

**COMMUNIQUE**

**HIGH-LEVEL MEETING OF MINISTERS OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, FINANCE, DEFENSE, AND STAKEHOLDERS**

**JULY 21-22, 2024**

**ELLEN JOHNSON SIRLEAF MINISTERIAL COMPLEX**

**MONROVIA, REPUBLIC OF LIBERIA**

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Liberia, in consultation with the Mano River Union Secretariat convened a High Level Meeting for the strengthening of the Mano River Union amongst Member States in Monrovia, from July 21-22, 2024.

The High Level Meeting sought to address the viability and visibility of the MRU Secretariat in view of strengthening its various organs to facilitate trade and economic integration in the sub-region; and to prepare the MRU, as a sub-regional organization capable of addressing emerging security and economic issues through collective actions.

H.E. Sara Beysolow Nyanti host minister, delivered the welcome remarks followed by statements from heads of ministerial delegations; including:

* The Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, Republic of Sierra Leone
* The Minister of African Integration and Ivoirians Abroad, Republic of Cote d’ Ivoire
* The Minister of Foreign Affairs, African Integration and Guineans Established Abroad; and Chair of the Union Ministerial Council, Republic of Guinea, represented by Mme. Seny F. Haba.

H.E. Joseph N. Boakai, Sr., President of the Republic of Liberia, graced the occasion, delivered the keynote address and officially opened the High-Level Meeting. The High-level Meeting was attended by:

1. **The Republic of Sierra Leone**
   1. H.E. Musa Timothy Kabba, Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation
   2. Kadiatu Allie, Deputy Minister 1, Ministry of Finance
   3. Dr. Victoria M. Sulimani, Director-General & Ambassador-at-Large
   4. Dr. David S. Yambasu, Director, Ministerial Followup
   5. Brigadier General George M. Bangura, Ministry of Defense
2. **The Republic of Cote d’Ivoire**
   1. H.E. Wautabouna Ouattara, Minister in Charge of African Integration & Ivorians Abroad, Mano River Union Affairs
   2. H.E. Madam M'brah A. Georgette, Ambassador of Cote d'Ivoire in Liberia
   3. H.E. Malan Niamkey Benjamin, Ambassador, Director of International Organizations
   4. Goli Kouame Louise Philippe, COS of Minister in Charge of African Integration & Ivoirians Abroad
   5. N'Guessan Konan Jerome, Minister Counselor
   6. Tanoh Konan Gervais Armand, Research Analyst, Ministry of Foreign Affairs
   7. Kanga Jean Aime, Communication and Protocol Officer
   8. Adjoumani Kra Paul Emile, Mission Manager of the Minister in Charge of African Integration
3. **The Republic of Liberia**
   1. H.E. Sara Beysolow Nyanti , Minister of Foreign Affairs and Host Minister
   2. Hon. Anthony Myers, Acting Minister of Finance and Development Planning
   3. Hon. Francis Nyumalin, Minister of Internal Affairs
   4. Hon. N. Oswald Tweh
   5. Hon. Amin Modad, Minister of Commerce
   6. Prof. Alaric Tokpa, Chairman of the Governance Commission
   7. Rtd. Gen. Prince Charles Johnson, II, Director, National Security Agency
   8. Hon. Steve Zargo, Commissioner General, Liberia Immigration Services
   9. Cllr. Deweh Gray, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs
   10. Hon. Ibrahim Al-bakri Nyei, Deputy Minister for International Cooperation/MOFA
   11. Christian W. Jallah Sr, MRU Resident Coordinator
   12. Hon. Saran Kaba Jones, Assistant Minister/Chief of Staff
   13. Hon. Saywah Gbaa, Assistant Minister for Public Affairs
   14. Hon. Charlyne Taylor, Assistant Minister for Afro-Asian/MFA
   15. Mr. Aaron Guannue, Desk Officer, MRU Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs
4. **The Republic of Guinea**
   1. Seny F. Haba – Deputy Director for African Integration, representing the

Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Guinea

* 1. H. E. Aboubacar Sylla – Ambassador of Guinea to Liberia
  2. Mr. Toure Aboubacar – Economic Counsellor

**Other participants were:**

1. Members of the Liberian Legislature
2. Members of the Liberian Cabinet
3. Heads of the United Nations Organizations and other International Organizations and Partners
4. Members of the Diplomatic and Consular Corps accredited to Liberia.
5. Special Representative of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Morocco.
6. United Nations Office for West Africa (UNOWAS)
7. The Kingdom of Morocco

The conference commenced with a technical meeting of experts at which participants deliberated on issues of peace, security, free movement, and Eco Currency, and the following:

* The need to strengthen the MRU Secretariat and make it viable and visible and the possibility of increasing Member States contributions to the Secretariat;

* The need for the implementation of the ECOWAS framework on free movement of trade between the MRU Member States;
* Exploring the use of the ECOWAS biometric ID card as a legal travel document within the MRU sub-region;
* The need to address conflict resolution strategies and ensure peace and stability between MRU Member States which open development opportunities and;
* Exploring the possibility of pilot testing the ECO currency in the MRU Member States.

The High-Level Meeting commenced with remarks from Ministers of Foreign Affairs, Finance, Defense and other stakeholders. The opening address was delivered by H.E. Joseph Nyuma Boakai, President of Liberia.

Also speaking at the High-Level Meeting was H.E. Amb. Mohammed Methqal, Director General of the Moroccan Agency for International Cooperation, who delivered a special message from H.E. Nasser Bourita, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, African Cooperation and Moroccan Expatriates of the Kingdom of Morocco.

The High-Level Meeting welcomed the pronouncements, support and commitment of the Government of the Kingdom of Morocco in view of ensuring that the MRU sub-region is peaceful and supported in its developmental initiatives.

The High-Level Meeting adopted the policy framework and guide outlined in the keynote address of the President of the Republic of Liberia, H.E. Joseph N. Boakai, Sr., who observed the historical threats to the peace, security and stability of the sub region and commended the MRU Member States in its continued efforts to foster closer working relationship. He further requested the support of ECOWAS, AU, UNOWAS and other partners to support the MRU Secretariat to ensure the proper functioning of its various organs especially the regular meeting of the Technical Committee on Finance and Administration (T-CAF), and the Union Ministerial Council (UMC) on an annual basis as prescribed by the MRU protocol. He also addressed the need to support the implementation of the MRU revised 15th Protocol on Peace, Security and Defense; and that this collaboration should also support conflict management, resolution, peace building and political transformation in the sub-region as an added impetus to the proposed revision of the ECOWAS Supplementary Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance of 2001.

The Secretary General of the MRU presented on the status of the Union made proposals for strengthening the Union. He stressed the need to discuss peace and security, a permanent MRU office in Freetown, as well as partnerships. He also called upon development partners to foster stronger and more active partnership in peace building initiatives, specifically for its engagement in the construction of the Peace Bridge between Guinea and Sierra Leone within the Nongoa and Koindu axis.

The High-Level meeting then deliberated on the five key points of key points of the agenda taking into consideration the presentations from the technical meeting experts.

**After deliberations, the participants resolved that;**

1. The MRU Secretariat should be strengthened and make it viable and visible with the possibility of increasing Member States contributions to the Secretariat;
2. Support from national government of member states of the MRU is solicited to take ownership of the availability, accessibility, operationalization and functionality of the ECOWAS biometric card especially at various border points, free of charge – for the first two years;
3. The MRU governments consider bearing some or all of the cost of the card to ensure its availability and making it compulsory for all MRU citizens to obtain in the soonest possible time or as deemed necessary by the authority of Heads of State.;
4. The capacity of state security actors, , and border management personnel in the customs procedures, immigration functionality, and all trade facilitation procedures and the development of standard operation procedures and rules of engagements are harmonized and strengthened;
5. The MRU Secretariat conducts an analysis of the four countries’ readiness for the ECO Currency; and present report of such assessment to the Heads of State.
6. Regular Joint Military Exercises are conducted to enhance interoperability and readiness among MRU countries through regular joint security exercises thereby improving military ties and sharing best practices;
7. Coordinated Border Control Measures are implemented through the deployment of advanced surveillance technologies, increased patrols, and establishment of joint border task forces to curb illegal activities and secure borders effectively;
8. Early Warning Systems and Centralized Intelligence Sharing is developed to establish a regional early warning system and a centralized intelligence database for real-time information sharing to detect and respond to security threats promptly;
9. To engage in Political Mediation and Prevent Electoral Violence: an MRU elections observer team is set up to engage in preventative diplomacy to monitor elections and address conflicts before they escalate, reducing pre and post-election violence;
10. The MRU Protocol Implementation and Secretariat Accountability is strengthened to ensure the domestication and implementation of MRU protocols by member states and enhance the accountability of the MRU Secretariat, including the involvement of the Foreign Ministers on the Ministerial Council for better coordination; and
11. Given the new multiple challenges of the subregion, Ministries of Foreign Affairs of member states should harmonize responsibilities to ensure consistency and coordination across the Union. The Ministries of Foreign Affairs should be responsible for international cooperation which in essence includes relationship management within the Union, as well as advancing joint projects. Ministries of Foreign Affairs should sign all international instruments, inter-union, and serve as the entry point for engagement on peace and security to ensure that all relevant domestic institutions are engaged.
12. Noting that the Heads of State of the Union have not met for 11 years, the high level meeting recommends that the Heads of State Summit should be held before the end of the year 2024 in either la Cote d’Ivoire or la Guinea.
13. The meeting resolved that going forward the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of Member States should be members of the Ministerial Council
14. Prior to the Heads of State Summit, the Secretariat will convene Technical Commission and Union Ministerial Council meetings that will include Ministries of Foreign Affairs. Consideration will be given to other relevant ministries at the next ministerial meeting.
15. The Heads of State will decide on the location of the Headquarters of the MRU Secretariat, noting that Sierra Leone has provided a parcel of land for the construction of a permanent headquarters, while Cote D’Ivoire has called for a review of the location of the Union’s Headquarters.
16. That the Secretariat takes note of the emerging issues around the prevalent use of illicit drugs, youth, trafficking in persons, climate change and other social issues and design appropriate programs to address them within the Union.
17. That the Secretariat reviews all Protocols of the MRU to assess their relevance to the contemporary situations in the Union, and address any gaps in governance. Results of this assessment to be presented to the Heads of State.
18. The meeting thanks Morocco for its participation and support and tasks the Secretariat to follow up on Morocco’s offer of multilateral support to the Union.

The High-Level Meeting expressed deep and profound thanks and appreciation to H.E. Joseph N. Boakai, Sr., President of the Republic of Liberia, for the guidance, which led to successful hosting of the Dialogue. Special appreciation also to the Liberian government through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs headed by Madame Sara Beysolow Nyanti, for the excellent coordination and hosting of the Mano River Union Dialogue.

**Done at Ellen Johnson Sirleaf Ministerial Complex, Congo Town, on the 22nd Day of July A.D. 2024**

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H.E. Sara Beysolow Nyanti

Minister of Foreign Affairs

**Republic of Liberia**

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H.E. Musa Timothy Kabba

Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation

**Republic of Sierra Leone**

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H.E. Wautabouna Ouattara

Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, African Integration and Ivorians Abroad

**Republic of Côte d’Ivoire**

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Dr. Morissanda Kouyate

Minister of Foreign Affairs, African Integration, and Guineans Established Abroad

PP. Mme. Seny Francoise Haba

**Republic of Guinea**