**Link: http://us-africa.tripod.com/sekou/manifesto.html**

**MANIFESTO**

Today, a battle is raging in Liberia and a national uprising is underway to dislodge Charles Taylor and the tyranny he represents. We are the catalysts in that uprising. The decision to adopt armed struggle as an option in resolving the remaining issues in our country, mainly those of civil liberties and the provision of security for the population, has been influenced by our desire to create an environment for all Liberians, irrespective of tribe, religion, gender or political affiliation and also foreign friends within our borders to live without fear. Nevertheless, the decision has been a painful but correct one in view of the fact that Charles Taylor is determined to continue his regime of terror on the Liberian people while holding on to power through the continued use of violence and brute force. By this, the tyrant has effectively foreclosed all alternative avenues of peaceful transition. And the longer he stays in power the greater the danger he poses to the stability of not only Liberia but also the sub-region as the whole. Hence, we have concluded that only the use of constructive counter-violence will forestall his destructive and hegemonistic ambitions.

Indeed, several factors have influenced this decision. Hopes that the 1997 Special Elections offered the best hope for democratization and reconciliation have been dashed in an atmosphere of state terror, the worst in recent times. Reprisals against political opponents have become standard policy of the Taylor government. Hundreds of innocent people have disappeared in Taylor’s murderous spree, tens of thousands have fled the country and hundreds of thousands are still in refugee camps rightly refusing to return home.

Rural Liberia is effectively a no-man’s land as Taylor’s so-called security forces roam around to wage terror on a defenseless population. Therefore, with Taylor’s repeated vow to “chase” ”declared and perceived enemies” in their mothers’ “wombs”, we have no choice but to challenge the tyrant on his own terms before his machinery of terror is well institutionalized.

**THE MISSION**

Our desire to lay the foundation for resilient political and social structures has been a primary motive for the current struggle. Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) has no intention of transforming itself into a political party or a permanent superstructure of governance. Because, realizing the horrors, which armed groups in the past transformed into political parties, have caused and are causing, this principle remains one of our standing policies and guidelines. No doubt, the level of destruction, both physical and psychological in Liberia is immense. We are aware that there will be no easy answers. But with the will, honesty and clear objectives, Liberians together can begin the process of returning the country to a level where a change for the better is possible and, is made the only desirable that this goal impossible with Taylor as President of Liberia. The way forward, therefore, demands that we excise Taylor from the Liberian body politic in his role as President of the nation, and halt his cancerous influence on the stability of the entire sub-region. Thus, his exit from the presidency of Liberia is non-negotiable. In this regards, our immediate objectives are the following.

**TO PROTECT CIVILIANS**

**1. LURD's HUMANITARIAN POLICY:**

1. LURD organization recognizing the importance of upholding, promoting Protecting the Human Rights of every Liberian as well as enforcement of humanitarian Law, LURD is committed to put in place the following mechanism for the achieving of these laudable objectives,
2. All political prisoners of war as well as all non-combatants shall be release Immediately and unconditionally by the so-called Taylor led government, in accordance with the Abuja agreement which was the substantive basic in ending the crisis in Liberia,
3. Refugees and Displaced persons.
   1. A national commission for resettlement, rehabilitation and reconstruction shall be established to seek funding from and the involvement of the UN and other agencies, including friendly countries, in order to design and implement a plan for voluntary repatriation and reintegration of Liberian refugees and internal displaced persons, including non-combatants, in conformity with the international convention, norms and practices.
4. Guarantee of the security of displaced Persons and Refugees.
   1. As a reaffirmation of our commitment to the observation of the International convention and principles of Human Rights and status of Refugees, LURD remain staid to take effective and appropriate measure to ensure that the right of Liberians to asylum is fully respected and that no camp or dwelling of refugees or displaced persons are violated;
5. Guarantee and Promotion of Human Right.
   1. The basic civil and political liberties recognised by Liberia legal system and contained in the declaration and principal of human rights adopted by the UN and OUA (AU), especially the universal declaration of human rights and the African charter on human and people’s right, shall be fully protected and promoted with in Liberia by LURD;
   2. These including the right to life and liberty, freedom from torture, The right to a trial, freedom of conscience expression and association, and the right to take part in governance of one’s country;
6. Human Rights commission.
   1. Human rights commission shall be established to strengthen the Existing machinery addressing the grievances of the people in respect of their basic human right;
   2. LURD commitment and pledge to promote human right education Throughout the various sectors of Liberia society, including school, media, the police, the military and the religious community,
   3. In pursuance of the above technical and material assistances may be sought from the UN-High commissioner of human rights, the African commission on human and people’s right and other relevant international agencies.
   4. Local human and civil society groups in Liberia shall be Encouraged to help monitor human rights observance.
7. Humanitarian Relief
   1. LURD shall request appropriate international humanitarian Assistance for the Liberians who are in dire need all over the country
   2. LURD pledge and commitment for the Liberian agree to guarantee safe and unhindered access by all humanitarian organization throughout the country in order to facilitate delivery of humanitarian assistances, in accordance with international convention, principle and norms which govern humanitarian operation, in this regard LURD agree to guarantee the security of the presence and movement of the humanitarian personnel;
   3. LURD also will guarantee the security of all properties and goods transported, stocked or distributed by humanitarian organizations as well as the security of their projects and beneficiaries; appropriate and effective administrative or security bodies which will monitor and facilitate the implementation of these guarantees of safety for the personnel, goods and areas of operations of humanitarian organization.

**2. CORRIDORS TO BE USED BY CIVILIANS:**

* 1. In furtherance of our commitment and pledge to alleviate the Deplorable plight of the people, the Liberian and the Sierra Leoneans that sought refuge in Liberia that the corridors from Monrovia to Tubmanburg, Robersport and Bo- Water side are opened for free passage with maximum protection; along the Gbanga axis to Zorzor and Voinjama said corridors are also opened for free passage of civilian with out molestation, intimidation and harassment, Ganta along the Saniquille axis also remain unhindered for civilian free passage and to their respective places.

**3. PRIORITY NEEDS:**

* 1. LURD shall encourage and provide free and compulsory education to include basic education and shall endeavour to provide affordable primary health care throughout the country; LURD shall also endeavour to revamp devastated plants for safe drinking water throughout the country.

**POLITICS AND GOVERNANCE**

We are conscious of the fact that politics remain the most contentious aspect of Liberia’s nightmare. The contest for the presidency and its preservation at all cost continue to hinder any genuine efforts at reconstruction and reconciliation. Hence, the extent of economic collapse necessitates new thinking in politics that would give the population confidence in civil authority and administration.

While democratic elections as we have seen in Taylors’ case do not necessarily guarantee a humane and compassionate political environment, we still hold the view that free and fair elections remain the best available mechanism for setting the leadership question. But elections must be conducted in an atmosphere that is transparent and devoid of fear, terror and manipulation. In short, elections should be held under conditions and circumstances where they produce substantive results and the results should be able to withstand the test of time and ensure future political democratic stability. A farcical election that is held only for the sake of holding elections is a sure recipe for future political chaos. Liberian history is replete with evidence to support this fact. Therefore, one of our immediate political objectives is to safeguard against the syndrome of the strongman leadership. Establishing institutions of democratic principles and continuity is our objective.

In this light, an inclusive transitional government of national unity formed with the participation of all-political groupings and persuasions, is one possible way of preparing the stage for a compassionate democratic political setting. With help from the international community, mainly ECOWAS, AU, the United Nations, Britain, France and US now engaged in the sub-region, this is clearly attainable. To this end, we will seek to initiate a national dialogue and national consensus. Such a conference will help set the present chaotic and destructive posture that is consuming the sub-region at Taylor’s behest. In this connection, LURD shall ensure the implementation of the following political programs.

**NATIONAL POLITICAL AGENDA**

**Article 1:**

The political policy of LURD for the transitional period shall be as follows:

1. LURD shall support an interim government with one President and one Vice President arrangement that will remove all impediments to restore democratic and constitutional rule in Liberia within a time frame of 24 months. The formation of such government shall emerge from national consultations.
2. LURD shall maintain the three branches of government.

**SECTION 1:** The executive Branch

The Executive Branch shall consist of a (a). A President and a Vice President; (b). In the formation of the Cabinet, Public Corporations and/or autonomous agencies, the various political interests and groupings within the country shall be taken into consideration.

**SECTION II:** Legislative Branch

a) The Transitional Legislative Assembly shall consist of fifty three (53) members who shall consist of two representatives from each county, one from each registered political party and ten members from LURD. The legislature shall elect its own core of officers.

**SECTION III:** Juridical Branch

The Juridical Branch shall consist of the Supreme Court and subordinate courts. Members of the Supreme Court shall consist of (a). The Chief Justice and four Associate Justiices who shall be recommended by the Liberian Bar Association and appointed by the President with the advice and consent of the Transitional Legislative Assembly;

(b) Judges of subordinate courts of record shall be recommended by the Liberian Bar Association and also appointed by the President with the advice and consent of the Transitional Legislative Assembly;

**MANDATES OF THE TRANSITIONAL GOVERNMENT**

**SECTION I:** POLITICAL

The Transitional government shall implement the following mandates:

* Shall conduct the affairs of the state as closely as possible with the constitution of the Republic of Liberia and in consultation with the International Community;
* Shall carry out the restructuring of the national army and other security agencies in consultation with ECOWAS, AU, Britain, France, USA, the International Community and the broad spectrum of the population;
* Shall restore friendly ties with neighboring and other peace-loving and democratic countries of the world and international organizations in an effort to maintain peace and stability in the sub-region and the world;
* Shall carry out the process of reconciliation and national healing, and promote ethnic, political and religious tolerance and gender equality throughout the country;
* Shall formulate and implement repatriation and resettlement programs of all Liberian refugees and the internally displaced persons;
* Shall guarantee the rule of law, respect for human rights and freedom of the press and ensure that transparency and accountability serve as the philosophy of the public service;
* Shall carry out a program of total disarmament, demobilization, rehabilitation and reintegration of all former combatants irrespective of the side they fought in the conflict;
* Shall set up an independent judiciary devoid of presidential and other influences for the speedy and fair adjudication of justice;
* The Transitional Government shall support the policy of respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all nations. Consistent herewith, it shall:
  + Seek to re-establish diplomatic relations with all peace-loving Nations of the world;
  + Support the Charters of the United Nations, African Union, ECOWAS and other international organizations and;
  + Support the policy of peaceful co-existence, good neighborliness and non-intervention in the internal affairs of other countries.
* Shall set up independent human rights, truth and reconciliation commissions to investigate human rights abuses to encourage and support all human rights organizations operating in the country;
* Shall rehabilitate Liberian foreign missions abroad and set a foreign policy based on Liberia’s interest;
* Shall conduct a commission to review the Constitution of 1986 and the election laws of Liberia; and
* Shall establish an independent elections commission to conduct free, fair and democratic elections to return the country to constitutional rule;

**SECTION II:** ECONOMIC

* The Transitional Government shall support the free enterprise system, which shall include the following:
* Support and improve the agricultural sector (agro-industry) of the country;
* Encourage and support the processing of raw materials such as logs, rubber, and iron ore etc. within the country;
* Encourage and support small and medium size business and the Liberalization policy;
* Open the economy to foreign investment and participation;
* Encourage and support the banking industry; and
* Encourage and support the negotiations with multinational firms to re-open the mining industries of the country.

**SECTION III:** SOCIAL

* Shall encourage and support the reconstruction of roads network throughout the country;
* Shall encourage and support the reconstruction of educational, vocational and health facilities in the country;
* Shall support the restoration of electricity and pipe borne water supplies within Monrovia and the political sub-divisions of the country;
* Shall encourage and support the improvement of sports and recreation; and
* Shall encourage support the construction of low-income housing estates throughout the country.

**SECTION IV:** CULTURAL AND TRADITIONAL

* Shall encourage and support rehabilitation and reactivation of our cultural institutions; and
* Shall encourage and support the arts and craft industry.

**SECURITY**

We believe that security is indispensable for the undertaking of various tasks geared at giving the population, the international community, foreign investors and humanitarian organizations confidence in civil authority and the conduct of government generally. Only with security the needed confidence in civil authority can be guaranteed. Thus, when we talk about Security that is rooted in the rule of law and based on safety for the population, for everybody within the borders of the country, and not a security structure centered around the “strongman’s” personal army for the protection of him, his family and his loot as is now the case. Without adequate and trained security personnel, the environment for stability and development will remain fluid and unattainable, thus undermining any political authority that will come into place after the exit of the Taylor tyranny, which is responsible for the prevailing situation in the country. Therefore, the following steps, among others, will be pursued immediately after the consolidation of victory arising from Taylor’s exit.

1. Seek international assistance and involvement in restructuring the security forces to meet our national needs and national demands;
2. Reorient the security forces to depart from their current mode and see themselves as basic components of the government desirous of building concrete foundations of democracy, stability and development;
3. Improve and cement good relations with sub-regional states into agreements, particularly with neighbors in the (Mano River Union states) plus Cote d’Ivoir to build confidence and constitute security structures that would handle collective security so badly needed for the commencement of reconstruction and reconciliation;
4. Disarmed all current security structures and other combatants with the assistance of the UN, international donors and other foreign traditional allies as a way of building confidence in the security forces as protectors of us all.

**RECONCILIATION, RESETTLEMENT AND RECONSTRUCTION**

The most urgent task confronting Liberia is dealing with the culture of impunity that has plagued the country for the past two decades. We believe that as long as lip service remains yardstick for measuring reconciliation while vengeance germinates the seeds of anarchy, the Liberian crisis will continue. In this regard, we have no intention of reinventing the wheel. Past failures and past experiences will be our road map to the future. We are determined to learn from the South Africans the lesson of how they have averted potentially dangerous political fallout and transformed it into an environment in which peace and development are pursued. Hence, a Truth and Reconciliation Commission will be set up with a mandate to seek discloses and find out how Liberia has degenerated to such levels. The independence and integrity of this commission will not be compromised. Here again, foreign help, in terms of ideas and resources, etc., will pivotal.

However, true reconciliation and democracy will not be achieved while our people remain homeless and displaced in Liberia and in foreign lands, deprived of the basic necessities of life. In view of the collapsed economy, resources needed to resettle the displaced population will be difficult to amass in a short period. But with confidence building measures, the groundwork for resettlement can be undertaken. Tied to resettlement is the need for a security environment that will encourage returnees to become self-dependent and resourceful again. Security in rural communities must be taken seriously to enhance relief activities, and most importantly, self-sustaining agricultural activities that are the bedrock of the rural economy.

Social and political structures put in place throughout the country will indicate the seriousness of tackling the spree of lawlessness that has consumed rural Liberia at the expense of economic activities and prosperity of the suffering and poverty-stricken masses of our people. A fresh look at local government in terms of providing resources and political leadership is vital for giving the rural population confidence in the state security.

**HUMAN RIGHTS AND RULE OF LAW**

At this core of our political tragedy is the culture of abuse and the disregard for the basic human rights of our people and the guarantee of due process of law. Under Taylor, things have gone from bad to worse. The structures of justice have simply crumbled under the tyrannical pursuits of a reckless and lawless President. Extra juridical murder of political opponents and the wholesale slaughter of innocent people have become commonplace. Due process of law has taken flight and its place a reign of terror has taken hold of the society, choking its development and stability.

This will have to stop. We pledge to hold those who exercise power accountable for its use and abuse, using the constitution as a guide. This is why we have issued repeated invitations to members of the press and human rights organizations to visit our controlled areas to monitor and ensure compliance with basic standards of decency and human rights.

**HUMANITARIAN SITUATION**

The humanitarian situation in Liberia is a grave one. Thousands of people have been uprooted and are moving towards what is considered safe areas. Our strategy has been to limit attacks on population areas. But Taylor’s decision to create human shields around combat zones is creating enormous operational problems. A conductive and humanitarian environment will only emerge under a more decent government that ensures a humane security and political atmosphere. In the meantime, as we tackle the tyranny, we will ensure the safety of the civilian population to the best of our ability.

**RELATIONS WITH NEIGHBORS**

In the short and medium terms, the extent of Liberia’s external security and internal stability will depend to a large extend on the nature and direction of the country’s relations with her neighbors. A significant part of Liberia’s on-going crisis is linked to tarnished relations with its neighbors. Evidently, with a megalomania ruling as President, the country has become a base for training and arming regional rebels, and this has led to a spate of regional destabilization.

At the domino of chaos rolls, the region is now considered one of the unstable places in the world. This simply means economic and construction activities cannot pursue. Besides the destruction of Liberia orchestrated by Charles Taylor and his foreign paymasters, Sierra Leone, Guinea and Côte d’Ivoir have been affected. Refugees are multiplying while the population of the three states is displaced in large numbers. Short-term food and medical relief, and not sustainable economic activities have become the norm. This trend cannot continue.

Therefore, our concentration will be on reassuring our neighbors through concrete steps that Liberia is no longer a factory for destabilization and instability for other countries. Amongst such steps is the idea of a sub-regional security arrangement. The three countries that form Mano River Union plus Côte d’Ivoir may have to study means through which collective security can be assured. But we commit here and now that Liberian territory will cease to be a fertilizing ground for horrors against its neighbors and other countries. We will ensure, therefore, that Liberia will not longer be the catalyst for a grand conspiracy of regional destabilization. One thing is clear, though a formula for peace in the sub-region must include the destruction of the Taylor presidency and the danger it poses. This we are committed to doing.

Moreover, our primary task is to restore traditional ties with countries that have played great roles in Liberian history. Our traditional links with key international actors including the United States have been so callously disfigured by the Taylor regime to such an extend that Liberia has become a pariah state loathed by most civilized nations. This will have to change. And we pledge that it changes.

**POLITICAL MANIFESTO COMMITTEE**

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| **Hon. Jackson E. Doe  Hon. Edward T. Farley  Hon. Joe T. Gbalah  Hon. Jaquar Nana Sheriff  Hon. Alhaji Sekou Fofana** | **Chairman  Co-Chairman  Secretary  Member  Member** |