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Cllr Charles H. Gibson

Minister of Labour

Ministry of Labour

Republic of Liberia

Ellen Johnson Sirleaf

Ministerial Complex

Tubman Boulevard

Monrovia.

25 August 2023

Dear Honourable Minister,

GROSS GOVERNMENT INTERFERENCE IN TRADE UNION AFFAIRS

I bring you warm courtesies on behalf of the teeming membership of the African Regional Organisation of the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC-Africa www.ituc-africa.org) and wish to draw your attention to the subject matter.

The Liberia Labour Congress (LLC) leaders have drawn our attention to a circular purportedly being circulated under your instruction and supervision. The said circular calls for elections into the various organs of the LLC that your office would conduct.

Mr. Minister, this represents a crude attempt to interfere in trade union matters. This is because the operations and administration of the trade unions are strictly the affairs of workers and their elected leaders and not the business of government.

ITUC-Africa rejects this interference and calls on you to desist from this path that could jeopardise industrial harmony in the country. We are aware that the workers and leaders of the LLC, though highly irritated by this latest attempt to hijack and undermine their organisation, have resolved to continue to resist this attempt through peaceful, legal, and legitimate means. We salute their resolve and urge you to please halt this provocative move.

We are aware that the current thorny but surmountable issue within the Liberian industrial relation milieu is the denial of the freedom of association and collective bargaining rights to public sector workers in your country. On account of this issue, the Committee on the Application of Standards (CAS) sitting during the 110th and 111th Sessions of the International Labour Conference (ILC) in 2022 and 2023, respectively, discussed Liberia's failure to respect and apply the provisions of Convention 87 (Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise, 1948) in law and practice. The Committee, on both occasions, called on the Liberian

government to, without further delay, take measured and timely steps to remedy this infraction with the active and inclusive participation of the concerned and affected workers and their trade union organisations.

Rather than comply with the conclusions of the Committee, your ministry appears to be displaying total disregard for international labour standards and the supervisory mechanism of the International Labour Organisation. The attempt to organise elections for the LLC that excludes the same public sector workers manifestly demonstrates this disregard.

ITUC-Africa affirms that freedom of association is a cornerstone of other workplace rights. Workers in the public sector are workers and have the right to form and join trade unions of their choosing freely. These workers in Liberia are organised. We ask that the government recognise them and refrain from interfering with internal trade union administration to undermine them by excluding some categories of workers. Indeed, any attempt by governments to control or manipulate the internal processes of trade unions violates international labour standards and undermines the principles of democracy and social justice that are essential for a just and equitable society.

ITUC-Africa calls upon the Liberian government and your ministry to respect the autonomy of trade unions and uphold the principles of freedom of association and democratic governance. We demand the immediate withdrawal of any measures aimed at manipulating trade union elections. We urge you to take the necessary steps towards the full and unhindered enjoyment of the right of freedom of association for public sector workers and to accord recognition to the organised public sector trade unions.

Yours sincerely



Kwasi Adu-Amankwah
General Secretary

Cc : The Director General, ILO
Director, Norms, ILO
Director, ILO-ACTRAV
Director, ILO Abuja Office
General Secretary, ITUC
Chairman, Labour Committee of the Liberian Senate