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Liberia

Compilation of information prepared by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

I. Background

1. The present report was prepared pursuant to Human Rights Council resolutions 5/1 and 16/21, taking into consideration the outcome of the previous review.¹ It is a compilation of information contained in relevant United Nations documents, presented in a summarized manner owing to word-limit constraints.

II. Scope of international obligations and cooperation with human rights mechanisms

2. The United Nations country team recommended that Liberia ratify the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, aiming at the abolition of the death penalty; the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment; the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict and the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography; and the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women; and continue to align its national laws with international treaties and standards.²

3. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) recommended ratifying the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.³

III. National human rights framework

1. Constitutional and legislative framework

4. The country team noted that Liberia had undertaken legal reforms aimed at harmonizing its domestic legislation with international human rights standards. It recommended that Liberia finalize and enact the revised Domestic Violence Act, the anti-female genital mutilation bill and the revised Public Health Act; accelerate enactment of the Legal Aid Bill, the Corrections Service Bill and the Alternative Dispute Resolution Act; and ensure full implementation of newly adopted laws through operational guidelines and monitoring mechanisms.⁴



2. Institutional infrastructure and policy measures

5. The country team noted that the Independent National Commission on Human Rights faced persistent challenges with regard to limited personnel, technical resources, funding, public visibility, and capacity to monitor and report on human rights abuses and violations. It recommended that Liberia allocate adequate and predictable funding to the Commission, safeguard the Commission's institutional independence through legislative review, and strengthen the Commission's monitoring, reporting and public outreach functions.⁵

6. The Working Group on the issue of human rights and transnational corporations and other business enterprises (hereinafter referred to as the Working Group) noted that the Independent National Commission on Human Rights was underresourced and therefore unable to effectively fulfil its functions. The Working Group considered that the good work of the Commission could be significantly expanded if it were provided with appropriate funding to train stakeholders on business and human rights, upgrade its website and hire additional monitors to perform its functions.⁶

7. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) recommended that Liberia allocate sufficient budgetary resources to institutions that were critical for the protection and promotion of human rights in the electoral process, including the National Elections Commission, the Independent National Commission on Human Rights and the judiciary, in order to enable them to discharge their functions effectively and speed up their processes, including in relation to the right of access to justice.⁷

8. The Working Group recommended that Liberia establish effective accountability mechanisms for the meaningful participation of relevant stakeholders, including civil society actors; and ensure that all government institutions dealing with business, as well as the judiciary and the Independent National Commission on Human Rights, had the necessary resources, including budgetary resources, and training to provide effective oversight of corporate behaviour and ensure corporate accountability.⁸

9. The country team recommended that Liberia fully operationalize the national mechanism for reporting and follow-up with appropriate staffing and a formalized mandate, increase domestic resource allocation to support implementation of human rights action plans, and institutionalize periodic policy review and evaluation linked to national and international commitments.⁹

10. The country team noted that Liberia had taken steps to improve accountability and transparency through legal reform and institutional strengthening. However, operational challenges persisted due to limited funding and institutional overlap. The country team recommended that Liberia expand civic education and participation in public accountability processes, and improve coordination between anti-corruption institutions to avoid duplication.¹⁰

11. The country team recommended that Liberia initiate a specific government budget line to support the provision of care to and the protection of girls, boys and women subjected to violence.¹¹

IV. Promotion and protection of human rights

A. Implementation of international human rights obligations, taking into account applicable international humanitarian law

1. Equality and non-discrimination

12. The country team noted that people in Liberia continued to experience disparities in access to services and in the protection afforded to them, according to their gender, their disability status, and whether they lived in urban or rural areas; and that, despite the efforts made, structural barriers to equality persisted. It recommended strengthening inclusive service delivery and anti-discrimination mechanisms.¹²

13. The Working Group heard about the practice of differentiated systems of benefits and allowances for expatriates compared with local employees, resulting in serious discriminatory practices in relation to access to different food, accommodation, wages, insurance and annual leave.¹³

14. OHCHR recommended that Liberia put in place a strategy to combat discrimination and hate speech and always prohibit incitement, especially during election periods.¹⁴

2. Right to life, liberty and security of person, and freedom from torture

15. The country team noted the efforts that Liberia had made towards abolition of the death penalty, which included a draft bill on the abolition of the death penalty to be resubmitted to Parliament.¹⁵ It recommended that Liberia continue to align its national laws with international treaties and standards.¹⁶

16. OHCHR stated that during the electoral period, persons had reportedly been arbitrarily arrested for election-related violence, by the police and other members of the security forces, in the context of the elections.¹⁷ OHCHR recommended adequately equipping the Liberia National Police with less-lethal crowd control equipment and providing appropriate training to strengthen their capacity to respond to electoral violence, in compliance with international human rights standards on the use of force.¹⁸

17. OHCHR observed that persons had been held in prolonged detention, beyond the statutory legal period of 48 hours, without formal charges being laid against them, several days after their arrest. OHCHR also noted, during its monitoring of the police detention facility in Gbarnga on 3 October 2023, that some detainees from Foya were being kept in a congested cell without formal charges being laid against them.¹⁹

18. UNESCO noted that corporal punishment was justifiable under the Children's Law of 2011.²⁰ It recommended that Liberia legally proscribe corporal punishment in education settings.²¹

3. Administration of justice, including impunity, and the rule of law

19. The Working Group found that serious challenges existed in relation to access to justice and effective remedies, and that the lack of accountability and ongoing impunity for serious human rights abuses had led to an erosion of confidence in public bodies.²²

20. The Working Group further noted that actual or perceived corruption and weak public institutions fuelled a lack of trust in State authorities and exacerbated social conflict.²³ Access to remedy when abuses occurred seemed to be very challenging, due to the lack of appropriate grievance mechanisms, fear of reprisals or dismissal, and a lack of access to the judicial system, including because of high costs, and stigma.²⁴ The Working Group recommended ensuring prompt and impartial investigations and accountability for cases involving threats and violence against individuals and trade unions defending human rights and the environment, including by businesses, State security forces and private security companies, and providing effective remedies to victims.²⁵

21. OHCHR indicated that by the end of June 2024, no information had been made public, from the police or the Ministry of Justice, on the outcomes of most of the complaints made relating to incidents that OHCHR had documented and reported.²⁶ OHCHR had observed limited accountability for the human rights violations and acts of violence that had taken place. OHCHR stressed the importance for the new Government, with support from the international community if necessary, of ensuring that there was no impunity for the violations and acts of violence documented during the elections, and of ensuring that justice was provided to the victims.²⁷

22. The country team stated that Liberia continued to face systemic challenges in ensuring timely and equitable access to justice. Prolonged pretrial detention, inadequate legal representation, and overcrowded court dockets and correctional facilities remained persistent issues. The country team recommended that Liberia strengthen access to justice through expanded legal aid and court decentralization, and provide support to implement and sustain a substantive national preventive mechanism. It also recommended that Liberia improve prison oversight, rehabilitation programmes and non-custodial sentencing, by passing and

implementing the Corrections Service Act. The country team further recommended capacity-building programmes for justice sector actors, and advocacy for the expansion of probation services and for the establishment of a parole board.²⁸

23. The country team stated that transitional justice remained a sensitive and evolving issue in Liberia, and that despite recommendations from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, formal mechanisms for accountability had not been fully implemented. It recommended that Liberia take specific measures to implement the Truth and Reconciliation Commission recommendations, including accountability through customary and statutory mechanisms; establish an independent war and economic crimes court in line with international standards; and continue inclusive national dialogue and other initiatives on transitional justice.²⁹

4. Fundamental freedoms and the right to participate in public and political life

24. OHCHR was concerned by reported instances of election-related violence, use of language that could amount to hate speech and incitement to violence, and attacks on journalists in Liberia, ahead of the general election, as well as on the election day of 10 October 2024.³⁰

25. The Working Group received distressing reports from community members of repression, police brutality and arbitrary detention in the context of peaceful protests and was very concerned by the chilling effect that violence and threats against defenders and communities had on their right to public participation.³¹ It recommended that Liberia create a safe and enabling environment for human rights defenders and protect the life and integrity of people at risk because of their work defending the rights of communities, land or the environment; and ensure that the criminal justice system was not used to attack, intimidate, criminalize or deter those who spoke out against business-related human rights abuses.³²

26. OHCHR noted, furthermore, that in the context of protests, individuals identified as opposition supporters had been injured during clashes with supporters of the ruling party, and that the police had failed to take appropriate measures to meet their obligations to protect the right to peaceful assembly.³³ OHCHR recommended that Liberia ensure that all cases of election-related violence and human rights violations and abuses were promptly investigated, and that the perpetrators were held accountable; and that it consider amending the new electoral law to remove vague provisions and to provide definitions for key issues such as “voter trucking”.³⁴

27. According to OHCHR, some election observers noted that the State-owned broadcaster had allocated most of its prime-time content for government messages, which was inconsistent with fair media access for all political candidates and parties for campaigning and advertising purposes.³⁵

28. The country team stressed that women, youth and persons with disabilities remained underrepresented in elected and appointed positions, and that, while there was improved access to information and greater media diversity, harassment and threats against journalists had been reported. The country team recommended that Liberia adopt legislative reforms and mandatory temporary special measures to improve inclusive political participation, including in order to accelerate the representation of women in legislative and appointed positions and including at the local level; strengthen the enforcement of laws protecting freedom of expression and media independence; and expand civic education in order to foster participation and transparency.³⁶

29. UNESCO noted that a bill to establish an independent broadcasting regulator was pending before the legislature.³⁷ UNESCO recommended establishing an independent broadcasting regulator.³⁸

5. Prohibition of all forms of slavery, including trafficking in persons

30. The country team stressed that Liberia had demonstrated increased commitment to addressing trafficking, through policy and institutional reforms, such as the amendment made in 2021 to the Trafficking in Persons Law of 2005, increasing prison sentences. However, Liberia remained a source, transit and destination country for trafficking in persons. The

country team recommended that Liberia strengthen the enforcement and prosecution of trafficking-related crimes, by strengthening its investigative and prosecutorial capacities; expand survivor-centred support services, including reintegration and rehabilitation tailored to women and children; and enhance community awareness and prevention strategies.³⁹

31. The Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially women and children observed that women and girls, in particular, were victims of forced labour and sexual exploitation in high-risk sectors, such as domestic work, agriculture and illicit mining.⁴⁰

32. The Special Rapporteur on trafficking also noted that assistance and protection services for victims were very limited, particularly in rural areas and at border crossings, and that urgent action was required to expand the provision of safe homes and child protection measures. Noting the ongoing development and forthcoming launch of the upcoming phases of the national action plan to combat trafficking in persons, the National Development Plan and the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework, the Special Rapporteur on trafficking encouraged Liberia to firmly situate prevention of trafficking in persons and accountability within the wider development context.⁴¹

33. The Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations of the International Labour Organization (ILO) encouraged Liberia to pursue its efforts to ensure that investigations and prosecutions for trafficking cases were carried out and that adequate penalties were imposed on perpetrators.⁴² Furthermore, it requested that Liberia take the measures necessary to ensure the effective implementation of the Act to Ban Trafficking in Persons, of 2005, particularly to ensure that perpetrators of trafficking in children were subject to thorough investigations and prosecutions, and that sufficiently effective and dissuasive penalties were imposed in practice. In that regard, it requested that Liberia continue its efforts to strengthen the capacity of law enforcement agencies to identify and combat the sale and trafficking of children under 18 years of age.⁴³

6. Right to work and to just and favourable conditions of work

34. The Working Group stated that the overall situation pertaining to the protection of a range of labour rights was bleak in key economic sectors, especially in mining and agribusiness operations in concession areas. The scarcity of decent employment and of choice of employment was a countrywide problem, which exacerbated the power imbalance between employers and employees, placing the latter at a high risk of abuse, including labour exploitation.⁴⁴

35. According to the Working Group, workers reported excessive working hours, with 12-hour shifts, unpaid overtime, unsafe working conditions in mines, unsanitary and inadequate corporate accommodation and insufficient personal protective equipment on plantations.⁴⁵ Furthermore, the Working Group heard repeatedly about the late payment of wages in the public and private sectors, and that the minimum daily wage was not adequate to cover the rising cost of living.⁴⁶

36. The Special Rapporteur on trafficking noted that risks of trafficking for forced labour and child labour in supply chains, including in fisheries, remained high, with limited capacity for inspection and enforcement.⁴⁷

37. The Working Group also heard that, due to the absence of other job opportunities, workers had no choice but to continue to work in conditions of exploitation, with delayed or non-payment of salaries and arbitrary reductions in rates of pay.⁴⁸ It also noted the failure of labour inspectors to monitor and report on the many serious abuses in the workplace.⁴⁹ The Working Group recommended that Liberia prevent and address abuses of the human rights of workers, including risks to their health and safety and labour rights, strengthening existing regulations and the institutional capacity to implement and monitor labour rights, including in relation to the principles of equal pay for equal work and non-discrimination and in relation to working hours, weekly rest, night work, the payment of overtime hours and work on public holidays in all sectors and for all workers. It also recommended ensuring the imposition of effective sanctions for non-compliance; ensuring that the labour inspectorate had the necessary resources; and strengthening awareness among businesses of their independent responsibility to respect human rights, including regarding occupational safety and health and the right of workers to create and join trade unions and to engage in collective bargaining,

without fear of reprisal. It further recommended implementing training programmes to educate workers, especially those in vulnerable situations, on their rights, including the right to create and join trade unions and to engage in collective bargaining.⁵⁰

38. The ILO Committee of Experts requested that additional duties only be provided to labour inspectors insofar as these did not interfere with their duty to secure enforcement of legal provisions. The same Committee also requested Liberia to intensify its efforts to ensure a sufficient number of labour inspectors to secure effective discharge of the inspection functions, and to adopt the necessary measures for the labour inspectors to have the necessary material means to carry out their functions effectively.⁵¹

7. Right to social security

39. The country team recommended that Liberia increase the allocation of domestic funding for family planning programmes to meet the high need for contraception among women and girls.⁵²

40. The country team recommended that Liberia develop and implement the national social protection strategy, comprehensively addressing issues concerning children and other societal groups.⁵³

8. Right to an adequate standard of living

41. The Working Group was alarmed to repeatedly hear about difficulties in finding food and that importers of rice were allegedly hoarding rice in order to drive up the price to be paid by the Government and by people. That context rendered basic food unaffordable for many and contributed to the unavailability of food in the marketplace. The Working Group was concerned about the extent of food scarcity and malnutrition, possibly reaching acute food insecurity in parts of the country.⁵⁴

42. The Working Group observed the lack of basic infrastructure in the country and the uneven development that had taken place, with basic services lacking in all of the locations that the Working Group visited, especially outside of Monrovia, reflecting a general neglect of local communities in development planning.⁵⁵

43. The country team stressed that Liberia was continuing to address persistent poverty, limited access to healthcare, and gaps in education, labour rights and land governance. It recommended that Liberia strengthen enforcement of the Land Rights Act and labour protection laws, and finalize the National Action Plan for Youth Peace and Security and the National Youth Policy and provide support for the implementation of each of these.⁵⁶

9. Right to health

44. The World Health Organization (WHO) noted that Liberia continued to be challenged, among other things, by weak infrastructure affecting access in rural communities, a weak health system, inadequate investment in the health sector and a very limited community insurance scheme. WHO was encouraged about the ongoing process of increasing the budget allocation for the health sector, and stressed that meaningful investment in that sector remained paramount in achieving better health outcomes.⁵⁷

45. The country team stated that more than 33 per cent of women who wanted to use contraception were unable to get these services, and that the high prevalence of unsafe clandestine abortions, which often led to maternal mortality, and the high rate of early pregnancy among adolescents, was due notably to the limited access to sexual and reproductive health services. The country team recommended that Liberia amend the Public Health Law to expand access to safe and legal abortion services, as a critical measure to reduce maternal mortality and uphold women's reproductive rights.⁵⁸ It also recommended that Liberia strengthen measures to address the barriers to access for women to healthcare services, which included sociocultural norms as well as high out-of-pocket expenditure for accessing healthcare; and expand access to healthcare through public financing and community-based systems.⁵⁹

10. Right to education

46. The Working Group noted that there were educational challenges across the country, particularly among women and girls.⁶⁰ It was concerned that girls faced risks to their physical integrity in transit to their schools.⁶¹

47. The country team stressed that education completion rates remained low, particularly among girls; and that at the core of the development challenges in Liberia were the interconnected issues of low levels of literacy, unemployment, and multidimensional poverty, which was an indication of severe deprivation of access to basic services. The country team also noted that all those factors disproportionately affected citizens, particularly vulnerable persons, women and girls, and persons with disabilities. It further noted that low levels of literacy continued to limit productive capacities, further entrenching income and gender inequalities. The country team recommended that Liberia improve education access and outcomes, particularly for girls and marginalized groups.⁶²

48. UNESCO noted that only a small amount of data was available regarding efforts to increase access to quality education, and that the gross enrolment in primary education was only 67 per cent in 2022. In addition, according to the Global Education Monitoring Report, of 2023, the male literacy rate had progressed very slowly and the youth literacy rate even appeared to have declined.⁶³ UNESCO recommended that Liberia enshrine the right to education for all in the Constitution and in legislation, without discrimination; guarantee in legislation at least 12 years of free primary and secondary education; guarantee in legislation at least one year of free and compulsory pre-primary education; ensure that legal safeguards secured the right of children to complete compulsory education before entering the workforce; ensure regular reporting on education data at all levels; pursue efforts to increase enrolment in education and increase literacy; and increase efforts to finance education, by allocating at least 4 to 6 per cent of gross domestic product to education and/or at least 15 to 20 per cent of public expenditure to education, in accordance with international benchmarks.⁶⁴

11. Development, the environment, and business and human rights

49. While acknowledging that government policies that promoted foreign investments were legitimate, the Working Group remained concerned by the lack of a holistic approach by the Government that took into account the sustainable use of natural resources, resilient infrastructure, sustainable development, the socioeconomic needs of local populations and the right to live in a healthy environment. According to the Working Group, it was urgent for Liberia to create an enabling environment that was conducive to responsible business conduct and stable investment that benefited all.⁶⁵

50. The Working Group observed an absence of awareness of the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights and of the business and human rights agenda, and noted the need for significant capacity-building and awareness-raising in that regard.⁶⁶ The failure of mining and agricultural concessionaires to comply with human rights standards was a major concern for the Working Group.⁶⁷ The Working Group recommended that Liberia provide guidance and set clear expectations for investors and businesses, including foreign businesses, to respect human rights and the environment as a precondition for doing business in Liberia.⁶⁸

51. In addition, the Working Group recommended that Liberia strengthen regulations, including by developing legislation imposing binding human rights due diligence requirements for all businesses, which would provide for corporate liability as well as access to and effective remedies for victims of corporate human rights abuses. It also recommended that Liberia raise awareness and build capacity regarding the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights among all actors in society and among civil servants, the judiciary and lawmakers in order to strengthen their capacity to deliver on their respective obligations to prevent, investigate, punish and redress business-related human rights abuses, and allocate adequate resources to that end.⁶⁹

52. In relation to the national action plan on business and human rights, the Working Group recommended that Liberia ensure that every step of the process was developed in a transparent manner, including by providing access to information at all stages, and with the equal and meaningful participation of all relevant stakeholders in all counties, with a

particular focus on communities in the most marginalized situations outside the capital; ensure that the national action plan included indicators that were specific, measurable, achievable and time-bound to assess implementation; allocate adequate resources; and ensure that the relevant ministries and agencies could deliver on their responsibilities under the plan and could be held accountable for not doing so.⁷⁰

53. Moreover, the Working Group recommended that Liberia adopt a more holistic approach to human rights and environmental impact assessments that considered cumulative social, environmental, economic and cultural impacts, with the meaningful participation of affected communities.⁷¹

B. Rights of specific persons or groups

1. Women

54. The country team emphasized that sexual and gender-based violence predominantly affecting women and girls persisted in Liberia. For example, in 2023, the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection had recorded a total of 3,204 cases of gender-based violence, 83 per cent of which affected young women and children aged 20 and below.⁷²

55. The country team noted that the practice of female genital mutilation remained at a high level and that the high rate of teenage pregnancies continued to hinder the education and development of girls. It also noted that the practice of child marriage persisted, predominately impacting girls, and that the practice was fuelled by high household poverty rates, entrenched social norms, conflicting legal frameworks and weak social protection safety nets.

56. The country team recommended that Liberia implement the road map from the sixty-eighth session of the Commission on the Status of Women and the concluding observations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women;⁷³ criminalize all forms of gender-based violence and harmful traditional practices, by passing the law against female genital mutilation and strengthening the Gender-based Violence Act; ensure women's equitable participation in governance, leadership and economic development; introduce monitoring mechanisms to address the recruitment of girls into the Sande secret society; and prevent and eliminate abuse and sexual violence perpetrated against girls at school and ensure that perpetrators were adequately punished. The country team also recommended that Liberia institute legislation promoting re-entry into school for girls after they had given birth, and integrate age-appropriate education on sexual and reproductive health and rights into teacher training institutions.⁷⁴

57. The Working Group welcomed the initiative by Liberia to establish gender units in all ministries. However, civil society organizations, workers' unions and communities had consistently reported that sexual and gender-based violence was systematic across the economy and society, which was of great concern.⁷⁵

58. The Working Group recommended that Liberia strengthen measures to combat gender-based discrimination, sexual harassment and gender-based violence in the workplace and in society in general, with a view to protecting all individuals, without discrimination, in line with international standards.⁷⁶

59. OHCHR noted that women's participation in national and local politics and leadership remained very limited, and that deeply entrenched social norms and practices restricting women's role to household and family chores, and unequal access to education, skills training and finance, were among the factors that inhibited women's full participation in elections. According to OHCHR, during the 10 October 2023 elections, only 15 per cent of the total number of candidates fielded by political parties were women, despite a voluntary pledge announced by political parties to ensure that women comprised 30 per cent of their candidate lists.⁷⁷

60. The Working Group expressed concern that Liberia had been ranked 156th out of 162 countries on the Gender Inequality Index and that only 11 per cent of seats in the parliament were held by women. The law did not provide for mandatory gender quotas, and

there were very low levels of female representation in managerial positions, and gender disparities in labour market participation.⁷⁸

61. The Working Group recommended promoting the equal representation of women in leadership positions, including by moving forward with instituting enforceable gender quotas, such as in the proposed amendments to the elections law pending before the Legislature, and by adopting similar mandatory quota initiatives for the representation of women in the private sector.⁷⁹

62. OHCHR recommended that Liberia implement the recommendations made by the Human Rights Committee and the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women towards achieving the goal of 50/50 gender parity in elected positions and in all branches and levels of Government, including through the use of temporary special measures. Such measures could include restoring the previously mandatory requirement of a 30 per cent quota of women for all registered political parties, and additional interim steps such as campaign funding for female candidates; and building the capacity of all State institutions, including parliaments and election bodies, to guarantee that women could participate in public affairs in safety, free from gender-based violence.⁸⁰

63. The ILO Committee of Experts encouraged Liberia to pursue its efforts to promote women's access to secure land tenure, credit and material goods and to provide detailed information on the impact of the measures adopted in that regard, in particular on the specific needs of Indigenous women.⁸¹

2. Children

64. The use of child labour was of particular concern to the Working Group. It referred to repeated testimony concerning the use of children in some palm oil and rubber plantations in different parts of the country. It pointed out that parents had extremely high daily targets imposed on them by employers for the collection of produce and needed the support of their children in order not to lose their daily wages, which meant that the children were providing unpaid labour instead of going to school.⁸²

65. The Working Group recommended that Liberia strengthen legislation on child labour and its root causes, including by ensuring that the hazardous occupations and activities prohibited for children were comprehensively addressed and effectively monitored and that the prohibitions were implemented throughout the country.⁸³

66. According to UNESCO, although the minimum age of employment in the Labour Code was aligned with the end of compulsory education, it was possible to employ children before that age, based on certain conditions, which could undermine the prohibition of child labour.⁸⁴

67. Considering the large number of children under 18 years of age who were engaged in hazardous work, the ILO Committee of Experts once again urged Liberia to intensify its efforts to protect children from the worst forms of child labour.⁸⁵

68. Considering that orphans were at an increased risk of being engaged in the worst forms of child labour, the ILO Committee of Experts strongly encouraged Liberia to continue to take effective and time-bound measures to ensure their protection from the worst forms of child labour, in particular by increasing their access to education and vocational training.⁸⁶

69. The country team recommended ensuring that children in contact or conflict with the law had adequate assistance, as needed on a case-by-case basis and in line with the principle of the best interests of the child; and reviewing the current legislative framework to remove the inconsistency between customary and statutory law with respect to eliminating child marriage.⁸⁷

3. Older persons

70. The Working Group heard repeated concerns about a lack of overall pension provision for older persons.⁸⁸

4. Persons with disabilities

71. OHCHR noted that during the 2023 elections, persons with disabilities had faced significant challenges, and that accessibility to polling stations and centres had been one of the major challenges for voters with disabilities. It recommended that Liberia improve accessibility to polling stations and other election-related material and infrastructure for persons with disabilities.⁸⁹

72. The Working Group was concerned to observe that government buildings were inaccessible to persons with disabilities.⁹⁰

73. The country team recommended that Liberia fully implement the National Disability Inclusion Policy; expand access to inclusive services for children and for persons with disabilities; and ensure legal and policy safeguards to protect vulnerable populations.⁹¹

5. Indigenous Peoples

74. The Working Group recommended that Liberia ensure the effective enforcement and oversight of the regulations providing for the equal and meaningful participation of rights holders and for the right to free, prior and informed consent for Indigenous Peoples in environmental and development-related decision-making, including the management of natural resources, from an early stage and throughout project implementation and monitoring, including by ensuring access to information, and transparency, during the scoping and licensing phases.⁹²

75. The Working Group also recommended that Liberia build capacity and allocate adequate resources to the relevant authorities to strengthen the implementation of the Land Rights Act of 2018, with the meaningful participation of rights holders.⁹³

6. Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons

76. In its joint report, OHCHR and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) noted that, while Liberia had committed to upholding human rights for all, the continuing criminalization of same-sex sexual behaviour was linked to widespread stigma, discrimination and violence which kept Liberian lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender persons living virtually in hiding. OHCHR and UNDP further indicated that those abuses extended from the public sphere to the private sphere and meant that lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender persons in Liberia lived with the constant threat of violence, fear of reporting violent crimes to the police, and of arrest, blackmail and extortion, and the risk of expulsion from family, religious institutions, the workplace, schools and homes.⁹⁴

77. OHCHR and UNDP recommended that Liberia repeal sections of the penal law that criminalized consensual same-sex relations; ensure effective investigations into allegations of homophobic and transphobic violence and ensure that alleged perpetrators were investigated and prosecuted if found guilty; and prohibit and combat discrimination against individuals on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity.⁹⁵

Notes

¹ [A/HRC/46/6](#), [A/HRC/46/6Add.1](#) and [A/HRC/DEC/46/113](#).

² United Nations country team submission for the universal periodic review of Liberia, para. 8.

³ UNESCO submission for the universal periodic review of Liberia, para. 27.

⁴ United Nations country team submission, para. 9.

⁵ *Ibid.*, paras. 19 and 20.

⁶ [A/HRC/53/24/Add.1](#), para. 70.

⁷ OHCHR, Report on the human rights issues in the context of general elections and presidential run-off in Liberia, 10 October and 14 November 2023, p. 21.

⁸ [A/HRC/53/24/Add.1](#), para. 80 (a) (iii) and (n).

⁹ United Nations country team submission, para. 17.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, paras. 24–26.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, para. 55.

¹² United Nations country team submission, paras. 21–23.

¹³ [A/HRC/53/24/Add.1](#), para. 49.

- ¹⁴ OHCHR, Report on the human rights issues in the context of general elections and presidential run-off in Liberia, 10 October and 14 November 2023, p. 21.
- ¹⁵ United Nations country team submission, para. 8.
- ¹⁶ Ibid.
- ¹⁷ OHCHR, Report on the human rights issues in the context of general elections and presidential run-off in Liberia, 10 October and 14 November 2023, p. 10.
- ¹⁸ Ibid., p. 21.
- ¹⁹ Ibid., p. 11.
- ²⁰ UNESCO submission, para. 4.
- ²¹ Ibid., para. 22.
- ²² [A/HRC/53/24/Add.1](#), para. 68.
- ²³ Ibid., para. 10.
- ²⁴ Ibid., para. 61.
- ²⁵ Ibid., para. 80 (f) (iii).
- ²⁶ OHCHR, Report on the human rights issues in the context of general elections and presidential run-off in Liberia, 10 October and 14 November 2023, p. 18.
- ²⁷ Ibid., p. 20.
- ²⁸ United Nations country team submission, paras. 34–37.
- ²⁹ Ibid., paras. 38–40.
- ³⁰ See <https://www.ohchr.org/en/statements-and-speeches/2023/10/comment-un-human-rights-office-spokesperson-seif-magango-ahead-0> and OHCHR, Report on the human rights issues in the context of general elections and presidential run-off in Liberia, 10 October and 14 November 2023, p. 11.
- ³¹ [A/HRC/53/24/Add.1](#), para. 30.
- ³² Ibid., para. 80 (f).
- ³³ OHCHR, Report on the human rights issues in the context of general elections and presidential run-off in Liberia, 10 October and 14 November 2023, pp. 13 and 14.
- ³⁴ Ibid., p. 21.
- ³⁵ Ibid., p. 11.
- ³⁶ United Nations country team submission, paras. 42 and 43.
- ³⁷ UNESCO submission, para. 14.
- ³⁸ Ibid., para. 23.
- ³⁹ United Nations country team submission, paras. 44–46.
- ⁴⁰ See <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2024/12/liberia-must-step-action-combat-trafficking-persons-says-expert>.
- ⁴¹ Ibid.
- ⁴² See https://normlex.ilo.org/dyn/nrmlx_en/f?p=1000:13100:0::NO:13100:P13100_COMMENT_ID,P13100_COUNTRY_ID:4290102,102742:NO.
- ⁴³ See https://normlex.ilo.org/dyn/nrmlx_en/f?p=1000:13100:0::NO:13100:P13100_COMMENT_ID,P13100_COUNTRY_ID:4325169,102742:NO.
- ⁴⁴ [A/HRC/53/24/Add.1](#), para. 46.
- ⁴⁵ Ibid., para. 49.
- ⁴⁶ Ibid., para. 50.
- ⁴⁷ See <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2024/12/liberia-must-step-action-combat-trafficking-persons-says-expert>.
- ⁴⁸ [A/HRC/53/24/Add.1](#), para. 51.
- ⁴⁹ Ibid., para. 52.
- ⁵⁰ [A/HRC/53/24/Add.1](#), para. 80 (j).
- ⁵¹ See https://normlex.ilo.org/dyn/nrmlx_en/f?p=1000:13100:0::NO:13100:P13100_COMMENT_ID,P13100_COUNTRY_ID:4419764,102742:NO.
- ⁵² United Nations country team submission, para. 55.
- ⁵³ Ibid., para. 17.
- ⁵⁴ [A/HRC/53/24/Add.1](#), para. 11.
- ⁵⁵ Ibid., para. 13.
- ⁵⁶ United Nations country team submission, paras. 27–33.
- ⁵⁷ See <https://www.afro.who.int/countries/liberia/news/ensuring-health-equity-narrowing-barrier-gaps-accessing-health-care>.
- ⁵⁸ United Nations country team submission, paras. 53 and 55.
- ⁵⁹ United Nations country team submission, paras. 27–33 and 55.
- ⁶⁰ [A/HRC/53/24/Add.1](#), para. 15.
- ⁶¹ Ibid., para. 64.
- ⁶² United Nations country team submission, paras. 27–33.
- ⁶³ UNESCO submission, para. 8.
- ⁶⁴ Ibid., para. 22.

- ⁶⁵ [A/HRC/53/24/Add.1](#), para. 12.
- ⁶⁶ Ibid., para. 14.
- ⁶⁷ Ibid., para. 35.
- ⁶⁸ Ibid., para. 80 (b).
- ⁶⁹ Ibid., para. 80 (c) and (e).
- ⁷⁰ Ibid., para. 80 (a) (i) and (iii).
- ⁷¹ Ibid., para. 80 (l).
- ⁷² United Nations country team submission, paras. 54 and 55.
- ⁷³ [CEDAW/C/LBR/CO/6](#).
- ⁷⁴ Ibid., paras. 21–23 and 55.
- ⁷⁵ [A/HRC/53/24/Add.1](#), paras. 57 and 58.
- ⁷⁶ Ibid., para. 80 (g).
- ⁷⁷ OHCHR, Report on the human rights issues in the context of general elections and presidential run-off in Liberia, 10 October and 14 November 2023, p. 15.
- ⁷⁸ [A/HRC/53/24/Add.1](#), para. 65.
- ⁷⁹ Ibid., para. 80 (h).
- ⁸⁰ OHCHR, Report on the human rights issues in the context of general elections and presidential run-off in Liberia, 10 October and 14 November 2023, pp. 20 and 21.
- ⁸¹ See https://normlex.ilo.org/dyn/nrmlx_en/f?p=1000:13100:0::NO:13100:P13100_COMMENT_ID,P13100_COUNTRY_ID:4363574,102742:NO.
- ⁸² [A/HRC/53/24/Add.1](#), para. 56.
- ⁸³ Ibid., para. 80 (i).
- ⁸⁴ UNESCO submission, para. 5.
- ⁸⁵ See https://normlex.ilo.org/dyn/nrmlx_en/f?p=1000:13100:0::NO:13100:P13100_COMMENT_ID,P13100_COUNTRY_ID:4325169,102742:NO. See also https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:13100:0::NO::P13100_COMMENT_ID,P13100_COUNTRY_ID:3957996,102742.
- ⁸⁶ See https://normlex.ilo.org/dyn/nrmlx_en/f?p=1000:13100:0::NO:13100:P13100_COMMENT_ID,P13100_COUNTRY_ID:4325169,102742:NO.
- ⁸⁷ United Nations country team submission, para. 10.
- ⁸⁸ [A/HRC/53/24/Add.1](#), para. 55.
- ⁸⁹ OHCHR, Report on the human rights issues in the context of general elections and presidential run-off in Liberia, 10 October and 14 November 2023, pp. 17 and 21.
- ⁹⁰ [A/HRC/53/24/Add.1](#), para. 54.
- ⁹¹ United Nations country team submission, paras. 21–23 and 50.
- ⁹² [A/HRC/53/24/Add.1](#), para. 80 (k).
- ⁹³ Ibid., para. 80 (p) (i).
- ⁹⁴ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and United Nations Development Programme, *Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Rights in Africa: Liberia Country Report* (April 2020), p. 47.
- ⁹⁵ Ibid., pp. 10–12.