

PRESS RELEASE

MRU Countries Support Establishment of Youth Volunteers Scheme

Monrovia, Liberia: May 26, 2009 – Delegates at the just ended sub-regional conference on the establishment of a National Youth Volunteer Schemes in the Mano River Union (MRU) have recommended the establishment of an effective sensitization program to inculcate a sense of patriotism among youth in the sub-region for effective engagement in the development process. They said the current structure of the National Youth Volunteer Service (NYVS) managed by the Ministry of Youth and Sports should be maintained and strengthened through the provision of annual budgetary support by the government. Participants also stressed the need for strong political will on the part of government and a legal framework that will govern the NYVS programme.

The conference was held at the Ministry of Youth and Sports conference room in Monrovia with support from the European Commission, the Government of Liberia and the United Nations Volunteers office in Bonn, Germany. Representatives from the government of Sierra Leone, Guinea and Ivory Coast attended the conference. The Minister of Youth Development in Nigeria, Hon. Sen. Akinlabi Olasunkanmi and the Director of Youth Schemes Secretariats for Ghana and Nigeria shared experiences on the National Youth Volunteer Scheme in their respective countries. Others representatives from employers associations from Ghana and Nigeria were also in attendance at the conference.



President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf addressing delegates

The conference was aimed at providing a platform for the exchange of ideas, experiences, and best practices from various West African countries on the establishment of national youth schemes to better inform the Liberian initiative which is in the pilot phase and to establish a regional network on youth, volunteerism and nation building as well as promote volunteerism and the involvement of youth in development.

Addressing delegates at the conference, President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf commended the organizers of the conference saying “the reactivation of the Mano River Union is a significant achievement in realizing the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) objective of economic cooperation noting that this initiative will achieve large economies of scale for all the member states”. President Johnson Sirleaf noted that youth have lost the value of service and work ethics over the years and have resulted to personal benefits to the expense of society. She hope that through the National Youth



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Volunteer scheme youth will recommit their energies to national service and the re-building of the country.

The Liberian leader assured delegates of her Government's support to the establishment of a National Youth Volunteer Scheme in Liberia. She admonished beneficiaries to remain committed to the objectives of volunteerism and national service.

Also addressing the delegates, UNDP Country Director Dominic Sam said since the establishment of the National Youth Volunteer Service in 2006, 67 university graduates have completed community service in the areas of education, health and creating community awareness on the effects of HIV/AIDS. He said the programme will be expanded to more counties in the country and the number of volunteers will increase.

Speaking on behalf of European Commission, Mr. Matrinb commended the role played by youth schemes in Ghana and Nigeria and noted that those schemes provided the youth with formal, informal and non formal education and help in empowering youth to play active role in nation building.