

Validation Workshop of Electricity Sector Regulatory Instruments
Opening Remarks by Minister Gesler E. Murray
(Minister of Mines and Energy)
At the National Consultative Workshop
30 October 2019

All Protocol Observed

On behalf of the President, His Excellency Dr. George Manneh Weah, the Government, and people of Liberia, I will like to welcome you all to this first Validation Workshop of the Electricity Sector Regulatory Instruments. I would like to thank the Chairman of Liberia Electricity Regulatory Commission(LERC) for asking me to make this opening address and would also like to thank the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC), the Millennium Challenge Account Liberia (MCA-L), the EU and all of our other international partners who have assisted over the last few years in bringing the LERC into full realization.

Opening this Validation workshop is a result of all the efforts being exerted by the Government of Liberia and her partners (especially the MCA-L) in fully establishing the LERC.

It is worth remembering that just a few years ago we were generating single figure and unreliable megawatts (mw), to a few thousand customers. We have come a long way since then, but we clearly have much further to go if we are to provide the access to electricity that our people deserve.

While reading through the regulations, a couple of items struck me, one of which is section 4. Of the Administrative procedures and Regulations which reads thus:

- (a) The Commission will operate in an **open, transparent, and impartial** manner;
and
- (b) The Commission shall be able to keep the general public fully informed about the Commission's actions as contemplated by the Law.

The elements of openness, transparency, and impartiality are fully aligned with His Excellency Dr. George Manneh Weah's Pro-Poor Agenda for Prosperity and

Development (PAPD). LERC is set up to act in the interest of the ordinary Liberian people, the general public, and private service providers in the energy sector. It is encouraging that their stated mandate includes the aforementioned

Transparency and Accountability

In section 20, it is mentioned that the Commission will hold public hearings on setting of the tariff. I strongly believe that when implemented, it will be the most cardinal effort to reduce the high tariff burden on electricity across the country. Again, this also brings ***transparency and accountability***

We as nation cannot grow and develop without access to affordable power. And we all know that the sector is currently weighed down by over 50% commercial losses at the LEC. No business, let alone a country, can run in that manner. We have just brought the revised energy theft law onto the books and we need to start enforcing it. And I hope that the LERC will also find a part to play in reducing the predatory practices that still exist across the sector.

I am convinced that establishment of the LERC is a significant step forward in the development of our small energy sector that has a promising future. We need to push our network further across the country and the LERC will also play an important role in this direction.

It is good to mention that the regulation of the energy sector is essential for efficient operations. Henceforth, these summary points clearly outlined my personal emotions as we roll-out the regulatory processes of the sector:

- It will not be enough to finalize Regulations and allow them to “gather dust on the shelves”
- I will encourage LERC to ensure the fullest and judicious application of the Regulations;
- The electricity sector of Liberia is at a crossroads needing rejuvenation in order to create the enabling environment towards accelerating the growth of the economy;
- Besides my personal commitment, I also call on my compatriots, the good people of Liberia, as well as the private sector and our Development Partners to step up efforts that will progress the sustainable development of the electricity sector of Liberia.

- The Ministry of Mines and Energy will provide the visionary and enlightened leadership needed by the sector and give LERC the necessary support in carrying out its mandate as enshrined in the 2015 Electricity Law of Liberia.

Please note that all decision making from the review of these documents today must clearly be in the interests of the ordinary Liberian as this is the general goal of the Government of Liberia.

Distinguish participants, as we proceed with this workshop today, let me leave you with these two requests.

1. Please remember that we are a small developing energy sector and the high level of commercial power theft makes the sector fragile which is certainly unacceptable, and
2. That all decisions must be made in the best interest of the ordinary Liberian people, our citizens whom we all must serve. And this second point must at the helm of all that we do and all that we regulate.

Thanks.