

***Monrovia, Liberia, December 2 (Infosplusgabon) - The Heads United Nations Missions in West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS) have noted the importance of complying with the constitutionally-mandated date for the inauguration of the new government in Liberia in January 2018.***

In this connection, they underscored the need for all parties and stakeholders to exercise restraint, uphold the rule of law, and conduct all activities with civility and in a non-violent manner, including in their public discourse.

The statement is contained in a communiqué issued by the Heads of the UN Missions in West Africa at the end of their 31st High-level Meeting on 1 December in Monrovia, Liberia.

The meeting was convened at the invitation of the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for West Africa and the Sahel and Head of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS), Mohamed Ibn Chambas.

In attendance were the Special Representatives of the UN Secretary-General and Heads of UN missions in Liberia (UNMIL), Mr. Farid Zarif; Mali (MINUSMA), Mr. Mahamat Saleh Annadif; and the United Nations Resident Coordinator for Côte d'Ivoire, Mr. Babacar Cissé.

According to the communiqué, the objective of the meeting was to provide insights and exchange views on peace and security dynamics in the areas of operation of the respective missions and in the West African region.

The forum also sought to strengthen coordination to address common challenges in such areas as elections, transnational organized crime, violent extremism and terrorism, security sector and constitutional reform processes, as well as democratic transitions.

The Heads of missions underlined that peaceful, free, fair and transparent elections are a prerequisite for peace consolidation and sustainable development in Liberia.

They made it clear that the destiny of Liberia remains the responsibility of all Liberians, while emphasizing that the international community needs to continue assisting Liberia's development beyond the conclusion of the electoral process and UNMIL's withdrawal.

The Heads of missions lauded the peaceful nature of the 10 October elections in Liberia and

noted that compliance with the rule of law and due process is essential for strengthening Liberia's nascent democracy.

The Heads of missions hoped that the electoral process would be concluded expeditiously, stressing that legal challenges should be legitimate and in good faith.

Two parties, the opposition Liberty Party and the ruling Unity Party, are challenging the first round 10 October poll, alleging "widespread irregularities and fraud" that they said have compromised the results.

Hearings into the claims have been shifting between the National Elections Commission (NEC) and the Supreme Court of Liberia.

A run-off, scheduled for 7 December, was called off by a mandate from the Supreme Court after it ruled that complainant Liberty Party was not given due process by NEC, which it ordered to hear the party's complaint.

In the communiqué, the UN heads of mission emphasised that the will of the Liberian people must be respected.

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