PRESS CLIPPINGS

Enclosed are clippings of local and international press on the Special Court and related issues obtained by the Outreach and Public Affairs Office as at:
Thursday, 13 May 2010

Press clips are produced Monday through Friday.
Any omission, comment or suggestion, please contact
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Ext 7217
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Special Court tells success story

By David Jayne Munley

Mr. Peter C. Andersen, the Special Court for Sierra Leone’s Chief of Outreach and Public Affairs, has told The Examiner in an exclusive interview, on Monday, May 10 this year that the Court has successfully achieved its mandate and objectives to prosecute war crimes and crimes against humanity committed in Sierra Leone’s brutal eleven year civil war.

Elucidating the gains made in its eight year existence (on an approximately 200 million Dollar budget including construction of infrastructure for the project), Mr. Andersen pointed out that the Court’s success has attracted interests and consultations by other legal systems the world over, especially by the International Court of Justice.

He recalled that the Trial Chambers have delivered judgments and sentencing on 20th June and 19th July, 2007 respectively on the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC) indictees, Alex Tamba Brima, Brima Bassy Kamara and Santigie Babor Koru, which he described as a great achievement for the Court.

He also further recounted that in the case of the Prosecutor versus the Revolutionary United Front’s (RUF’s) Issa Hassan Sekay, Morris Kalon and Augustine Gibson, the Trial Chambers delivered verdict and sentencing judgment on the 25th February and 8th April 2009 respectively.

He emphasized that the RUF’s case was the first in international law in which crimes related to attacks on United Nations peace keepers were adjudicated and its completion a milestone achievement in the Court’s efforts to combat impunity in Sierra Leone.

He said upon delivering of these verdicts and sentences the Judges had fulfilled their judicial mandate and completed their services to the Court.

He explained that the case of the Civil Defence Force was also completed with the Trial Chamber rendering its sentencing against the remaining accused, Mohamed Kaimooh and Aliu Kondewa on 9th October, 2007 and Augustine Gbowa on 8th April 2009.

He disclosed that all convicts are presently serving their sentences in Rwanda, while the Court is gradually downsizing its personnel with much of the judges laid off.

Mr. Andersen also explained that the completion strategy of the Special Court is focused on residual issues and functions, while the Outreach and Public Affairs Section has continued to publicise the activities and accomplishments of the Special Court in every town and village in Sierra Leone, and neighbours like Liberia and Guinea Conakry. He said that outreach officers located in all of the districts of Sierra Leone had carried out screenings of edited trial summaries in communities throughout Sierra Leone and in Liberia.

He explained that the Court continues to engage in legacy programming and the feasibility of different institutional arrangements for the residual mechanisms.

He further emphasized that the maintenance, preservation, and management of the archives of the Court is being designed under an archiving project as one of the residual functions including witness protection and support.

He also disclosed that supervision of prison sentences, pardons and commutations or early releases is another residual issue that Court is looking at.

He noted that residual mechanisms must also have the capacity to try Johnny Paul Koroma if he was not confirmed dead by the end of the Court in a national setting.

He revealed that as part of its legacy project the Court on January 20 this year unveiled a plaque at Talia Yamebeko (Base Zero), the former Kamarjor headquarters in the Bonthe District.

He further disclosed that with funding from the European Union, plans are underway to erect and unveil a similar plaque in Pendembu in the Kailahun Chiefdom where the RUF had its headquarters.

He also recalled that over thirty countries contributed to the Court’s budget with the United States of America, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom as the largest contributors.

He pointed out that the Charles Taylor trial is expected to be completed in August this year while the downsizing of personnel continues, estimating that by June 2010, the Court would have been effectively summarised.
Charles Taylor May Die In Jail

Charles Taylor, whose absence in court past Tuesday sparked speculations from various schools of education that he is unwell, is alleged suffering from severe heart failure, which if not checked, may cause his death. Although the Special Court in a release from its public affairs office dated 12 May refutes press insinuations that the indicted former war lord, Charles Taylor, is suffering from severe heart condition that might be life threatening, as not being true, sources say the indicted warlord was not in court past Monday due to ill health.

In the release from Special Court, reasons as to the health of Charles Taylor were never explained at all. "We cannot discuss specifics of an accused's medical conditions, as this would be a violation of his right to privacy. I can, however, say that Charles Taylor does not have any life-threatening conditions", the release states.

A Source from The Hague where Charles Taylor's trial is active, says the condition of the indicted warlord is critical. Though in court past Tuesday, his posture according court visitors was somewhat atypical of the Charles Taylor many used to see.
By Abu Kalokoh

President of the Sierra Leone Bar Association, Joseph Kamara, during a press conference at the Association’s Secretariat on 11 Lamina Sankoh Street yesterday cataloged a wide range of issues affecting the justice system in Sierra Leone.

He stated among other things that long delays in trials, overloaded cases of Magistrates, the unnecessary waste of time in applying wrong principles of law because of the lack of proper training, prohibitive costs of using the system, all combine to derail the execution of fair trials in the courts.

Announcing the proposed activities for the Association in the area of Justice Sector Reform, Joseph Kamara said that the justice system is rooted in the rule of law for the development of the coun-

Contd. on page 2
try and that there are strong links between establishing democratic governance, reducing poverty and securing access to justice which when absent can undermine democracy. He emphasized that there should be access to all regardless of race, religion, sex, political affiliation, age or class stating, “national programmes and policies need to ensure an explicit focus on the poor and disadvantaged whose concerns need to be included in programs so that they don’t fall through cracks in the justice system.”

Reading from a press statement, the president continued that the country’s legal system fails to provide remedies that are preventive, timely, non-discriminatory, adequate etc. Secretary General of the Association, Easmon Ngakui, informed that the Association has a legal Aid scheme sponsored by the UNDP and that members of the scheme have dealt with 529 cases in which 213 were accused country-wide and 140 of those cases have been discharged including 165 accused persons. He said that majority of the accused persons are based in Freetown, among which 40 and 45 concern juvenile and female offenders respectively concluding, “the legal Aid Scheme lays more emphasis on the freedom of persons and the Association under the scheme will be posting Solicitors at various police stations to address legal matters.”
Salone Parliament to domesticate IHL

By Augustine Samba

As part of their activities to mark the 61st Anniversary of the Geneva Convention on International Humanitarian Law (IHL), staff and Volunteers of the Sierra Leone Red Cross Society in collaboration with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) on Wednesday 12th May 2010 summoned Members of the House of Parliament to a special meeting held in Committee Room 1, Parliament Building, Tower Hill in Freetown.

The essence of the special session was to convince the Government of Sierra Leone, through the Members of Parliament to domesticate the Geneva Convention and Protocols on International Humanitarian Law (IHL).
The UN backed Special Court for Sierra Leone has clarified that former president Charles Taylor is not facing any life threatening situation as claimed by his family.

On Monday, Mr. Taylor’s family in Liberia said the former president had developed a serious heart condition.

The family spokesman also alleged Mr. Taylor was being denied advanced medical attention.

Mr. Peter Anderson could not confirm nor deny if Mr. Taylor had been given access to medication, but said such disclosure would be a violation of his right to privacy.

The Special Court spokesman however said Mr. Taylor and other inmates receive quick medical attention whenever it is needed.

Mr. Anderson told Star Radio, the court has medical practitioners on its staff who examine the inmates and provide them medical care when needed.

He said Mr. Taylor’s return to court on Tuesday is evidence that he has no serious medical condition.

Mr. Anderson also failed to say why Mr. Taylor was absent from court on Monday, saying defense lawyers provided the information in a closed session.
Prosecution Witness Joseph Zig Zag Marzah Did Not Have A Sound Mind, He Took Drugs and Was Never Close To Charles Taylor. He Is A Liar, Witness Says

By Alpha Sesay

Daily Summary

Prosecution witness and former member of Charles Taylor’s rebel group, Joseph Zig Zag Marzah, did not have a sound mind, he took drugs, he was never close to Mr. Taylor, and he is a liar, Mr. Taylor’s 11th defense witness told Special Court for Sierra Leone judges today in The Hague.

Mr. Timan Edward Zammy, a former commander in Mr. Taylor’s National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) rebel group concluded his direct-examination today, telling judges that his former colleague in the NPFL, Mr. Marzah, who testified against Mr. Taylor in 2008, lied when he told the court that he (Marzah) was very close to Mr. Taylor. Mr. Marzah in his 2008 testimony told the judges that Mr. Taylor assigned him to the First Battalion of the NPFL in the early days of the war in Liberia. Mr. Marzah also said that when Mr. Taylor became president of Liberia in 1997, he (Taylor) sent him to transport arms and ammunition for Revolutionary United Front (RUF) rebels in Sierra Leone in exchange for diamonds and that on occasions, he shared food with the former president during which time they feasted on human intestines and other body parts. Mr. Taylor in his testimony regarded Mr. Marzah’s testimony as disgusting. He said that Mr. Marzah was an illiterate, was not of a sound mind, was a mere orderly to Benjamin Yeaten, the then Director of Mr. Taylor’s Special Security Services (SSS), and therefore would never have even come close to him while he was president. Today, Mr. Zammy shared similar sentiments about Mr. Marzah.

“Zig Zag Marzah is not a sound person. When Marzah was with Benjamin Yeaten, he used to take drugs and they tied him and threw him into dirty water,” the witness said as he described Mr. Marzah.

“Zig Zag Marzah was just a dirty man in the NPFL. We later came to know that he was not sound. Marzah lies like someone I will not be able to describe,” said Mr. Zammy.

The witness added that as a mere bodyguard, Mr. Marzah was not even allowed to go close to his immediate boss, Mr. Yeaten, the Director of the SSS.

“Benjamin Yeaten did not allow him to go close to him. He was always in the Kitchen. That is what I know about him,” he said.

During Mr. Marzah’s 2008 testimony against Mr. Taylor, he did a great deal to support prosecution charges against Mr. Taylor that the former Liberian president provided support to RUF rebels in Sierra Leone. Mr. Zammy, on his part today told the court that Mr. Marzah is not credible and should not be relied on to say the truth.

“All what Marzah has said is a lie. I do not believe him. Marzah is a liar,” the witness said.

On Mr. Marzah’s account that Mr. Taylor appointed him to the First Battalion Unit of the NPFL, Mr. Zammy, who served as commander for the same battalion for a one month period said that Mr. Marzah was never a part of that unit.
“Zig Zag Marzah was not appointed into any battalion by Mr. Taylor,” Mr. Zammy asserted.

Presiding Judge of the Trial Chamber Julia Sebutinde, who became concerned by the witness’s assertion, asked him whether his claim that Mr. Marzah was never appointed to the First Battalion by Mr. Taylor was based on the one month he spent as commander of the battalion.

The witness said that while he was head of that battalion in 1990, Mr. Marzah was never assigned there. He added that even after his departure, Mr. Marzah was way down the NPFL hierarchy for him to have received appointment into a battalion directly from Mr. Taylor.

The witness also refuted Mr. Marzah’s claims that he (Marzah) was a close associate to Mr. Taylor who dined with the former president and who Mr. Taylor sent on special operations.

“Marzah was way down the line. He was not even close to Mr. Taylor. Marzah would not even go close to Mr. Taylor for any appointment,” the witness explained.

Mr. Zammy, in his testimony today, refuted another aspect of Mr. Marzah’s account in his 2008 testimony that the NPFL would kill civilians, display their heads on car bumpers, and use their intestines to make check points as a means of instilling fear in civilians.

“It’s a lie. It never even happened. It’s a great lie. Nobody put human skulls on vehicles. It’s a lie,” Mr. Zammy asserted.

On the use of human intestines to make check points, Mr. Zammy said that “nobody ever used intestines as check points. It’s a lie.”

Prosecutors commenced Mr. Zammy’s cross-examination immediately after the conclusion of his direct testimony.

Also in court today, the judges refuted claims in the Liberian media that Mr. Taylor was absent in court on Monday because he had severe heart problems and that the court had refused him medical treatment. Mr. Taylor was present in court on Tuesday and Wednesday.

The Charles Taylor trial today held its last proceedings in the ICC premises. The conduct of the trial will now move on to the newly established court premises of the Special Tribunal for Lebanon (STL) in The Hague. Thursday and Friday will be used to test equipment in the STL court room and therefore the trial of Mr. Taylor will only resume on Monday.

Mr. Zammy’s cross-examination continues on Monday.
ICTJ - War Lords Could Exploit Weaknesses in TRC Report

J.V. Boimah

The International Center for Transitional Justice (ICTJ), an international human right institution has predicted an impediment of the hard-won peace process if political will in overcoming the limitation in the TRC report for proper implementations are not enhanced.

"the Liberian government should continue to demonstrate necessary political will to press ahead with measures to help overcome the limitations in the TRC recommendations. If the anti-TRC forces are allowed to hijack the prospect discussion on the final report and its implementations, it will impede the country's hard won peace and further entrench the culture of impunity that has characterized the country since its founding in 1847," the ICTJ report stated.

The statement came after series of waving criticisms against the implementations of the TRC's final report by alleged war lords including Sen. Prince Johnson (TRC' most notorious perpetrators of the 14-year civil war recommended for prosecution) on grounds of lack of transparency in the process.

More Work to Be Done in Post-Conflict Liberia

Speaking Tuesday at the official launch of the ICJT report on the TRC recommendations, Paul James Allen, ICJT' program Associate said there is a huge risk that the weaknesses of the TRC reports could be exploited by war lords to undermined its implementations.

The ICTJ official highlighted, the lustrations and recommendations on prosecutions of alleged war lords without respect for due process as some of the weaknesses in the TRC process noting; "ICTJ has a serious reservation about how the recommendations and lustration were arrived at in the report and thus questions their validity going forward."

He added that with the fragile nature of the country's peace process, it is very imperative that country engage in a truly consultative process to address the critical issues of accountability, justice, and national healing raised in the report so as to ensure its implementations.
Taylor Sick in Prison

The trial of Charles Taylor sitting in The Hague was adjourned on Monday morning and was expected to resume yesterday as the former Liberian president was absent in court Monday.

Reports from The Hague said when the court resumed Tuesday morning and Mr. Taylor was conspicuously absent for reasons that were not discussed in public.

Mr. Taylor's defense counsel, Courtenay Griffiths, asked that the court be put into closed session where the reasons for Mr. Taylor's absence were discussed.

When court returned into open session, the judges announced that based on a request by defense lawyers a request which was granted by the judges the court will adjourn for the day and resume on Tuesday.

Reasons for Mr. Taylor's absence from the court were not given; but a local radio station in Monrovia quoted family sources as blaming the indicted former Liberian president's absence from the court on illness. The report further expressed concerns about the prolongation of the trial of the ex-president. According to other reports, Taylor is suffering from heart problem.

Back in The Hague, the judges also asked defense lawyers to give an indication of when the defense case will be concluded.

In his response, Mr. Taylor's lead defense counsel Mr. Griffiths informed the judges that an optimistic position would be that the defense case will be concluded at the end of August or early September this year when all defense witnesses would have testified.

Presiding judge of the chamber, Justice Julia Sebutinde, cautioned Mr. Griffiths that the bench reserves the right or authority to order the defense to reduce their witness list as, according to her, the burden of proof in this case lies on the prosecution, and not the defense.

Mr. Taylor's trial was expected to continue yesterday with the continuation of the testimony of the 11th defense witness, Timeh Edward Zammy.

In a related development, when the witness said last week that Liberian rebel forces killed a wounded Prisoner of War (POW) because he was still considered an enemy soldier, judges in the trial of the former president took a keen interest. (It is against international law to execute prisoners of war who have laid down their arms and who have not first received a fair trial).

“We killed the first wounded prisoner of war because he was an enemy soldier, and he exchanged fire with our men,” said Timeh Edward Zammy, a former member of Mr. Taylor's rebel group, the National Patriotic Front of Liberia, told the Special Court for Sierra Leone.
Mr. Zammy was referring to the first prisoner of war that was captured along the Liberian border with Ivory Coast in 1989 because he had attempted to exchange fire with the rebels. He said the POW was among Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL) personnel sent by former Liberian president Samuel Doe to prevent the NPFL from taking the Liberian town of Gbutuo in Nimba County.

His statement drew questions from two judges: Justice Teresa Doherty and presiding judge, Justice Julia Sebutinde.

“Did you kill a Prisoner of War?” Justice Doherty asked the witness.

“The Prisoner of War was the soldier, one of the soldiers who exchanged fires with our men, and he was an enemy. He never surrendered,” the witness said.

“Please answer my question,” Justice Doherty said again. I said yes, he was an enemy who attacked us,” Mr. Zammy said.

“Mr. Witness, the question was simply, did you kill the Prisoner of War?” the presiding judge, Justice Sebutinde asked. “Yes, he was killed because he was an enemy, a soldier who attacked us,” the witness responded.

“I did not ask you why, we just wanted to hear whether the prisoner was killed or not killed. That was the only question,” Justice Sebutinde pressed the witness further.

The witness eventually said that the prisoner was killed. Mr. Taylor is on trial for allegedly providing support to Revolutionary United Front (RUF) rebels in the commission of war crimes, crimes against humanity and other serious violations of international humanitarian law committed in the territory of Sierra Leone from 1996 to 2002. To prove their case against Mr. Taylor, prosecutors have sought to raise issues concerning the commission of similar crimes in Liberia when Mr. Taylor was leader of the NPFL and later president of Liberia.

Prosecutors have tried to establish that crimes committed in Liberia were similar to or the same as those committed by the RUF in Sierra Leone. Mr. Taylor's defense team, however, has rejected all allegations against him, and has sought to present a case which focuses on Mr. Taylor's role as a peacemaker and a leader who was interested only in the welfare of his people and of neighboring countries.
UNMIL Public Information Office Media Summary

12 May 2010

[The media summaries and press clips do not necessarily represent the views of UNMIL.]

UN News in Liberia

Truth FM (News monitored today at 10:00 am)
UN Envoy Describes CSOs as Major Actors

- The UN deputy special representative for rule of law in Liberia, Ms. Henrietta Mensa-Bonsu has described civil society organizations (CSOs) as major actors in the democratic governance of Liberia’s security sector.
- Ms. Mensa-Bonsu said the UN Mission in Liberia is impressed with the level of cooperation it continued to receive from law enforcement association of Liberia.
- She said the association has professionalized the law enforcement sector of the country by providing training and creating opportunities for its members.

Other UN News

World Bank Commits US$20M to Road Project Again - Finance Minister Disclosed
[Public Agenda]

- The Finance Ministry has disclosed that the World Bank has decided to provide an additional US$20 million to the current US$30 million road project being carried out in the country.
- Making the disclosure recently, Minister Augustine Ngafuan who shortly returned from world financial experts including World Bank officials’ meetings said the latest pronouncement has ensured that the full amount of US$50 million for the project is now a guarantee.
- Minister Ngafuan noted that the body also agreed with the World Bank team that the Monrovia-Gbarnga and Gbarnga-Ganta highway projects will not be put on the back burner as the contract awarding process for the projects is already on course.
- During the just-ended Washington DC meeting in the US, the subject of electricity, according to the Finance Minister, was also brought to the World Bank delegation’s attention at which time the need for the rehabilitation of the power sector in Liberia was discussed.

Local News on Liberian issues

Senate Debates HIPC Audit Reports Today - Several Financial Experts Invited
[Daily Observer, Front Page Africa]

- The Liberian Senate will today Wednesday hold a major public debate on the reports of the recent HIPC audits conducted by the General Auditing Commission (GAC).
- The debate comes in the wake of claims and counterclaims by those listed to give account of millions of missing dollars as stated in the reports.
- According to the Senate chairman on banking and currency, Senator Isaac Nyenabo, several financial experts in Liberia have been invited to give their professional views on the reports.
- The debate will bring to the table four recent HIPC audits conducted by the GAC including those of the Ministries of Finance, Health, Public Works and Lands, Mines and Energy.

Thieves Pillage Monrovia’s Road Construction Materials
[Daily Observer, The Informer, Front Page Africa]
• The Public Works Ministry has reported theft of construction materials at CICO’s work sites in and around Monrovia.
• CICO is the Chinese construction company contracted by government to rebuild the streets of Monrovia.
• Minister Samuel Woods told reporters, unknown persons were in the habit of uprooting copper wires, cables and other road construction materials.
• Minister Woods reported that the thieves have also stolen cement, crush rocks, and manhole tops from newly constructed sites.
• The Public Works boss warned government would take drastic action against anyone caught in the act.

**US Embassy Cautions SSS To Exhibit Professionalism**

**[The Inquirer]**

• The US Embassy near Monrovia says the role of the Special Security Service (SSS) is crucial to the 2011 General and Presidential Elections.
• The Charge d’Affaires at the US Embassy Brooks Robinson said the SSS which protects the Presidency must exhibit all degrees of professionalism.
• Ms. Robinson cautioned the SSS officers to be law-abiding and have respect for human rights.
• She spoke Tuesday at the graduation of new SSS personnel and the dedication of a powerhouse at the Headquarters of the Presidential Guard Force.
• Meanwhile, President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf’s National Security Advisor has called on the Special Security Service (SSS), the Presidential Guard Force to be disciplined.
• Dr. H. Boima Fahbulleh said without discipline, the mandate of the SSS would be seriously undermined.
• For his part, SSS Director Samuel Brisbane appealed to international partners to give logistical support to the SSS to help accelerate its work.
• About fifty new recruits of the SSS graduated Tuesday following eight months training.

**NEC Undergoes Training On Constituency Boundary Delimitation**

**[Heritage, The Inquirer]**

• A three-day workshop on constituency boundary delimitation for staff of the National Elections Commission (NEC) begins today, Wednesday at the Library of the United States Embassy near Monrovia.
• A NEC release quotes the co-chairman of the NEC, Cllr. Elizabeth Nelson, who also chairs the Delimitation Working Group, as saying that during the workshop, Members of the Board of Commissioners, the Executive Director, Deputies and Directors of the Commission will be exposed to the various procedures and technical steps of constituency delimitation.
• The workshop, which will be facilitated by Dr. Lisa Handley and a team of delimitation experts, is sponsored by the International Foundation for Election Systems (IFES) with funding from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).
• The NEC boundary delimitation workshop will run from May 12-14, 2010.
• IFES, a traditional partner of the NEC, is scaling up its collaboration with the Commission under a US$17.5 million electoral assistance grant provided by the United States government.
• The grant spans over a five-year period.

**Opposition Politician Dismisses Vice Presidential Candidacy**


• The Standard Bearer of the opposition of the Congress for Democratic Change (CDC), Ambassador George Weah, has described as untrue reports that he has agreed to contest the 2011 polls as vice presidential candidate to either Cllr. Charles Brumskine of the Liberty Party or Cllr. Winston Tubman of the Liberia National Union (LINU).
• According to Ambassador Weah, he has never had any discussions with the two political party leaders to contest the ensuing polls as vice presidential candidate to either of them.
• “I am the man of the people. I have the crowd. The people believe in me, why I must contest the elections as vice presidential candidate to either Cllr. Brumskine or Cllr. Tubman,” Ambassador Weah remarked.
• “There is no way I can go second to anyone. I have the confidence of the people,” he emphasized.
• According to Weah, he remains a political force to reckon with in the ensuing elections.

**ICTJ Wants Further Debate On TRC Recommendations**


• The International Centre for Transitional Justice (ICTJ) says the TRC recommendations still need to be debated despite serious weaknesses in the TRC final report.
According to the ICTJ, accountability and victims’ rights are critical to Liberia’s recovery process.

The group’s latest position on the TRC report is contained in its report released Tuesday under the theme Beyond the TRC: Transitional Justice Options in Liberia.

The group believes issues raised in the report including the need for justice, accountability, and reconciliation, are critical to the country’s future.

The ICTJ report which is based on extensive research and monitoring, however pointed out some weaknesses in the TRC report including lack of evidentiary data, coherence between and within sections among others.

Armed Robbers Attack Journalist - Slash Him, Steal Valuables

[Daily Observer]

A Liberian journalist residing in the MVCT Community, Paynesville, Winston Harmon, was on Saturday morning attacked by armed robbers who inflicted several wounds on his body and made away with several of his valuables.

According to Mr. Harmon, three of the robbers broke into his home and held him at gunpoint as they requested for money and when they saw that he would not bulge, they slashed him on the head with a cutlass and inflicted wounds on his body with the cutlasses they were wielding.

Mr. Harmon who writes for The Gazette newspaper said the robbers threatened to butcher him if he would not yield to their demands.

Mr. Harmon who is currently undergoing medical treatment at the John F. Kennedy Medical Hospital in Monrovia said officers of the Liberian National Police arrived on the scene after the robbers had fled the scene.

When contacted, Assistant Police Director for Press and Public Affairs George Bardu said Police is currently conducting investigation into the incident.

Kokoyah Citizens Demand Accountability

[Daily Observer]

Citizens of Kokoyah District, in Bong County have expressed concern over the use of funds donated to the district.

The citizens alleged funds have been received from donors including the Kokoyah Millennium Village, AmLib, and Mittal Steel but no development can be seen.

They noticed no school, clinic, well or latrine has been constructed in the district since the end of the war years.

Kokoyah District Superintendent Joseph Flomo shared the citizens’ concern saying despite repeated promises by donors no visible development can be seen.

Meanwhile, the Treasurer of the Kokoyah Development Association, Harry Greaves has called on the county’s administration and caucus to account.

Mr. Greaves, speaking Sunday at the Association’s Annual Meeting in Botota asked the citizens to be patient, saying reconstruction takes time.

Star Radio (News monitored today at 09:00 am)

Senate Rejects Amendment on Tax Exemptions

The Senate has rejected a joint resolution from the House of Representatives seeking the amendment of certain portions of the Constitution.

The resolution seeks to abolish the tax exemptions on the allowances of key officials of the Judiciary, which include the Chief Justice, Associate Justices of the Supreme Court and Judges of Subordinate Courts of records.

But the Senate sent the resolution back to the House, claiming the House failed to follow constitutional requirements.

According to the Senate the House failed to generate the necessary two-thirds signatures required to take such a decision.

The Senate in its rejection said 35 representatives signed the resolution instead of 43 in line with Article 91 of the Constitution.

(Also reported Truth FM, Sky FM, and ELBC)

House Orders Review Of 2010/2011 Draft Budget

The House of Representatives has lifted the suspension on the debate for the 2010/2011 draft budget.

The House lifted the suspension after it received 67 copies of the proposed budget from the Executive.

In a letter to the House, Deputy Finance Minister for Budget George Gompu informed the body of the submission of additional copies of the draft budget.
• The House earlier suspended the debate on the draft budget on grounds that it received only a symbolic copy from the Executive.
• Meanwhile, the House has mandated its Finance Committee to review the budget and advise the plenary within two weeks.
• The draft budget amounts to a little over US$347 million.

(Also reported Radio Veritas, Truth FM, Sky FM, and ELBC)

Poverty, Unemployment Still Haunt Liberia — Says Foreign Minister
• Foreign Minister Olubanke King Akerele has identified poverty, unemployment and illiteracy as major challenges confronting Liberia’s recovery process.
• Minister Akerele attributed the situation to the country’s prolonged civil crisis and called for concerted effort to address the challenges and make Liberia better.
• The Foreign Minister spoke Tuesday when she represented President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf at the launch of the Women Training and Integrated Project of the Liberia National Red Cross Society.
• She recounted the numerous problems experienced by women and girls during the war and hopes the program will help transform their lives.
• Speaking earlier, the President of the Liberia National Red Cross Society, Theresa Leigh Sherman said about 200 war affected women would benefit from the project.
• Mrs. Sherman said the women will undergo one year training in the areas of psychosocial care, vocational skills and business education.

Thieves Pillage Monrovia’s Road Construction Materials
(Also reported Truth FM, Sky FM, and ELBC)

Gender Ministry Distributes Assorted Tools, Food to Rural Women
• The Gender Ministry has begun the distribution of several assorted farming implements valued at over US$28,000 across the country.
• The Ministry says the tools along with additional seeds are being simultaneously distributed among rural women in twelve counties.
• A statement said the exercise is funded by the Ministry’s budget and seeks to complement the food security and nutrition project ongoing in Lofa, Bong and Nimba Counties.
• Among the tools being distributed are cutlasses, diggers, holes, knives and axes.
• The Ministry is also distributing about 200 bags of seed rice, plantain, yam and eddoes.
• The initiative is being sponsored by the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization and World Food Programme.

US Embassy Cautions SSS to Exhibit Professionalism
(Also reported Truth FM, Sky FM, and ELBC)

Liberia Wins US$40M Education Grant
• Liberia has been named beneficiary of a new grant from the Education for All Fast Track Initiative, a global partnership between low-income countries and donors to ensure that children in developing countries receive basic quality education.
• As part of the initiative, Liberia will receive a grant of US$40 million.
• A World Bank release says the money will be used to finance the construction of 453 new classrooms at the primary school level.
• It will also provide 100,000 textbooks to students and 21,500 sets of teachers’ guides.
• A school health component will finance the development of learning materials, training of teachers and de-worming of primary school students.
• The grant is part of a total of three hundred three million US dollars received from 19 donors including the World Bank, UNICEF and UNESCO.

ICTJ Wants Further Debate on TRC Recommendations
(Also reported Truth FM, Sky FM, and ELBC)

Kokoyah Citizens Demand Accountability

International Clips on Liberia

Somali pirates seize Liberia-flagged and Greek-owned ship in Gulf of Aden

Reuters - Somali pirates have seized a Liberia-flagged and Greek-owned ship with 24 people aboard in the Gulf of Aden, officials said on Wednesday. The ship, managed by Eurobulk Ltd and named Eleni P, was carrying iron and
sailing from Ukraine to China via Singapore. Of the 24 people on board, two were Greeks and the rest Filipinos, the company said. A security officer for Eurobulk, who declined to be named, told Reuters that 10 people had jumped on the ship at approximately 0510 GMT on Wednesday. "We don't have any information on the safety of the crew," the officer said. Rampant piracy off the coast of Somalia has earned gunmen tens of millions of dollars in ransoms and increased insurance premiums for ships. Some vessels have chosen to take longer, more costly routes to avoid areas where pirates operate.

**International Clips on West Africa**

**Guinea**

**Iron ore majors give Guinea the green light**

Reuters - A deal between the world's top iron ore miner Vale and BSG Resources to build a massive mine in Guinea is the latest sign that resources firms care more about what lies underground there than chaotic politics on the surface. April's $2.5 billion accord was the second mega-deal in Guinean minerals this year, after Rio Tinto agreed in March a $2.9 billion joint venture with China's Chinalco, also to develop an iron ore mine. The contracts are remarkable because many potential investors had been holding off financing major new projects since a 2008 military coup which pitched Guinea, poor despite being the world's biggest exporter of aluminium ore bauxite, into a prolonged political crisis. While mining firms already working in Guinea continued doing so, the government said the political situation was at least partially responsible for a downturn in mineral exports in 2009.

**Ivory Coast**

**Ivory Coast revises down economic growth forecasts**

Reuters - Ivory Coast's Finance Ministry has revised down its economic growth forecasts for 2010 and 2011 by a percentage point each to 3 and 4 percent, respectively, according to an estimate obtained by Reuters on Wednesday. A source at the Finance Ministry, who provided the estimate but declined to be named, said this was because fresh data had come in since January from key sectors including cocoa, oil and financial services. West Africa's former economic powerhouse has suffered sluggish growth rates ever since a 2002-3 war divided the country in two, crippling business and frightening away foreign investment. Most analysts are cautious with growth estimates in the absence of elections needed to reunite the country and return it to normal. The electoral process is currently blocked because of wrangling over voter registration. The polls in the world's top cocoa grower were originally supposed to take place in 2005 and many Ivorians doubt they will ever happen. Ivory Coast is awaiting further debt relief from donors under the IMF-World Bank Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) programme and has already benefited from extensive debt relief from major donors like France in the past year. It is in the process of swapping 2.2 billion euros of defaulted sovereign debt with the London Club of commercial creditors.

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"Vested interests" are hampering Liberia's recovery from civil war by failing to address key recommendations of the country's Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), according to a new report.

The International Centre for Transitional Justice (ICTJ) said that as politicians, the media and the public limited their focus to the possible prosecutions of big names, including the president, little was being done to compensate victims of war crimes, set up new human rights commission or develop a "palava hut" system of community peace-building.

The TRC recommended two courts be set up to prosecute 182 individuals for gross violations of human rights, international humanitarian law and domestic crimes and that a further 49 companies or people be tried for economic crimes.

The list includes President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, who could be barred from public office for 30 years for allegedly financing war criminals.

"Many people who have a personal vested interest in the recommendations not going forward are very critical of the whole report," ICTJ programme associate Lizzie Goodfriend told IRIN. "Our goal is to help Liberian actors engage more comprehensively in the [reconciliation] debate... In the six months since the report came out there has not been a lot of movement."

Many of the TRC's recommendations provide important levers for Liberians to move on from their 14-year conflict, said Goodfriend. "The government needs to ensure Liberians from all corners treat the TRC recommendations as a matter of urgency."

There is still work to be done - all reconciliation recommendations require honing, said the NGO, for instance to define the scope and powers of the "palava hut" process, or specify who should receive reparations and under what criteria.

Sierra Leone's reparations scheme and South Africa's victim-support movement can be tapped into for good practice, she said.

Under the proposed Liberia scheme US$500 million will be spent over 30 years on mental and physical health, economic, educational and infrastructure projects. These should be linked to ongoing development programmes, Goodfriend urged. "Liberia could set an innovative precedent in linking reparations and development," she pointed out.

Prosecutions-wise, civil society groups have criticized the process by which some of the 239 names were put forward, citing insufficient evidence in certain cases. The ICTJ recommends a new professional investigation process be set up, and the Ministry of Justice is considering turning to foreign countries to help with prosecutions, given its insufficient capacity.

Liberians have for decades used traditional reconciliation processes - discussions between victim and perpetrator, mediated by village chiefs - to resolve conflicts, but extending the "palava hut" system country-wide means it must be linked to the formal justice sector, to avoid tensions between the two, says the ICTJ.
Last month President Sirleaf sent the TRC recommendations to the legislature, and called on the Ministry of Justice to set up a task force to take forward its recommendations. "This is a start," said Goodfriend.

More Work to Be Done in Post-Conflict Liberia

But the proposed setting up of a human rights commission to ensure the government implements human rights policies is not yet under way.

Donors also need to step up and financially support the government to help bring forward certain recommendations, says the ICTJ.

"The whole transitional justice field is premised on the fact that if you don't meet needs of victims and deal with abuses committed in the past in a meaningful way, then the past can come back to haunt you, and there could be a repeat of violence," said Goodfriend. "The TRC is just the beginning of that process in Liberia and if this work does not continue, then efforts will have been in vain and the needs of victims in Liberia's conflict will not be fully met."

[This report does not necessarily reflect the views of the United Nations ]
Liberia: Need to address past violations extends beyond TRC Process

Written by ICTJ

Despite serious weaknesses in the Liberia Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) report, accountability and victims’ rights are critical to Liberia’s recovery process and the TRC’s recommendations must still be debated and taken forward, said the International Center for Transitional Justice (ICTJ) today in the release of its report: Beyond the Truth and Reconciliation Commission: Transitional Justice Options in Liberia.

“The issues raised by the TRC process, including the need for justice, accountability, and reconciliation, are critical to the country’s future and its possibilities for sustained peace,” said Suliman Baldo, director of ICTJ’s Africa Program.

The ICTJ report is based on extensive research and monitoring. It reviews the truth-seeking process, examines the TRC final report, and suggests a number of steps that Liberians can take to meet the needs of victims and account for past violations.

Among the TRC report’s weaknesses are a lack of evidentiary data, coherence between and within sections, specificity, and the unanimous support of all commissioners, two of whom refused to endorse it. These factors have raised doubts about the viability of the TRC’s more controversial recommendations on prosecutions and lustration, with questions about whether and how these can be implemented.

Since its publication in December 2009, the TRC report and its recommendations have received wide media coverage and have generated diverse responses from the public, civil society, the government, and the international community. Most of these reactions have centered on the recommendations dealing with prosecutions and lustration.

The ICTJ report emphasizes the need for a comprehensive debate on the TRC recommendations, one that is inclusive of all stakeholders. It covers a range of issues critical to Liberia’s post-conflict recovery efforts, which include the need for criminal accountability, reparations, memorialization, and institutional reform. Among its recommendations are:

- The executive should publish a white paper outlining its policy position and overall response to the TRC report.
- Existing government commissions should incorporate relevant TRC recommendations into their own workplans and strategy documents.
- Civil society should monitor and report on all TRC follow-up activities.

“It is essential that Liberia’s government and its people—including Liberia’s vibrant human rights community, as well as its key international partners—take steps to overcome the limitations of the TRC report. Detractors should not be permitted to exploit the TRC’s weaknesses to stifle debate on how Liberia can effectively prevent a repeat of its violent and turbulent past,” Baldo continued.

About ICTJ
The International Center for Transitional Justice works to redress and prevent the most severe violations of human rights by confronting legacies of mass abuse. ICTJ seeks holistic solutions to promote accountability and create just and peaceful societies. For more information, visit www.ictj.org.
Bulgaria's plan for special tribunal triggers heated debate

VESSELIN ZHELEV

The Bulgarian government is proposing to set up a special tribunal for cases of organised crime and high-level corruption in a bid to speed up trials in that area.

"The specialised court is necessary to speed up justice," interior minister Tsvetan Tsvetanov said. "The efficiency of justice in the EU is much higher than in Bulgaria."

But the plan is drawing flak from the Socialist opposition, human rights groups and lawyers, who argue the extraordinary tribunals would encroach on the very fundamentals of democracy and would be a tool for the government to intimidate or crush opponents.

"The purpose is to create two kinds of courts - one for general cases, and another for cases that the government wants to win by all means," Daniela Dokovska, a respected lawyer contended.

The EU is still monitoring how Bulgaria is catching up with community law and order standards it had not met on its accession in January 2007. The bloc's top executive body, the European Commission, has repeatedly criticised the new member state for slow progress in a string of corruption and organised crime investigations and trials, some of which have been continuously postponed because of defendants' ill health or the absence of their lawyers.

Under Prime Minister Boiko Borisov, a tough-talking populist, police have arrested dozens of people on organised crime and corruption charges. Among those accused are three former ministers. But eight months of spectacular police raids and media hype have yet to lead to verdicts.

The government is expected to submit a legislative proposal to parliament about the special court within a month and the body should be up and running by the start of the next year, Mr Tsvetanov said.

Parliament has already adopted a legal amendment that makes wiretap recordings and anonymous witnesses' testimony sufficient for courts to make convictions. To date, such evidence was not enough for a conviction.

Critics say the new legislation leaves too much room for police to fabricate evidence and rig trials. They also see the specialised court as a way for the government to circumvent independent courts and impose its own agenda on the judiciary.

Both Mr Borisov and Mr Tsvetanov are former high ranking policemen. They have repeatedly accused the legal system of being corrupt or too lenient on criminals, while judges have blamed inconclusive trials on police failure to collect solid evidence.
Under the project, the specialised court will be coupled with a special prosecution office. The prosecutor will have 15 days after the conclusion of the preliminary investigation to come up with an indictment and the judge will be bound to issue a verdict within 15 days after the defendant's last word. Both deadlines are half the length of those of normal legal bodies.

"For years, Bulgaria has been asked to put more effort into the fight against corruption," Bulgarian Socialist MEP Kristian Vigenin told his colleagues. "Today the effort is there but the fight against corruption is evolving into a fight against democracy."

"There is just one court in the legal world - the one created by law," history professor Dragomir Draganov said. "All other 'extraordinary,' 'military,' 'provisional' and other tribunals stand for one and the same thing: intrusion of the government into the work of the independent judiciary."

Within the EU, Italy and Spain have special courts to try mafia and terrorism cases respectively. The Constitutional Court has abolished a similar set-up in Slovakia. A European Commission spokesman declined to comment on the issue, saying the organisation of legal systems fell to member states.

"Countries like the Philippines, Indonesia, Congo, Sierra Leone enjoy such courts," said Ivanka Ivanova, a human rights activist from the Open Society fund in Sofia.
ICC Chief Concludes Kenya Visit to Probe 2008 Violence

Alisha Ryu | Nairobi

The chief prosecutor for the International Criminal Court, Luis Moreno-Ocampo has concluded a visit to Kenya, where he is investigating allegations that some top level government officials were involved in the country's deadly 2008 post-election ethnic violence. There are fresh reports of Kenyan ethnic groups arming themselves ahead of the next presidential election in 2012.

The post-election mayhem that engulfed Kenya in the aftermath of the disputed presidential elections in early 2008 killed more than 1,300 people and displaced 300,000 others. Hatred turned mixed-ethnic towns into killing fields, as neighbors cut each other down with machetes and bows and arrows.

But Kenyan human rights activist, Ken Wafula, says he fears the next presidential election may be far more deadly. The director of the Center for Human Rights and Democracy says two of the country's largest ethnic communities - the Kikuyu and the Kalenjin - are rapidly increasing their stockpiles of firearms, including handguns and AK-47 assault rifles.

"Communities are not willing to wait until they are attacked again. Communities are arming themselves," Wafula said. "They feel that the government is unable to protect them."

Some of the worst violence in 2008 took place in the country's fertile Rift Valley, which the Kalenjin people claim as their traditional homeland but is also home to a large number of Kikuyus.

Tribal rivalries that have plagued the country since independence from Britain in 1963 boiled over in the Rift Valley after Kenya's incumbent President Mwai Kibaki - a Kikuyu - was declared the winner over the candidate supported by the Kalenjin, Raila Odinga.

The ensuing violence prompted the International Criminal Court to investigate allegations of crimes against humanity. Chief prosecutor, Luis Moreno-Ocampo has submitted a list of suspects to the court, which is widely believed to include the names of cabinet ministers, politicians, and businessmen.

Last year, Ken Wafula was arrested and charged with inciting violence after reporting that communities in
the Rift Valley had begun to re-arm. He says he is speaking out again because the situation is becoming worse, despite pledges by Kenya's coalition government of President Kibaki and Prime Minister Odinga to rid the country of illegal firearms.

In recent months, Kenyan security forces have been dispatched to the Rift Valley and other areas to collect guns from nomadic tribes, who are increasingly using firearms, smuggled in from neighboring Sudan, Somalia, and Uganda, to steal livestock and to settle personal scores.

Wafula says there is growing suspicion that many of those confiscated weapons are being re-distributed among ethnic communities by senior officials.

"The disarmament that is happening is actually covering up the real arms deals that are going on in various communities," Wafula said. "Top officials are involved in the arms trade."

Politicians in Kenya have long used election periods to entrench tribal loyalties and to whip up ethnic animosity to gain an advantage over their rivals. Since multi-party elections were introduced in 1992, political violence has marred each election.
NAIROBI, Kenya, May 12 - The only time this busy man has to rest is when he is on a plane headed for duty to one of the many countries he is conducting investigations.

Luis Moreno Ocampo is a man who works round the clock and sees his family once a month!

My appointment with him is for 8.45 am at the Serena Hotel in Nairobi.

He arrives for our meeting at exactly that time in the breakfast area as I waited with the International Criminal Court Public Information Unit Media Liaison Officer Nicola Fletcher.

Fletcher was in the process of asking a waiter to prepare a table when Ocampo walks in.

She quickly rushes to him and engages in a conversation as they head to the table where I join them.

He picks a plate, places two croissants on it and some strawberry jam before heading to a table on the patio but amid all this rush, he barely notices that the table has not even been set.

Waiters rush to his service and he immediately picks a croissant, dips it in the jam on the side of the plate and takes a bite.

A waiter tries to tie a napkin around his neck, but he seems unperturbed as he is in hurry to finish his breakfast.

All this time, he has not spoken to me and seems not to notice my presence. I get uneasy but Fletcher steps in and introduces me to Luis Moreno-Ocampo, the Prosecutor of the ICC.

I am now seated directly opposite him and he gives me a warm smile making me more at ease to begin my interview.
At this point, I am told that I have eight (yes, eight!) minutes to conduct my interview.

He turns the tables on me and starts interrogating me. “Where is Capital FM and what’s its coverage? Do you reach out to victims and witnesses of the post-election violence?”

This sets the mood for our interview but I ask whether I should shoot my questions or wait for him to finish his breakfast.

He is quick to tell me that we should proceed as he has a beehive of activities lined up in the final 12 hours of his five-day visit in Kenya.

Before my interview, Mr Ocampo has spoken a lot about the International Criminal Court (ICC) and extensively illustrated his role in the Kenyan process, and so that is not in my interest today.

“As you can see now, I am eating a croissant,” is his answer when I ask what his favourite meal is.

Do you have a family? I continue... “Yes I have a family. My wife and kids live in Buenos Aires. I am working for the world doing justice and I go to see my family once a month for a few days.”

What do you do in your free time? I ask. “I have no free time. My only free time is only when I am flying. But it is great. I feel honoured to be the prosecutor of the ICC.”

He is passionate with matters of justice especially for the poor and weak in all societies.

He never forgets to mention his concern for victims of violence and even uses the opportunity to send me to a victim in Kibera Jane Wairimu who had been interviewed on Monday by Radio Netherlands Worldwide.

“I want to use the opportunity to talk to people like Jane, she lost everything, but now she has hope in the ICC. I’d like to work for her but I know I can prosecute some leaders but Jane needs more. She needs to recover her house; she needs assistance, that is why I will do my job for Jane. It will not be enough but I need other Kenyans to work for Jane,” this is Mr Ocampo’s special message not only to Jane, but the thousands of victims of the 2008 post-election violence.

It is interesting to know that Mr Ocampo has rich experience and is compassionate in matters of law, human rights and justice for victims.

Before he became the ICC Prosecutor, he served as a deputy prosecutor during the junta trials in his native Argentina.

He has also served as a District Attorney.

In 1992 he started his own law firm where his clients included renowned football legend Diego Maradona.

He also represented victims of the Nazi war.

An Associate Professor of criminal law, Mr Ocampo lectured at Stanford University, University of Buenos Aires and Harvard Law School.

The veteran prosecutor also draws a lot of experience in law after having worked as a consultant for World Bank and sat in the advisory board of Transparency International.

So how did he become the ICC Prosecutor?

“I was in Buenos Aires parking my car and then I received a phone call telling me, ‘Luis Moreno Ocampo, we are calling you because we put your name in a list of candidates to be the Prosecutor of
The ICC and now you have made it to the top of the list. We have never talked to you, so we don’t know whether you’d like the job,’ he recalls.

He continued, “I told my wife I have received this funny call today. Nothing will happen don’t worry. I went to New York for an interview and a few months later they appointed me unanimously.”

The 58-year-old prosecutor was elected unopposed as the first ICC Prosecutor in April 2003.

My eight minutes are up before I probe the private life of Mr O’campo further.

Immediately after finishing his breakfast he rushes to another interview marking the beginning of a series of meetings he has to attend before leaving the country.

But even as he hurriedly leaves his table, he warmly gives me a handshake and tells me to collect questions from Kenyans on his behalf and email them to his office.
Human Rights Group Calls for Stronger International Criminal Court

Michael Onyiego | Nairobi

The Human Rights Watch group is calling for a strengthened commitment to international justice at a conference that begins later this month in Uganda.

In a report entitled "Making Kampala Count" New York-based Human Rights Watch is urging countries sending representatives to the Review Conference of the Rome Statute in Uganda to pledge support for the International Criminal Court and ensure perpetrators of crimes against humanity are held to account.

The Rome Statute is the governing treaty of the International Criminal Court adopted in 1998 in an effort to prevent and punish crimes against humanity, such as genocide.

The conference is to evaluate four key themes of the court's work: peace and justice, strengthening national courts, the ICC's impact on affected communities and state cooperation.

A counsel for the International Justice Program at Human Rights Watch, Elizabeth Evenson, says the discussions could have a real impact on the court's mission. "This is the first-ever review conference for the ICC and so it means it will be an exceptional gathering of states that belong to the ICC, civil society and the international community more broadly interested in advancing the global fight against impunity. We think that the discussion that will be had in Kampala, over the two weeks of the conference, can make a real concrete difference in strengthening the fight against impunity, in consolidating the progress of the ICC and taking that fight forward," she said.

The pledges that states make to support the ICC will be crucial measures of the court's effectiveness. The ICC mandate is limited to crimes against humanity, and because the court does not employ police to enforce its decisions, it relies on state cooperation to implement justice.

The Kampala conference is also to address the court's role in crimes of aggression, when states engage in conflict that violates the U.N. charter. The conference will attempt to define crimes of aggression and whether to allow the International Criminal Court to determine the legality of specific military engagements.

Human Rights Watch says it is strongly opposed to proposals to create a jurisdictional filter on crimes of aggression, through which the U.N. Security Council would decide which cases the ICC could pursue.

Evenson says such a restriction would greatly damage the legitimacy of the court. "We think that this would compromise the court's jurisdiction," she said. "There is already a way in which the Security Council can refer cases to the ICC, but this would be slightly different because it would give exclusive control over one of the crimes to the Security Council, which is obviously a highly politicized body."

The two-week Review Conference of the Rome Statute begin May 31st in the Ugandan capital.

The ICC treaty has been adopted by 111 states, including 30 from Africa. The International Criminal Court has investigated five cases since 2002, all on the African continent, and has been accused by some of applying a double standard to developing nations, particularly in Africa and the Middle East.
Issawi: Bellemare Made Major Progress in Hariri Murder Probe

Special Tribunal for Lebanon spokeswoman Fatima Issawi said Prosecutor Daniel Bellemare has made major progress in the investigation into ex-Premier Rafik Hariri's assassination.
Issawi told the Saudi al-Watan newspaper in remarks published Thursday that the court has faith in Bellemare's professionalism and the decisions he would make.

The tribunal is not in a stagnant situation as some imagine, the STL spokeswoman said. "Many things have been achieved till now and since the STL was launched in March last year."

"However, due to the sensitivity of the investigation, we can't reveal any information about them," she added.
TPIR/NZABONIMANA - DISPATCHES FROM FRENCH EMBASSY ACCEPTED AS EXCULPATORY EVIDENCE

Former Rwandan Minister of Youth Callixte Nzabonimana has obtained from the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR), where he stands trial, that three diplomatic dispatches issued by the French embassy in Kigali during the genocide be accepted as exculpatory evidence.

According to these dispatches, the defendant "would have been inside the French embassy in Kigali from April 7 to April 12 1994", while the Prosecution alleges he was, during that period, busy organizing the killings of Tutsis in his native commune of Nyabikenke (Central Rwanda).

In the aftermath of Juvénal Habyarimana's assassination on April 6, 1994, numerous government officials sought refuge at the French embassy.

According to the Canadian defence co-counsel Philippe Larochelle, it is not sufficient that France finally provided these diplomatic dispatches. He blames the French authorities for having been dragging their feet for already more than a year and a half, in effect preventing him from meeting with former employees at the French embassy in Kigali, namely security guards, who could be witnesses for the defence.

He asserts their testimony would allow him to prove that Nzabonimana had no time to go to Nyabikenke and come back during his rare and short exits from the embassy between April 7 and 12.

Philippe Larochelle contends that, if France were to fully cooperate, the defence team could disprove "50 to 70%" of the accusations leveled against his client.

The former minister is facing five charges of genocide, conspiracy to commit genocide, direct and public incitement to commit genocide, extermination and murder. The Prosecution presents him as the main instigator of the killings in his home prefecture of Gitarama.

Callixte Nzabonimana pleads not guilty.