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Liberia's Truth and Reconciliation Commission inaugurated;
SRS G Doss announces \$500,000 donation from UNDP

Monrovia, Liberia – The Liberian Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) was officially inaugurated at a ceremony in Monrovia's Executive Mansion on Monday, 20 February 2006. President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf presided over the well-attended ceremony at which the nine members of the Commission took their oaths of office.



Swearing in of the TRC Commissioners

The TRC was mandated by the Accra Comprehensive Peace Agreement of August 2003 and was formally established by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Act of Liberia published in June 2005. Since then, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) has overseen the process which resulted in the selection of the TRC Commissioners.

The TRC's composition reflects the multi-ethnic and multi-denominational nature of the state and also has a broad regional balance. To support the nine members, the TRC will have three international technical advisers -- two appointed by ECOWAS and one by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.

In her address, President Johnson-Sirleaf said: "the inauguration of the TRC is an unprecedented testament to the courage we have summoned as a nation and people to reckon with our shameful and despicable past – and to establish a consensus on national truth," and added "This commission is our hope – to define the past on our behalf in terms that are seen and believed to be fair and balanced, and bring forth a unifying narrative on which our nation's rebuilding and renewal processes can be more securely anchored."

Outlining the TRC's role, the President told the Commissioners that they are to "document all abuses, validate and establish the narratives of both victims and victimizers; while paying particular attention to women, children, the elderly and other vulnerable members of society; and to provide at the end of their mandate, clear and workable recommendations on how Liberia can collectively retribute for the past – and move on in unity to face the future."

During his remarks at the ceremony, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Coordinator of United Nations Operation in Liberia, Mr. Alan Doss, welcomed the long-awaited inauguration of the TRC and announced that the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) would donate US\$500,000 to help it with its operations.

Mr. Doss further said, "For many countries emerging from prolonged periods of conflict and war, truth and reconciliation has proved to be one of the best ways to bind up the wounds of the past, to confront impunity, and to liberate the energies of the people to focus on the urgent business of national recovery." He added that Liberia's "traumas of the past will not disappear by simply ignoring them."

Mr. Doss paid tribute to the recently inaugurated President's longstanding commitment to peace and justice in Liberia and to her stated determination to combat impunity and strengthen justice, which he said has been well received by all in the international community. He added: "The priority you have given to the inauguration of the TRC is yet another proof of your resolve to push ahead vigorously with your good governance agenda." The ceremony was attended by members of Liberia's three-branches of government as well as by representatives of the diplomatic corps and international organizations.

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