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Japanese Gov't Donates US\$2 Million To Liberia

Envoy Urges Consolidation Of Program

By Edwin M. Fayia III

The Country Director for the United Nations Development Programme in Liberia (UNDP), Mr. Steven Ursino, has disclosed that a national strategy on awareness of the small arms abuse has been developed.

Speaking at the official signing ceremony of the small arms for development on Monday in Monrovia, Mr. Ursino said the project has a high substantive and financial delivery rate.

The UNDP boss also noted that so far, the project has utilized over 80 percent of the public funds which include the additional US\$90,000.00.

Mr. Ursino said four chiefdoms are undergoing arms for development in the country.

He further indicated that the 1950 Fire Arms Traffic Act is revised with the draft to be presented to the House of Representatives and Senate next month.

He assured the Japanese Government and Liberians that UNDP would continue to provide quality services to make Liberia a gun-free society.

In a brief statement at the signing ceremony Monday at the UNDP head office in Mamba Point, Monrovia, the Japanese Ambassador accredited to Liberia Mr. Masamichi Ishikawa said, his country has decided to make a grant of 232 million Japanese



Japanese Ambassador Masamichi Ishikawa

Yen, which amounts to approximately US\$2 million U.S. dollars to the UNDP to enable it to carry out the arms for development project in Liberia.

What his Government and the people of Japan would be very pleased to see is the beneficiaries making optimum use of the funds for the enhancement of the program. The beneficiaries include grassroot communities, community-based organizations, civil society and Liberia National Police among others.

The Japanese envoy urged the Liberian Government to make good use of this opportunity to achieve total peace and stability in the nation.

To achieve the ultimate goals of rehabilitation, reintegration, development and socio-economic development of Liberia, Ambassador Ishikawa said, requires dedication, determination and cooperation of the people of Liberia.

He was pleased, he said, to note that activities are going towards supporting the economic development of the communities.

"This unique occasion," the Japanese envoy said, provides some provisions of alternative means of livelihood and social rehabilitation.

On behalf of the Liberian Government, Foreign Minister George W. Wallace, Jr. said a weapon-free Liberia provides the best guarantee against

crimes and other vices in society.

Foreign Minister Wallace described the arms for development project as the surest and most sincere way of disarming demobilizing and an otherwise militarized society.

"We are satisfied with this program and urge other partners in peace and friends of Liberia to support the program aimed at sweeping Liberia of weapons and warlike materials," Ambassador Wallace pointed out.

He said the danger of weapons proliferating the country in the midst of a youthful population with a more than 85 percent unemployment rate in alarming and frightening.

Ambassador also noted,

Liberia has announced her graduation from war and political upheavals.

He asserted, Liberia has resolved never to look back into that tragic page of history.

In the absence of peace and stability "the Minister stressed, growth and development cannot be guaranteed.

He emphasized that a nation living in constant fear and terror cannot be expected to make any progress.

"We also note with satisfaction the generous contribution of the US\$2.25 million by Japan to UNICEF in Liberia to protect the country's young population from infectious diseases, which include malaria and acute respiratory infections."

"Japan's investment in the well-being of our young people, manifests her true commitment to assisting Liberia to return to permanent normality," Foreign Minister Wallace indicated.

"We would also appreciate were Japan to consider bringing greater relief to Liberia by waiving debts Liberia owed her.

For his part, Planning and Economic Affairs Minister Dr. Toga McIntosh said, "We are so far impressed with the Arms for Development initiatives you have launched in Liberia."

The Planning Minister expressed confidence in the level of education and public