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UNMIL and American Bar Association Africa Project organize Mediation Law workshop

Monrovia, Liberia - A day-long workshop was held on Monday, 19 June, at the Headquarters of the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) in Monrovia to seek a consensus on the need to establish a legal framework on Mediation in Liberia. The workshop, organized jointly by the UNMIL Legal and Judicial System Support Division (LJSSD) and the American Bar Association (ABA) Africa Law Initiative, brought together officials of the Liberian Government, the National Bar Association of Liberia, non-governmental and civil society organizations.



From left: Mr. Alfred Fofie (UNMIL LJSSD), UNMIL OIC, Mr. Luiz Carlos da Costa, Mr. Michael Diggs (Louis Arthur Grimes Law School) and Ms. Guessippina Bonner (ABA)

During his opening remarks, UNMIL Officer-in-Charge, Mr. Luiz Carlos da Costa, said the concept of mediation is not new to Africa. He added “in Liberia, the Palava Hut has been the traditional place where chiefs and elders of communities have resolved disputes for centuries. However, standardized rules, qualification for mediators, and inclusion in Liberian legislation will institutionalize mediation as a viable solution for resolving disputes.”

UNMIL, he noted, has played its part in strengthening Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR), citing its support through its LJSSD-coordinated workshops on ADR for senior students at the Louis Arthur Grimes Law School, University of Liberia.

These workshops, he pointed out “were intended to provide the first step in the development of ADR schemes in Liberia and also to help ease the burden on the judicial system.” In conclusion, Mr. da Costa said the Mediation Legislation, once enacted into law, will ensure a significant reduction in case-loads within the judicial system and put in place uniformed standards for mediation and mediators that meet international norms that are also rooted in the traditional mediation techniques of Liberia.

Liberia’s Justice Minister, Cllr. Frances Johnson-Morris, expressed support for the Mediation Law and the need to adopt it into the country’s legal system. She said once the Mediation Law is adopted, it will ease the burden on the courts.

Also speaking at the workshop, the Chairman of the House of Representatives Judicial Committee, Hon. Armah Sarnor, promised the full support of the House of Representatives for the enactment of the Legislation, in order to make Mediation part of Liberia’s jurisprudence. This he said will help decongest the courts’ dockets.

The ABA Africa Law Initiative is a public service project of the ABA. It provides legal expertise, advice and training to judges, lawyers and government officials throughout Africa.
