit. He was born in Monrovia on 7 April 1970, and hails from the Kolahun District, in northern Lofa County. As a young student leader studying Accounting at the Booker Washington Institute (BWI) in the '80s, he emerged as one of three students – the other two were Indian students attending St. Patrick's High School – who won the West African Examinations Council's (WAEC) 1989 Merit Award for scoring the highest marks in the exams nationwide. In fact, his 87% score in Science in the 1989 WAEC Exams was the highest nationwide. He also graduated as Valedictorian of the Class of 1989 from the Booker Washington Institute (BWI), earning a diploma in Accounting.

Ngafuan entered the University of Liberia in 1990 in pursuit of a Bachelor's

degree in Accounting and Economics. However, due to the intermittent episodes of the Liberian civil war, which interrupted the academic life of students of the University, coupled with scanty support from the Government of Liberia to the University of Liberia, Ngafuan earned his degree in February 2000 with the highest academic distinction – *summa cum laude*. While still a university student, Ngafuan used his time to capacitate himself on multiple fronts. In 1998, he received a Certificate in Democratic Leadership from the African Leadership Forum, founded by former Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo. In 1999, he earned a Certificate in Alternative Dispute Resolution from the University of Sacramento, in California, USA. In 2002, while serving as a Banking Analyst at the Central Bank of Liberia, Hon. Ngafuan enrolled in the William E. Simon Graduate School of Business Administration, University of Rochester, in New York,

USA, where he earned a solid MBA in Finance and Accounting in June 2004.

### *Political Life*

Hon. Ngafuan has been politically active since his high school days. He served as Interim Student Leader of the Booker Washington Institute in 1988, and was elected in the same year as Vice President of the Student Government. In April 1998, Ngafuan was elected President of the University of Liberia Student (ULSU), a position he held until February 2000. Leading nearly 10,000 students at the nation's highest institution of learning – an institution often dubbed the "microcosm of Liberian society" – Ngafuan's mandate was not only to promote the interest of students, but also to defend social justice, press freedom, inclusive democracy, and political liberties in Liberia. Many still remember the indomitable courage and visionary comments of the young student leader when,

in 1998, he spoke truth to power at the Unity Conference Center during the Vision 2024 Conference chaired by former Liberian President Charles Taylor. Concerned about the rapidly deteriorating political situation, the young student leader expressed qualms about the manner in which ECOMOG peacekeepers were made to leave Liberia, the lack of justice in the murder case of former Liberian politician Samuel Dokie, and the rising climate of fear, among a host of other concerns. Challenging President Taylor's record on reconciliation, the young Ngafuan asked President Taylor a few pointed questions: "Mr. President, where are Alhaji Kromah, Roosevelt Johnson, Prince Johnson, former Vice President Harry Moniba, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, Henry Fahnbulleh, Amos Sawyer, etc? Wherever they are, are they safe to return, or would you be safe with their return?" Mr. President, are we truly reconciled?" Speaking almost prophetically, the courageous student leader continued: "Mr. President, if we don't take more tangible actions on the path of reconciliation, I fear that all the visions that we are crafting here will collapse like a pack of cards!"

With such popular stature and vast political acumen, Ngafuan was a natural fit to organize and lead the Youths for Ellen Presidency (YEP), comprising thousands of young people nationwide who felt that, among the 22 presidential contenders in the 2005 Presidential Elections, Mrs. Ellen Johnson Sirleaf represented the best choice for Liberia. While serving as Chairman of YEP, he also doubled as Spokesperson of the Unity Party Campaign Team in the 2005 Elections. Again, in 2011, he was a key figure in the Unity Party Campaign Team which secured a second term for President Sirleaf.

### *Professional Career, Successes and Achievements*

Beginning in 1988, with a six-month internship in the Accounts Division of the Liberia Petroleum Refining Company (LPRC) as a requirement to earning a diploma in Accounting at the Booker Washington Institute, Honorable Ngafuan has had a distinguished professional career. During the 1997 Presidential and General Elections, he served as Se-

nior Civic Education Officer for Bong County with the Independent Elections Commission. His distinguished academic performance at the UL earned him automatic employment with the Central Bank of Liberia. He rose through the ranks from Bank Examiner to Senior Banking Analyst and, finally, to the position of Head of International Banking. In January 2006, he was appointed by President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf as Budget Director of the Republic of Liberia. In August 2008, he was appointed Minister of Finance, a position he successfully held until February 2012 when he assumed his present position as Minister of Foreign Affairs and Dean of the Cabinet.

As Budget Director of Liberia, Ngafuan lifted the veil of secrecy around the National Budget by making it a truly public document. He created awareness around the budget process on radio talk shows and at Hatai shops and in other interactive fora in Monrovia and across the country. He brought discipline, integrity, and predictability around the entire budget process, earning the admiration of many, including many critics who initially doubted his ability to perform because of his age. When elevated to the position of Minister of Finance in 2008, he became the youngest Finance Minister across the entire African continent. As Finance Minister he simultaneously served as Liberia's Governor to the Boards of Governors of the IMF, the World Bank and the African Development Bank (ADB). Hon. Ngafuan chaired the AfDB Constituency, comprising Liberia, Ghana, The Gambia, Sudan and Sierra Leone from 2010 up to end of his service as Minister of Finance. In his capacity as Governor of Liberia at the African Development Bank, Ngafuan was one of three African Finance Ministers selected by Bank President Donald Kaberuka to participate in Consultative Meetings for the 12th Replenishment of Resources of the African Development Fund (ADF-12). In a 29 November 2010 letter of appreciation, Bank President Kaberuka wrote: "The timely and succinct intervention you made during [our] meetings helped the Bank present a strong case for the selected and focused areas of intervention under the ADF-12. With your

assistance, ADF Deputies agreed on a replenishment level of US\$9.5 billion over the next three years (2011-2013), a 10.6 percent increase in donor contributions over the ADF-11. We remain convinced that beyond this noble mission, which you accomplished so admirably, we can continue to count on your wise and valuable counsel."

Hon. Ngafuan was elected Chair of the Board of Directors of the Liberia Bank for Development and Investment (LBDI) in 2010, until his transition to the position of Minister of Foreign Affairs. His achievements as Minister of Finance were numerous, ranging from expanding the revenue base from a little over US\$100 million to US\$500 million; to the introduction of scores of reforms, including spearheading the crafting and ensuring the passage of the much-touted Public Financial Management (PFM) Law, which clearly lays out the roles and responsibilities of major actors in public financial management, as well as providing the legal basis for introduction of the Medium Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF).

He automated business processes at the Ministry of Finance as a way of enhancing efficiency and transparency. On the revenue side, he introduced the ASYCUDA software, and on the budget and expenditure sides he introduced the Integrated Financial Management Information System (IFMIS). The Direct Deposit Program whereby Government employees are paid directly to their accounts at commercial banks was introduced in 2009 by the Ngafuan administration. This brought much desired convenience to civil servants, and dealt significantly with the intractable problems of ghost names on Government's payroll. The introduction of a Public Sector Accounting System (IPSAS) by the Government of Liberia through the Ministry of Finance in 2009 was significant because it was the first time in the nation's history that accounting standards were formally introduced across Government. Perhaps the most towering of all of Hon. Ngafuan's achievements at Finance was his skillful leadership of the Liberian Government's efforts which culminated in the successful cancellation of nearly US\$5 billion in external debt through the Heavily In-

debted Poor Countries (HIPC) Initiative. This remarkable feat, of debt cancellation by reaching the HIPC Completion Point, was achieved in record time, distinguishing Liberia as one of the fastest HIPC achievers.

In his current portfolio as Minister of Foreign Affairs and Dean of the Liberian Cabinet, Hon. Ngafuan has led the Foreign Ministry of Foreign Affairs in undertaking positive engagements with all friendly countries and peoples of the world, particularly with those nations having diplomatic representation near Monrovia. Through his remarkable foresight and diplomatic adeptness, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs successfully finalized several important bilateral agreements which, when brought to fruition, will significantly impact economic development in Liberia. The most significant agreements which Hon. Ngafuan has negotiated and signed, in furtherance of Government's Development Diplomacy Agenda, include: the landmark US\$60 million agreement with the Chinese Government for the construction of a modern Ministerial Complex intended to house ten government ministries and agencies; and a US\$50 million agreement with the Japanese Government for the expansion of Somalia Drive to a four-lane, paved expressway. When completed, the Ministerial Complex will be the second largest Chinese office infrastructure in Africa, second only to African Union Headquarters in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

Since Minister Ngafuan took the helm of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Liberia's bilateral relations have improved significantly, with several friendly nations opening embassies in Monrovia with resident-accredited ambassadors. These include: the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Sweden, Brazil, and the State of Qatar. Hon. Ngafuan has also helped spur tremendous improvement in relations with Indonesia, Kuwait, Qatar, and now with the United Arab Emirates, with implications for huge economic benefits and technical assistance to Liberia.

The mature and skillful manner in which he managed the simmering tensions brewing between Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire, triggered by deadly cross-border

raids into Ivorian territory, attests to his innate diplomatic skills. Through an initiative called the Quadripartite Framework, which involved the two governments as well as the peacekeeping missions in both countries, all of the stakeholders have agreed to a host of measures that have occasioned the stabilization of the border region and the launch of confidence-building meetings involving chiefs and elders of the two countries.

With guidance from the Chief Architect of Liberia's foreign policy, President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, Hon. Ngafuan has represented the President at high-level meetings of ECOWAS, the African Union, and a host of other for a, including the France-Africa Summit hosted by French President François Hollande in December 2013. He has successfully shepherded three important political framework engagements – namely, the U.S.-Liberia Partnership Dialogue, the EU-Liberia Political Dialogue, and the Japan-Liberia Dialogue Engagement – which promise to boost improvements in agriculture, infrastructure and power, human development and other areas, as well as solidify the relationship between Liberia and these partners.

#### Awards

Hon. Ngafuan is a proud recipient of numerous awards and certificates of achievement for excellence in his academic, professional, political and literary life. The West African Examinations Council (WAEC) Merit Award for Academic Excellence, awarded in 1989 for being one of three students who topped the

WAEC country-wide exams in 1989, and the Certificate of Honor in 2000 from the J.J. Roberts Educational Foundation for graduating summa cum laude from the University of Liberia, are among the scores of academic awards Hon. Ngafuan has to his credit. For demonstrating principled and courageous leadership as President of the University of Liberia Student Union (ULSU), Ngafuan was named by the Inquirer Newspaper in 1998 as Student Activist of the Year. Ngafuan is one of Africa's poet laureates, having won 2nd Prize in an Africa-wide, yearlong BBC Network Africa Poetry Competition in 2001. He received the National Leadership Award in 2010 from the National Excellence Award Committee of Liberia. This award recognizes public and private citizens for distinguished service to community and nation. And in 2011, he was winner of the Public Service Award from the National Excellence Award Committee. Hon. Ngafuan has been named Minister of the Year by several local media institutions since he became a Minister of Government in 2008.

#### Others

Hon. Ngafuan is married to Mrs. Massa Konneh Ngafuan, and the union is blessed with three children – two girls and a boy. He loves sports, especially football, which he plays very well. When he served as Minister of Finance, he captained his team, "Dollars," to two successive championships in the Annual Inter-Ministerial Tournament.

