

As Circuit Courts Open in Liberia

--Chief Justice Yuoh Addresses Shortage of Relieving Judges

When she took over the mantle of authority as the third female Chief Justice of the Honorable Supreme Court of Liberia on October 10, 2022, Her Honor Sie-A-Nyene G. Yuoh, declared: "I am fully aware that with the recent change in the administration of the Supreme Court (from the Korkpor's Bench to the Yuoh's Bench), there are diverse expectations from all sectors of our society, including the international community, and even within the Judiciary. This means that all are interested in knowing the plans of the third female Chief Justice. I am positive that even as I am speaking at this very moment, some lawyers are hoping to be appointed as Relieving Judges."

The energetic Chief Justice who has been a little over a month in her role, told the audience on Monday, November, 14, 2022 during program marking the joint formal opening of First Judicial Circuit, Criminal Assizes A, B, C, D, for Montserrado County sitting in its November A.D. 2022 Term of Court that one of her priorities is to address the lack of Relieving Judges.

"One of the things we observed is that Judges work from January to December and continue working due to the lack of Relieving Judges. Judges work themselves out without being relieved to take vacation or break. We are working on that thoroughly and we will not relent until we see Judges taking a proper vacation. After their vacation, they can come back fresh with renewed vigor wanting to serve more diligently," Chief Justice Yuoh stated.

The Chief Justice said she is aware that whenever there is a transition and a new administration takes over, there are lots of expectations. But for Judges including Justices, there is only one primary objective which is to dispense justice at any cost.

Whether there is delay in salary or lack of infrastructure that should be the least of our worry because we signed up for this job and we will continue to perform.

She announced that the three branches of government have commenced collaboration, noting that through constant collaboration with the other two branches of government and other justice partners, the Judiciary can come out stronger in addressing the many challenges facing it.

In recent times, President George M. Weah appointed some lawyers to the position of Relieving Judges. His Honor Magistrate Nelson S. Chinneh has been elevated as a Relieving Judge while the Assistant Minister for Litigation at the Ministry of Justice, Cllr. Wesseh A. Wesseh is also appointed to similar position.

Making remarks at the opening of the courts, Assistant Minister for Litigation at the Ministry of Justice, Cllr. Wesseh A. Wesseh congratulated the new Chief Justice for her preferment by President Weah, stating that for the past month justice actors have seen the level of preparedness the Chief Justice has brought to the job.

Cllr. Wesseh noted that in recent times cases assigned at the Supreme Court have been expeditiously heard. “Last week, we were able to handle six criminal cases before the Supreme Court Bench. That in itself shows the level of changes and we hope to continue on that path”. Cllr. Wesseh said.

His Honor A. Blamo Dixon, Resident Circuit Judge, Criminal Court “C” and National Vice President for Judges Affairs and International Affairs of the National Association of Trial Judges of Liberia (NATJL) delivering the address for the opening of courts expressed joy for the elevation of the former President of the National Association of Trial Judges of Liberia, His Honor Yussif D. Kaba, from Resident Circuit Judge, Sixth Judicial Circuit, Civil Law Court “A”, Montserrado County, to Associate Justice of the Honorable Supreme Court of Liberia.

Likewise, the elevation of former Executive Member of the Association, His Honor Yarmie Quiqui Gbeisay, from Relieving Judge of Liberia to Associate Justice of the Honorable Supreme Court of the country, and including His Honor Magistrate Nelson S. Chinneh, who has also been elevated as a Relieving Judge of Liberia.

According to him, it behooves judges to be mindful as they enter A. D. 2023 that the stability or instability of our country lies in the quality of the judgments,

verdicts, decrees, orders and decisions that they (judges) will render in our various courts from November 14, 2022 to November 14, 2023.

He stated: “Madam Chief Justice you are from within the Supreme Court Bench and you are aware of the issues, problems and challenges confronting the employees of the Judiciary Branch of Government of Liberia. Our expectations are not high; because we are convinced that you will resolve some of the challenges in the future.”

“Your honor (Chief Justice) assured the Liberian people and the World at Large of Judicial Independence, Rule of Law, Due Process of Law, Uprightness, Human Rights, Due Diligence and Women Empowerment. You pledge cooperation to the other two Branches of Government, the Liberia National Bar Association, National Association of Trial Judges of Liberia, partners and stakeholders. You promised to build the capacity of the Judicial Inquiry Commission and the Grievance and Ethics Committee of the Supreme Court. We are sure that you will succeed”. Judge Dixon concluded.