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A NARRATIVE ON THE SCHEDULED NOVEMBER 25, 2026, 12:00 NOON PUBLIC HEARING ON THE WECC AND NACC BILLS BY
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I. Introduction/Background

A few weeks ago, precisely on November 3, 2026, I received an invitation from the Senate Standing Committee on Judiciary, Human Rights, Claims & Petitions through a letter dated October 29, 2026, signed by the Secretary of the Senate, Hon. J. Nanborlor F. Singbeh, Sr., to participate in a public hearing on two Harmonized Bills:

(1) The "Special War Crimes Court For Liberia (SWACCOL);" and,
(2) The "Special Economic and Corruption Crimes Court (National Anti-Corruption Court)."

A comparison of those Senate-harmonized bills with those earlier submitted by our office to Senate Committee shows very close similarity. However, this is not the crux of this narrative though. Rather, it is the conditions for the **"public hearing"** contained in the Committee's letter of invitation. First, the public hearing is scheduled for November 25, even though the imperative to publicize the bills for genuine and robust in-country and diaspora stakeholders' public participation remains. Second, the hearing is situated in the annex of the Senate Chamber in which the Committee met with both our team and the Law Reform Commission's on July 3 this year, even though it hardly could accommodate the eight of us and the Committee. Third, we are allotted ten minutes to make a presentation on the two draft laws so that our presentation will ***"assist the Committee to make recommendation to the Senate from an informed position."***

I respectfully replied to the Committee through the same medium three days later, on November 6, and raised a few concerns growing out of these decisions, emphasizing the Committee's public hearing assertion. As a way of engaging pursuant to our technical advisory role, I requested an audience with the Committee. Permit me to recall and thank the Committee for allowing similar interaction prior to its June and July consultative engagements with several stakeholder groups. That singly one-on-one engagements expanded, through my suggestions, the stakeholders that participated in the consultations. Hence, my interest in providing the same duty-bound advisory service. Unfortunately, my letter was never acknowledged, nor did the Committee respond.

With this difficult situation, I consulted with several stakeholders, including CSOs, women groups, victim support groups, youth groups and others separately and at the October monthly National Transitional Justice Coordination Committee meeting and the decision was reached to pursue a process that ensures genuine public participation.

The appropriate action was to oblige with the decision of the people I am directed to work closely with. Consequently, not receiving a response from the Committee, I wrote the President Pro Tempore raising the same concerns, attached a copy of my previous letter, and copied the Chairperson of the Senate Committee a set of the two letters. Again, neither an acknowledgement nor a reply reached our office, up to the publication of this paper. I therefore reverted to the stakeholders, and a decision was reached, and justifiably so, to not attend the meeting as it falls short of the envisaged public participation in such a critical process they have longed for over twenty years.

Meanwhile, there have emerged concerns about my decision to stay away from the meeting under the current conditions and calls to enlighten the public on what should be. I also thought that issuing this clarification will safe other invitees who may elected to walk the path I have taken, from explaining further.

One may ask, "**why am I insisting on broad public participation?"** I insist on broad public participation for two reasons: first, Legislators had postponed acting on the Bills until they consulted their constituents on the bills in their respective districts and counties that during their legislative break between the months of July and October, but evidence glaringly show that not a single Legislator had a meeting on this subject during the break; and second, the public would be shut out of the process since there is evidently no guaranteed arrangement to uphold their fundamental right to participate in such national decision-making process.

Disclaimer: I have **NEVER** been a legislator. Despite this disclaimer, I possess vast experience in legislative history, procedures, and processes having taught legislative drafting as a law professor for over ten years, planned and conducted professional legislative drafting and procedure training under the auspices of the Government of Liberia and the Honorable Legislature, and have published an instructive legislative drafting training manual that is a supplementary course material at the Louis Arthur Grimes School of Law.

II. Basics of Legislative Public Hearing

A. What is a real legislative public hearing and how is it conducted?

An actual legislative public hearing is a formal committee meeting where lawmakers gather testimony, expert advice, and public feedback on proposed bills, policies, or oversight issues. While exact rules vary by legislature, most hearings follow a clear structure. At a minimum, it includes:

(i) **Notice, Scheduling, Invitations and Sign-Ups:** Advance public announcement on the date, time, location subject of the hearing; invitation to specific experts, officials, or interest groups, and established mechanisms for members of the public to register to speak or submit written statements ahead of time or at the door.

(ii) **Testimonies of Witnesses / Remarks from the public:** Designated in legislative terms as witnesses, the invited experts, advocates, as well as the everyday citizens give their views, called "evidence" either as members of a panel or individually; or better still, are allowed to submit written testimony or supporting documents for the official record. These are followed by questions and answers for clarification purposes and thus, informed decision-making and broad public ownership

III. What does the above mean relative to the WECC and NACC Bills?

This question borders on ensuring broad, credible public participation for Liberia's **War and Economic Crimes Court Bill** and the **National Anti-Corruption Court Bill.** Simply said, it dictates a **multi-phase, decentralized consultation model** rather than a single session in Monrovia.

Given the national weight of the two bills characterized by current debates surrounding the Liberian Legislature's scheduled hearing, a reasonable process should combine accessible regional outreach with structured technical review. To achieve this, the Legislature should have ensured the below:

A. **Advance Access to Bill Texts:** Publish the exact texts of the harmonized drafts along with plain, nontechnical language summaries early - that is, at least two to three weeks before hearings begin - in standard and Liberian English, and as much as possible, local Liberian languages through accessible formats such as community radio, newspapers, and online portals including the legislative website. This would give legal experts, civil society, and everyday citizens time to review them and make informed contributions.

B. **Decentralized Regional Hearings:** Monrovia or Montserrado County is not Liberia. The Country comprises fifteen counties and seventy-three electoral districts. Although the capitol building is in Monrovia, there is no prohibition on moving legislative proceedings in other parts of the Country. In fact, this is permissible under Liberian law. Therefore, it is more than proper, in this circumstance, to move beyond the Capitol Building**.** Arguably, holding hearings solely in Monrovia excludes rural communities and war-affected populations who lack the resources to travel.

C. **A Not Monrovia-Only Justice Process.** War-affected communities and citizens in rural counties bore the heaviest toll of past conflicts and corruption. The Legislature has the burden to assure that they are heard in their own regions, not excluded by travel costs to the capital or lack of accessible broadcast and viewing facilities.

D. **Regional public hearing sessions.** A missed opportunity was the period of the legislative break when Legislators could have convened committee hearings across Liberia's geographic regions, in every capital city and district so victims' groups, traditional leaders, women organizations, youth, county residents, and every Liberian interested can testify in person.

E. **Structured Stakeholder Panels:** There is not a more compelling need to repeat a comprehensive process of consultation that what was already done in June and July. Separate comprehensive technical specific sessions were dedicated to civil society, the Independent National Commission on Human Rights, legal practitioners/experts, the Liberia National Bar Association, the Liberia Anti-Corruption Commission and other anti-commission institutions, the Law Reform Commission (LRC), and the Office for the Establishment of War and Economic Crimes Court for Liberia (OWECC-L), to examine constitutional and jurisdictional details. This cannot override or overshadow public participation or inclusion at this final stage, if it is public hearing.

F. **For Legitimate and Genuine Public Hearing, Reserve Open-Mic Time for Citizens.** Guarantee unscripted sign-up slots at every hearing so ordinary citizens and grassroots organizations can speak without needing formal institutional invitations, including local language interpretation

G. **Live Broadcast:** Broadcast all sessions live on national and community radio, television, and set up screens and a vibrant secretariat for call-ins and note taking. Maintain the high-value national characteristic of this process.

H. **Victims and Witness Protection – Mandatory Confidentiality Protections:** Establish a confidential intake mechanism for victims, witnesses, or whistleblowers who wish to submit sensitive testimony without public exposure. Truth telling and the ability to embrace the truth will give the requisite credibility to the process.

I. **Post-Hearing Report:** Commit firmly and assure the public with timelines and procedural guidelines that before submitting the bills for plenary debate, the Legislature will publish a **"Committee Synthesis Report"** reflecting public inputs, detailing adopted amendments, and explaining rejected recommendations.

IV. Do we still have the time to do these and complete the legislative process before the end of this year? YES, but nor without the unmatched political will and honest approach.

The OWECC-L has submitted a set of suggestions to the Legislature and committed facilitating the process. Civil Society Organizations, Victims Groups, and other stakeholders have assured of their assistance. Liberia can harness the goodwill of the international community, development partners and others in short time. They have shown strong support and ready willingness to Liberia's drive up to the completion of the process. There is no hurdle now other than the humble recognition of a new and more feasible approach by all actors. We believe the Legislature seize the moment and open this justice initiative to the entire Country and then decide in time.

V. Conclusion

The **goal** has been and remains establishing the courts through legislation in 2026 (this year) and operationalizing them by May 2027, consistent with the mandate of the Government of Liberia.