



OFFICE OF THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION IN LIBERIA  
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KONRAD ADENAUER FOUNDATION (KAF)

“Support of the Legislative Assembly in Liberia”

Strengthening the Parliamentary Practise – Legislation and Law Drafting

## MISSION REPORT

### Excerpts:

### Executive Summary and Recommendations Handbook

by

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## 1. Executive Summary:

The EU/KAF project “Support to the Legislative Assembly of Liberia” focuses on the legislative branch of the Liberian government. The 2005 elections met democratic standards and the present Legislature can claim to be representative. The legislative branch of previous governments was not able to fulfil any of these vital functions in an appropriate way.

The legislators will go on recess in August. Looking back at the first session period of the 52<sup>nd</sup> Legislature of Liberia, it can be said that first movements into the right directions have been made. As far as legislation is concerned, the legislators adopted important laws such as the national budget. First public hearings have been carried out. But the Legislature is still in the process of organizing and structuring itself. The existing deficiencies in infrastructure and equipment are still one obstacle on the way to a functioning Legislature. Besides this, the two houses still have problems in parliamentary procedures and practises. Most of the staff members are not qualified to fulfil their functions and are underpaid (although their salaries have just been increased from US\$ 26 to US\$ 30 per month). The access to information of the legislators is very poor as the baseline study will show. Research capacities need also to be strengthened.

The Government of Liberia has embarked upon a massive program of Public Sector Reform. The Governance Reform Commission (GRC) oversees the Government's public sector initiatives which also includes Legislative Capacity Building (with the cooperation of the National Legislature). But by the time this report was finished the GRC has been focusing mainly on the executive branch.

The expert was involved in the part of the project dealing with legislation and law drafting as one of the key functions of a democratic Legislature. A key component for good governance and laws of good quality is information. The expert carried out a baseline study on the access to information and resources of the legislators. A roundtable discussion on the results of the baseline study took place after the study has been finished. A workshop on the "Handbook on Legislation and Law Drafting" was organised in order to prepare the final draft of the Handbook drafted during the first year of the project.

The report describes the work of the expert in Germany and Liberia considering the specific situation in Liberia and the information obtained during the expert's stay in Monrovia. Each part of the report contains recommendations and proposals regarding the specific activity of the project.

### **Recommendations:**

The Handbook is an important output of EU/KAF project activities. Given the positive response of the legislators and their demonstration of interest, there is a good chance that the Handbook will be adopted by the Parliament as an official guideline and a tool for their daily work. The following steps are recommended to achieve this goal:

For the Handbook being adopted as an official guideline it is of utmost importance that there is "ownership" of the Legislature to secure acceptance. They have to get involved. With the workshop the first step was made. Now, EU/KAF should keep the process going and use the momentum in it. The expert's recommendation is to produce as soon as possible more copies of the Handbook to make sure that all MPs and the key staff members get a copy. A timeframe should be set up taking into consideration that the MPs need time to review the Handbook and are on recess until Jan. 2007 so that most of them will go back to their constituencies and ain't in Monrovia during this time. The recipients shall have the opportunity to submit comments on the Handbook and make suggestions for amendments until Oct. 1st 2006. In the meantime, the project office shall get in contact with the MPs on a regular basis and reminding them to submit comments. A reminder shall also be in written. From the experience the expert had so far, it is necessary to stay in contact with the MPs and to remind them. By the end of November, all comments and submissions (if there are any at all) may be forwarded to the expert in Germany to be reviewed and – as far as possible and practicable – incorporated into the final version. At the very beginning of the new session in mid January 2007 one of the first activities of the MPs should be a short "session" on the Handbook but this time in the Capitol as it has been strongly suggested by the legislators. In this workshop, the final version of the Handbook will be presented and handed over to the MPs for adoption.

When soon additional copies are given to the MPs that haven't received a copy yet, an official letter should be attached outlining the above mentioned procedure (requirement of comments until Oct. 1<sup>st</sup>, 2006; input will be incorporated into the final version, final version will be presented in the Capitol in mid Jan. 2007). This letter must also be sent to the MPs and staff members that already have a copy of the Handbook.

Dr. Iris Breutz, August 2006