



**OFFICE FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF  
WAR AND ECONOMIC CRIMES COURT  
FOR LIBERIA (OWECC-L)**



**REPORT ON  
THE ACHIEVEMENTS AND NEXT STEPS  
FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF  
A SPECIAL WAR AND ECONOMIC CRIMES COURT  
AND  
A NATIONAL ANTI-CORRUPTION COURT FOR LIBERIA  
TO  
HIS EXCELLENCY JOSEPH NYUMAH BOAKAI, SR.  
PRESIDENT  
REPUBLIC OF LIBERIA**

**MAY 31, 2025**

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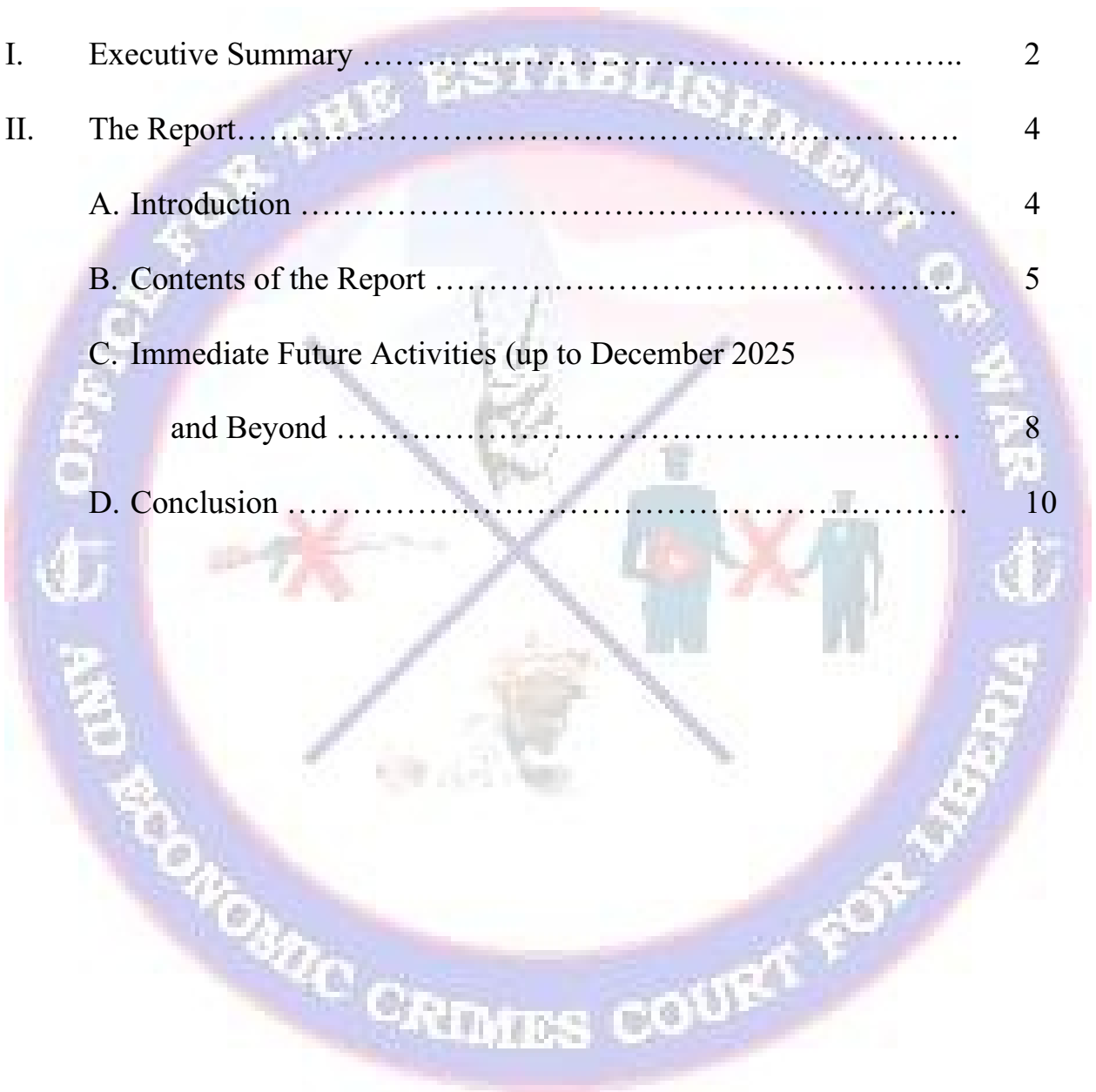
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## I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Office for the Establishment of a Special War and Economic Crimes and a National Anti-Corruption Court for Liberia, established initially through Executive Order Number 131 and re-situated a year after through Executive Order Number 148, has been functional under its second Executive Director, Dr. Cllr. Jallah Allen Barbu for seven months. The Office is mandated to lead the establishment of these two courts by developing mechanisms that will ensure their establishment, operationalization and sustainability, thereby bringing to closure the impasse and calls for accountability for atrocities committed during Liberia's civil crises from 1979 to 2003 and addressing long standing impunity of corruption from 1979 to current.

With an initial funding of a little over United States Dollars Three Hundred and Sixty-Eight Thousand (**US\$368,000.00**) from the Government of Liberia and logistical and technical capacity assistance from international partners, OWECC-L has built standing relationships and collaboration with victims and survivors support groups, civil society and professional organizations, religious institutions, women organizations, academic institutions, government ministries and agencies, institutions, judicial actors, international organizations and diplomatic mission, and a host of other stakeholders in its outreach and community initiatives. The acquisition of an office facility, recruitment of a corps of professionals and full operationalization of the Office have all constituted meaningfully to the successes and achievements so far and assure that the Office will complete its mandate within the period specified in its roadmap (work program).

OWECC-L has finalized its Roadmap and set timelines for the implementation of each phase. The Roadmap encapsulates historical, current and future activities, explained in separate work plans, beginning with the establishment of the Office and appointment of an Executive Director, running through recruitment and training of personnel, and then to the conduct of trials and residual aspects of the War and Economic Crimes Court as well as a recognition of the perpetuity of the National Anti-Corruption Court. The achievement of these initiatives are contingent on the full and timely financial and moral support of the Government and international partners.

To dive into the next critical stages, OWECC-L and transitional justice actors will focus on the National Outreach as the immediate next step. A national program to be held simultaneously in all counties, in June, is being planned. The goal is to have an all-encouraging national buy-in; thus, the plan is for Your Excellency to be the Chief Launcher.

## **II. THE REPORT**

### **A. Introduction:**

Under Executive Order No. 148 and as expected, OWECC-L is to submit quarterly reports to the President, on its current and future activities. With two reports earlier submitted covering the period November 1 to December 31 and up to March 25, this is the third report to the President. Building on those earlier reports, this report presents a clear Roadmap containing timelines on the implementation of each phase of the courts' establishment processes, and an emphasis on the urgency for adequate and timely financial and moral support, first by the Government of Liberia, and then, local and international partners.

Timelines under the Roadmap, explicated in accompanying documents focusing on integral parts of this report, culminate into the establishment and operationalization of the National Anti-Corruption Court in November 2026 when trials are expected to commence, and the establishment and operationalization of the Special War and Economic Crimes Court in November 2027, when the first set of indictments will be served.

The Courts will remain functional as indicated in the Roadmap under various mechanisms and timelines. It is envisaged that the Government of Liberia will prioritize this home-grown initiative as a historic step in its overall peace building and sustainability program as it comes closer to sitting as a member of the United Nations Security Council.

## **B. Contents of the Report:**

This report presents major activities the OWECC-L has undertaken this year and plans for the remaining months; it incorporates the periods thereafter in the Roadmap, up to and including the conduct of trials in both courts. Each phase, Mr. President, requires high-level financial, human and material investments. The accompanying investigative unit framework and pioneer accountability program are in this direction, and they are the bedrock for accelerating the achievement of our mandate.

### **Activities:**

Over the past five months, and in retrospect, the first two, OWECC-L did the below:

1. Submitted an initial and later, a comprehensive report to Your Excellency covering the period November 2024 to March 2025.
2. Established standing relationships with several Civil Society Organizations, the Liberian National Bar Association, victims and survivors support groups, women and youth organizations, the Liberia Council of Churches, the Liberia Muslim Council, the Rural Women Association, psychosocial and mental health expert groups, amongst others.
3. Built strong linkages with several ministries and agencies of Government (e.g. Ministries of Foreign Affairs; Internal Affairs; Gender, Children and Social Protection); the United Nations Liberia Country Team (e.g. OHCHR; UNICEF, UNDP and UN Women), and several diplomatic missions (e.g. EU Delegation, Swedish, UK, French and U.S.).

4. Developed a comprehensive Roadmap buttressed by a set of work plans on various thematic areas.
5. Collaborated with the United Nations Office for High Commissioner on Human Rights (OHCHR) in a two-day thematic retreat on coordination amongst transitional justice actors that culminated in the establishment of a National Transitional Justice Coordinating Committee (NTJCC), now coordinating Transitional Justice Actors throughout Liberia.
6. Conducted, under the auspices and assistance of the United Nations, a week-long high-level technical capacity building workshop on the processes leading to the establishment and operations of a war crimes court. The training was conducted by two experts from the UN Headquarters in New York.
7. In collaboration with Civil Society Organizations, held a women assembly in Ganta, Nimba County to start a story-telling initiative of experiences during the war.
8. Formed two technical drafting committees for the development of the legal framework of the War and Economic Crimes Court and the National Anti-Corruption Court, respectively.
9. Established a live research and records center that is researching and compiling the history and documents associated with the civil crises dating from 1979 to 2003, and others on corruption, dating from 1979 to current.

10. Commenced outreach/consultations with diverse stakeholders in seven counties (Montserrado, Margibi, Bomi, Lofa, Bong, Nimba and Grand Bassa).
11. Developed the Framework for an “Independent Investigative Unit for Liberia” that will be trained in evidence gathering and investigation in the field, on alleged human rights abuses and other forms of atrocities to enable the drawing up of indictments and witness protection mechanisms.
12. Developed a technical paper – “The Pioneer Accountability Program” in furtherance of the implementation of the Roadmap for the establishment of the two courts.
13. Launched a pilot program for children and youths in grade schools and opened an internship initiative as our “Grade School Ambassadorial and Internship Program;” the internship is for college and law school students, to give them the opportunity to contribute more fully to the process.
14. Built a website for the OWECC-L that is functional but still advancing in capacity.
15. Created a live gender and youth program and a psychosocial and mental health program to foster easier public engagement.
16. Pursued resource assistance under our resource mobilization program that has resulted in the receipt of technical capacity building, furniture, office equipment, stationery and supplies, a Land Cruiser 4x4 jeep, media gadgets, and small cash support to specific programs.

17. Incorporated braille and sign language in our daily programs to ensure full participation of persons with both sight and hearing disabilities.
18. Created a safe space for persons with physical/mobility disabilities to attend meetings and other activities at the OWECC-L.
19. Collaborated with international investigators from the United States and France in investigating alleged commissions of war crimes in Liberia for pending war crime trials in those countries.

**C. Immediate Future Activities (up to December 2025) And Beyond:**

The processes for establishing the Courts are becoming more critical and complex as activities increase. Our focus going forward are:

1. Hold a youth engagement and capacity-building program in transitional justice in collaboration with UNICEF in the last week of June or first week of July. UNICEF has provided initial support of United States Dollars Ten Thousand (US\$10,000.00).
2. Conduct a drug-free campaign as a part of OWECC-L's inclusiveness campaign in its work process, in collaboration with the Restoring Hope Foundation International this month.
3. Conduct a three-day high level technical dialogue in collaboration with OHCHR and National Anti-graft institutions on anti-corruption processes and prosecution in furtherance of drafting the statute for the Anti-Corruption Court.

4. Pay the outstanding salaries of four months to staff and consultancy fees due, in June; this is contingent on the Government's remittance of the two quarters' grant per E.O. 148.
5. Official launch in all counties simultaneously of the National Outreach Program in June.
6. Completion of synchronized outreach messages and in-depth public education and awareness modules on the OWECC-L on the one hand, and the WECC and NACC, on the other.
7. Commission drafting of the National Anti-Corruption Court (NACC) Bill scheduled for completion and submission to Your Excellency in September this year.
8. Commission exhaustive review and upgrading of the current draft War and Economic Crimes Court (WECC) Act.
9. For the activities in counts (7) and (8) above, undertake at least five study tours to other jurisdictions with quality experience on these subjects (e.g. The Gambia; Rwanda; Central African Republic).
10. Work with the Government, specifically the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, to establish connections with and seek support from the AU, ECOWAS and the UN.

11. Finalize the website construction and upload pertinent information for world-wide public awareness, full disclosure and greater accountability (Elementor Pro and the Theme for the framework).
12. Establish sub-stations in all counties for easy coordination between OWECC-L and the public.
13. Identify potential independent investigators and prosecutors and commence the preparation of training modules and appropriate training facilities.
14. Undertake the implementation of the Roadmap in other areas contingent on the completion of activities precedent to undertaking them.
- 15. Our biggest hope and strongest pillar of political will is to be blessed with a visit by Your Excellency to the OWECC -L, and on that visit, to launch the National Outreach Program**

#### **D. Conclusion:**

In all of these planned activities, the below conclusions remain constant so far:

- (1) The War and Economic Crimes Court (WECC) will be established and will exist in Liberia.
- (2) The module of the War and Economic Crimes Court (WECC) will be “**hybrid**,” bearing both national and international characteristics. The Government of Liberia will lead engagements with other countries and

international organizations. The details of the hybrid court are being studied (e.g. composition of the Bench; lawyers – local and foreign; controlling laws).

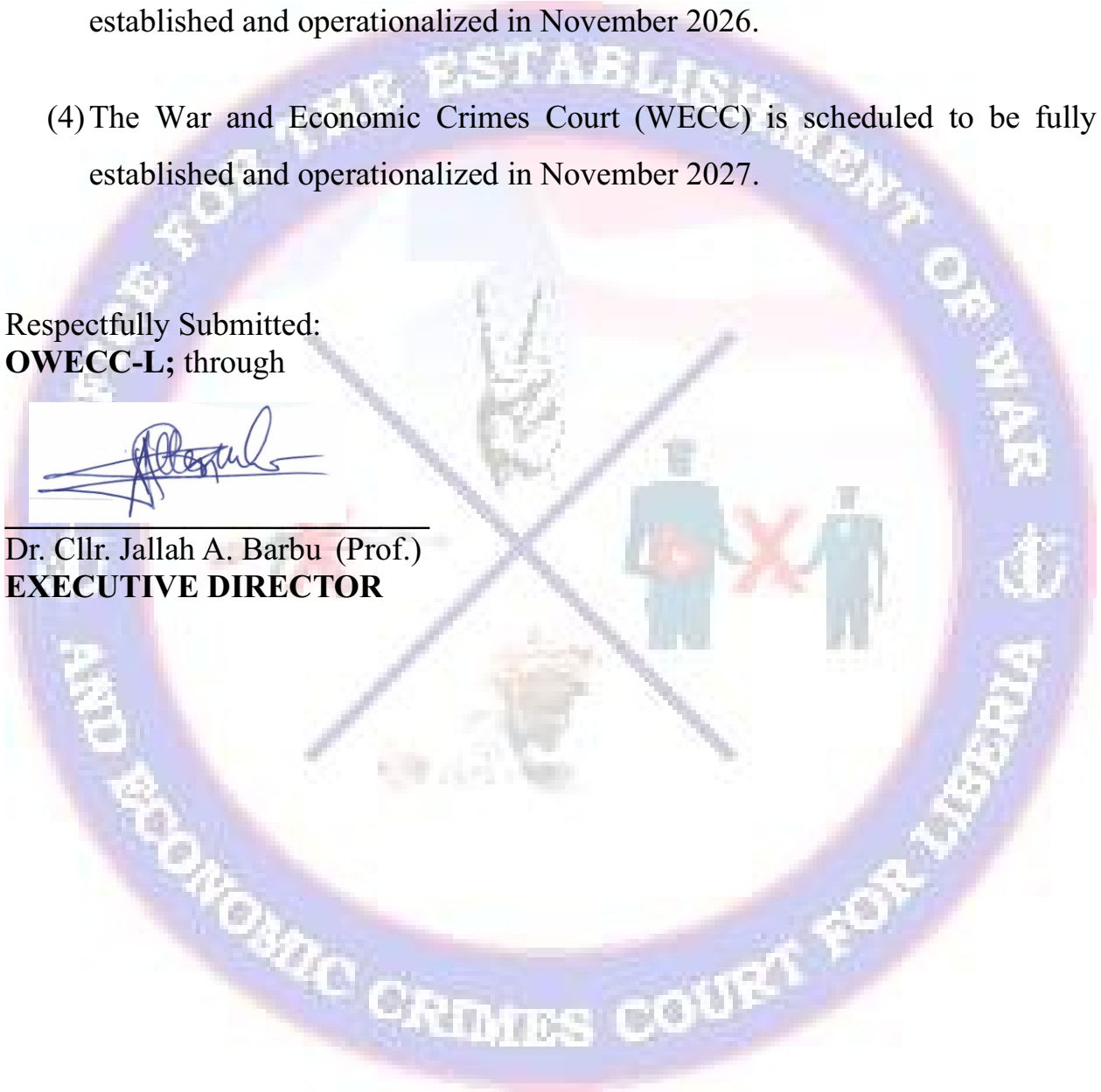
(3) The National Anti-Corruption Court (NACC) is scheduled to be fully established and operationalized in November 2026.

(4) The War and Economic Crimes Court (WECC) is scheduled to be fully established and operationalized in November 2027.

Respectfully Submitted:  
OWECC-L; through

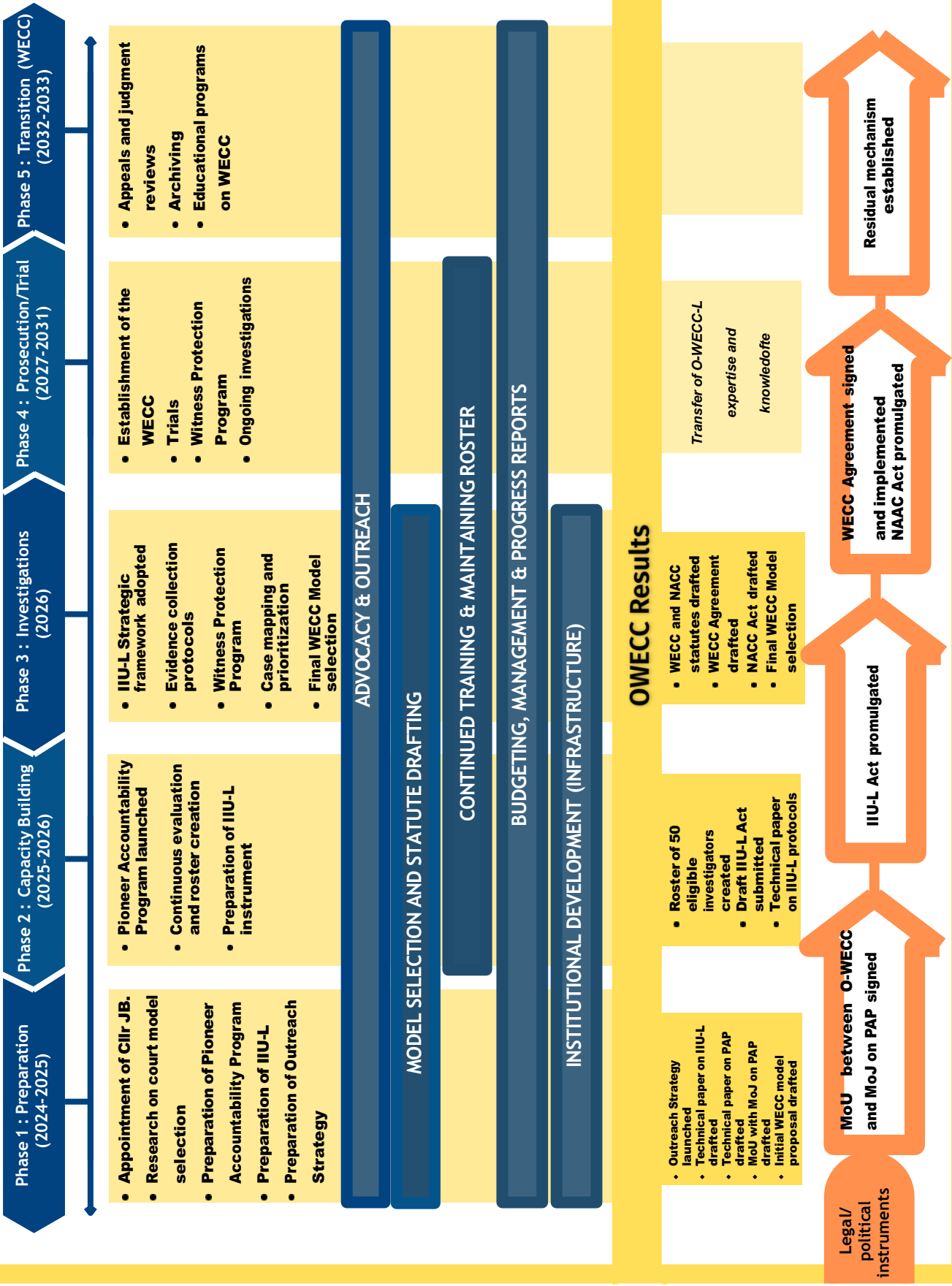


Dr. Cllr. Jallah A. Barbu (Prof.)  
**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**



**OWECC-L  
ROADMAP  
FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT  
OF A  
WAR AND ECONOMIC CRIMES COURT  
AND A  
NATIONAL ANTI-CORRUPTION  
COURT**

# Roadmap for the establishment of a War and Economic Crimes Court and a National Anti-Corruption Court



## **Roadmap for the Establishment of War and Economic Crimes Court in Liberia and the National Anti-Corruption Court**

### **Overview**

The establishment of the War and Economic Crimes Court (WECC) and the National Anti-Corruption Court (NACC) in Liberia will proceed through five strategic phases. The Office for the Establishment of the War and Economic Crimes Court in Liberia (O-WECC-L) will lead the first three phases.

This roadmap follows a concurrent rather than sequential implementation model. As a new phase begins, previous phases continue their operations, creating a layered and continuous approach to development.

### **Cross-cutting activities**

Throughout the phases, the following activities will remain relevant and operate continuously. (1) **Advocacy and outreach** to build and maintain support through cooperation opportunities, diplomatic engagement, strategic communications, and ongoing community dialogue; (2) **Legal framework** development, involving careful model selection for the desired accountability mechanism and comprehensive statute drafting; (3) **Capacity-building** through continuous training programs and maintenance of a qualified roster of investigators, prosecutors, and judges; (4) **Administrative oversight** encompassing budgeting, financial management, and regular progress reporting to stakeholders; and (5) **Strategic planning** for institutional development, including infrastructure requirements and capacity enhancement opportunities.

### **Phase 1: Preparation & foundation (2024-2025)**

Phase 1 encompasses the critical groundwork for establishing the War and Economic Crimes Court. During this phase, starting with the appointment of Cllr. Jallah Barbu on 01 November 2024, under Executive Order #131 of 2 May 2024, O-WECC-L will focus on meticulously preparing, conceptualizing, and drafting foundational documents.

### **Primary activities**

O-WECC-L will launch an **outreach strategy** to ensure a unified approach to communications and cooperation with relevant stakeholders, including civil society organizations, government actors, international partners, and affected communities. The strategy will adopt a gender-sensitive approach and respect the principle of ‘do no harm’, particularly when interacting with victim associations.

This phase involves mapping out the **legal framework** required for establishing the WECC and NACC, identifying key partners and resources, and designing preliminary capacity-building initiatives. This includes establishing the legal basis for creating the **Independent Investigation Unit for Liberia (IIU-L)**, which will investigate and document evidence and prepare prosecution-ready cases.

To guarantee that national expertise is available to the IIU-L at its inception, the O-WECC-L will initiate a Pioneer Accountability Program (PAP). This program aims to train at least 50 investigators who will be eligible to join the IIU-L when it is created. The PAP will play a crucial role in developing national expertise in war crimes and economic crimes investigations. O-WECC-L will also engage with the relevant national stakeholders to sign a Memorandum of Understanding with the Ministry of Justice establishing the PAP.

### **Expected results from O-WECC-L**

Outreach strategy is launched.

A technical paper on the establishment of the IIU-L is drafted.

A technical paper on the establishment of the Pioneer Accountability Program is drafted.

A draft Memorandum of Understanding establishing the Pioneer Accountability Program is completed.

An initial WECC model proposal is drafted.

### **Required legal/political instruments**

The start of Phase 2 is contingent upon the signature of a Memorandum of Understanding with the Ministry of Justice to create a dedicated investigation team under the Solicitor General's supervision.

#### **Phase 2: Training & capacity building (2025-2026)**

Phase 2 contains a comprehensive training curriculum for the **Pioneer Accountability Program**, forming the core of Liberia's capacity to investigate war and economic crimes effectively in accordance with its international obligations.

### **Primary activities**

O-WECC-L, in consultation with relevant actors, will assist in selecting a team of experienced practitioners to participate in the Pioneer Accountability Program and undertake specialized training following international standards while adapting methodologies to the Liberian context. The objective of the PAP is to prepare a group of 50 investigators who will be eligible to integrate the IIU-L when it is established and in line with the IIU-L's selection criteria. O-WECC-L will also oversee the evaluation and rostering of future candidates to the IIU-L and adopt a gender-balanced recruitment approach.

The training will focus on two primary areas: (1) **Foundational preparation** prior to the establishment of the IIU-L, the NACC and the WECC, covering international criminal law principles and international legal frameworks applicable to war crimes, crimes against humanity, and economic crimes; and (2) **Ongoing specialized professional development** focusing on advanced investigative methodologies, including evidence collection and preservation techniques, forensic analysis, trauma-informed witness interviewing, crime scene management, financial investigation strategies, documentation of conflict-related sexual violence, digital evidence handling, and international cooperation protocols.

Training will also include necessary longer-term expertise for conducting the WECC and NACC trials, including trial management, courtroom advocacy, and specialized criminal procedure. O-WECC-L will simultaneously draft the legal framework for the Independent Investigation Unit for Liberia (IIU-L), which will eventually be responsible for formal investigations in a robust, independent, impartial, and effective manner.

### **Expected results from O-WECC-L**

A roster of at least 50 investigators as candidates for the IIU-L is created.

A draft Act establishing the Independent Investigation Unit for Liberia (IIU-L) is completed.

A technical paper on the necessary investigation protocols and procedural guidelines tailored to the Liberian context is drafted.

### **Required legal/political instruments:**

The start of Phase 3 is contingent upon passing the IIU-L Act, which will ensure the conduct of independent and impartial investigations for criminal prosecution.

#### **Phase 3: Investigation & evidence collection (2026)**

With the IIU-L legally established, Phase 3 marks the start of formal investigations into war and economic crimes to prepare for effective criminal prosecutions. The Chief Investigator of the IIU-L will develop a strategic plan to guide the unit's objectives and priorities. The IIU-L will further adopt a gender strategy and ensure the protection of witnesses.

#### **Primary activities**

The IIU-L will collect, preserve and analyze evidence for potential use in criminal proceedings. Investigations will include collecting documentary, digital, and physical evidence, witness testimonies, and open-source information, adopting gender-sensitive and trauma-informed approaches, and applying the principle of 'do no harm'. The IIU-L will further analyze the evidence, establish links to potential perpetrators, and investigate command structures and chains of responsibility.

The investigative work will address specific challenges in the Liberian context, such as memory loss due to the passage of time and deterioration or disappearance of physical evidence. The IIU-L will also establish a Witness Protection Program to ensure the safety of witnesses. Records pertaining to witness protection will be handed over to the WECC Witness Protection Program upon its establishment.

#### **O-WECC-L's role**

O-WECC-L will continue to serve as the preparatory mechanism for the future court's institutional design and operationalization, while the IIU-L concentrates on investigations. The progress of the IIU-L in determining case volume and complexity will inform the model selection for the WECC and NACC.

O-WECC-L will support the IIU-L as a focal point for capacity-building, technical assistance, cooperation, and resource mobilization opportunities. As part of its outreach mandate, it will also develop a comprehensive communications strategy to convey IIU-L's purpose and achievements to the public while maintaining confidentiality and proactively addressing misinformation.

### **Expected results from O-WECC-L**

WECC Statute and NACC Statute drafted.

Agreement establishing the WECC drafted.

NACC Act drafted.

A final WECC model selection is drafted.

### **Required legal/political instruments**

The start of Phase 4 is contingent upon signing and implementing an international agreement on establishing the WECC and passing the National Anti-Corruption Court Act. The ministry of Foreign Affairs will play an important role in engagement with relevant actors on the international agreement.

#### **Phase 4: WECC and NACC trials (2027-2031)**

Phase 4 represents the operational stage of both the WECC and NACC. With the legal frameworks established, formal criminal proceedings can begin. The WECC and NACC will develop Strategic Plans outlining their goals and key priorities. The courts will also adopt, amongst others, a prosecution strategy, a gender strategy and relevant implementation plans.

IIU-L will hand over the collected evidence and cases to the prosecuting bodies of WECC and NACC and the courts will also adopt a Witness Protection Program to ensure their safe participation in the proceedings.

### **Transition of O-WECC-L's expertise and institutional knowledge**

O-WECC-L will conclude its mandate upon the full establishment of the WECC and NACC. However, it is crucial to transfer institutional knowledge and expertise of O-WECC-L to the courts, which will ensure the sustainability of capacity-building efforts, outreach and advocacy initiatives, staff management, and resource mobilization.

#### **Phase 5: WECC residual mechanism & legacy (2032-2033)**

The final phase will focus on transitioning from active court operations to a residual mechanism to address remaining functions after the WECC's primary mandate is fulfilled.

### **Primary activities**

The residual mechanism will handle appeals and judgment reviews, preserve court records and evidence through a comprehensive archival system as historical documentation and legal precedent. It will implement educational programs to communicate WECC's findings to the public. Records pertaining to sentence enforcement and witness protection will be handed over to the competent authorities during Phase 5.

The residual mechanism will support impact assessments on the WECC’s contribution to reconciliation and deterrence, and maintain international judicial cooperation channels for addressing future cases and accessing technical resources.



## **Framework for an Independent Investigation Unit for Liberia**

### **INTRODUCTION**

This document outlines the proposed operational framework for the **Independent Investigation Unit for Liberia (IIU-L)**. Under the leadership of a Chief Investigator, the IIU-L will investigate and preserve evidence to support future prosecutions of serious human rights violations and war crimes committed in Liberia between 1979 and 2003.

This framework addresses key questions regarding the unit's jurisdiction, legal basis, procedures, independence, funding and support opportunities (including regional and international cooperation).

The Office for the Establishment of a War and Economic Crimes Court (O-WECC-L) has prepared the following IIU-L framework, as part of the implementation of the Roadmap suggested by O-WECC-L. The model selected for this unit will ensure the independence and impartiality of investigations in line with international standards and Liberia's international obligations.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) of Liberia compiled extensive documentation and testimonies on human rights violations. However, it was not designed as an investigative body with the aim of collecting evidence admissible before criminal proceedings.

Instead of applying the "beyond reasonable doubt" standard required for criminal prosecutions, the TRC applied the lower "more likely than not" threshold when assessing evidence and making determinations.

Furthermore, the TRC report itself acknowledged that not all violence during its mandated period was documented, noting that for security, historical, accessibility, and social reasons, certain crimes were substantially under-reported—with sexual and gender-based violence being particularly under-documented despite their widespread occurrence during the conflicts.

### **JURISDICTION**

The IIU-L's primary focus would be to investigate war crimes and crimes against humanity committed in Liberia during the Liberian civil crises (1979-2003).<sup>1</sup> Additionally, its mandate should allow for the investigation of relevant conduct outside Liberia that directly links to the core crimes committed within the country, such as planning, financing, or support networks operating from abroad.

The unit should be mandated to investigate persons allegedly responsible for the specified crimes within its temporal, territorial, and material jurisdiction. While investigations may cover

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<sup>1</sup> In line with Joint Resolution #001/'24 of the Liberian Senate and House of Representatives of the Republic of Liberia and on the mechanisms for the establishment of an extraordinary criminal court for War and Economic Crimes and domestic Anti-Corruption Courts respectively, 25 April 2024; Executive Order No. 131, by the President of Liberia, 2 May 2024.

**OWECC-L  
FRAMEWORK  
FOR AN  
INDEPENDENT INVESTIGATION  
UNIT FOR LIBERIA**

perpetrators at all levels, a strategic priority should be placed on identifying and investigating individuals with the most significant responsibility for the most serious or systematic violations, regardless of their official position or any immunities under domestic law.

## **MANDATE & PRIMACY**

The IIU-L should be established as an independent and autonomous body through domestic legislation. It shall have a distinct legal personality and primacy over any equivalent investigative body in Liberia that could potentially fall within the IIU-L's mandate.

In the event of a dispute over primacy, the IIU-L and the relevant body shall engage in timely communication. Unresolved disputes shall be referred to the Joint Security Committee of the Government of Liberia convened by the Minister of Justice. This Committee will then meet for the sole purpose of resolving the conflict within a pre-defined scope for review.

Establishing the IIU-L solely through an Executive Order is strongly discouraged. This approach would lack legal permanence, legislative support, and the robust independence to handle sensitive and long-term investigations.

Legislation would give the IIU-L greater legitimacy. However, as timing is critical, a two-step approach could be considered by initially creating the IIU-L by Executive Order, then passing domestic legislation.

## **PROCEDURE AND OVERSIGHT**

### **Structure**

The IIU-L will be headed by the Chief Investigator, assisted by a Deputy Investigator. The Unit will be structured into four components:

- a) **The Immediate Office of the Chief Investigator** will oversee management and coordination, strategic planning, resource allocation, external relations, and interagency cooperation agreements.
- b) **The Investigation Office** will comprise experienced investigators with diverse expertise in human rights investigations, forensic analysis, financial crimes, and specialized investigative techniques. They will be organized into case-specific or thematic teams.
- c) **The Victims and Witnesses Office** will adopt programs for supporting and protecting victims and witnesses engaged with the IIU-L to ensure their safe participation in investigations. This will include psychosocial support, security assessments, protective measures, and logistical assistance in line with international standards and best practices.
- d) **The Criminal Analysis Office** will consist of skilled analysts who will process and interpret complex evidence, develop analytical products identifying patterns of criminality, establish linkage evidence between perpetrators and crimes, and prepare

comprehensive analytical reports to support potential prosecutions.

### **Standard Operating Procedures**

The IIU-L will develop and adhere to its own comprehensive **Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs)** covering investigations, crime scene management, evidence collection, chain of custody, forensic analysis, witness interviewing (using trauma-informed methods), data management, and analysis. These SOPs must be grounded in international best practices and legal standards, and informed by the Liberian Criminal Procedure Law, to ensure the quality, integrity, and potential admissibility of the evidence before future trial mechanisms, be they domestic, hybrid, or international.

Further to the SOP, a specific Code of Conduct shall be developed with details on ethical obligations, professional standards, impartiality requirements, rules on confidentiality and conflicts of interest, and zero tolerance for corruption. Adherence to the Code of Conduct should be made an explicit condition of employment with the IIU-L. Failure to adhere to the Code of Conduct could therefore constitute grounds for dismissal, and possible prosecution.

The IIU-L will also develop several strategies and implementation plans to guide the work of the IIU-L, such as a case prioritization strategy given the volume of the evidence and challenges faced by the passing of time, and a Gender Strategy integrating gender analysis in IIU-L's investigative and analytical work.

### **Oversight Committee**

An independent Oversight Committee will form part of the IIU-L's founding legislation.<sup>2</sup> It should comprise members of high integrity and relevant expertise. A possible composition could include representatives from the Liberian Government, from regional and international organizations such as ECOWAS, the African Union, or the United Nations, professional associations such as the Liberian National Bar Association, Liberian civil society organizations, and international experts. Representatives of donors may also be considered for inclusion.

The functions of this Oversight Committee would include receiving periodic reports on activities and outcomes, overseeing and providing advice on management aspects, including efficiency, budget and finance, staff appointments, and disciplinary actions.

### **Selection Panel**

Leadership positions within the IIU-L, such as the Chief Investigator and Deputy Investigator, and the heads of the IIU-L offices, would be filled through appointment by the President of the Republic, upon recommendation from an independent Selection Panel following a thorough and transparent selection process. The Chief Investigator position may be open to a non-Liberian candidate; however, all other leadership positions shall be filled by Liberian nationals.

This Selection Panel will be appointed and overseen by the Oversight Committee. It should ensure gender balance and could comprise members representing the same entities represented in the Oversight Committee.

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<sup>2</sup> Based on the model of the Gambia's Special Prosecutor's Office. Also, it may be imbedded in the same statute establishing the IIU-L.

### **Funding**

The IIU-L will be financed through a Special Investigation Fund, managed by the Oversight Committee, and its sources could include monies appropriated by the Liberian Legislature, publicly declared donations from vetted national or international entities supporting justice initiatives, and potentially, recovered assets. The Fund would cover operational expenses, personnel salaries, capacity building, and administrative costs based on an approved budget.

The first budget for the IIU-L should be developed by the Oversight Committee for one year. Subsequent annual budgets shall be submitted by the Chief Investigator and approved by the Oversight Committee.

### **POWERS OF THE CHIEF INVESTIGATOR**

The Chief Investigator, who reports to the Oversight Committee, would possess comprehensive investigative authority while operating separately from prosecutorial functions. These powers would include the ability to initiate and conduct thorough investigations; gather evidence through interviews, document collection, and forensic analysis; summon witnesses and compel production of documentation; conduct searches and seizures in accordance with the SOP; access classified information; establish specialized investigative teams; develop investigative strategies; and prepare comprehensive investigation reports for future prosecutorial authorities.

All government bodies with investigative powers shall provide the IIU-L with the necessary support and assistance when requested, in line with the primacy principle established in the IIU-L mandate. This should be operationalized through Memoranda of Understanding (MoU), Ministerial directives, or protocols for information sharing and joint operations.

### **REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION**

The IIU-L will be able to enter into bilateral partnerships and cooperation agreements with national, regional, and international entities to benefit from strategic advantages, enhance performance and legitimacy, access resources, and strengthen political insulation and independence. The cooperation modalities will also include MoUs to define areas of support such as advocacy, technical advice or support, expert deployment, capacity building, and information sharing.

The IIU-L will also benefit from existing frameworks such as the African Union Transitional Justice Policy to promote the key principles of victim-centeredness, gender sensitivity, national ownership, and accountability. As outlined in the AUTJP Implementation Roadmap, AU support could include technical assistance from the continental roster of Transitional Justice experts for deployment, collaboration with ECOWAS, and capacity building through AU-led training programs (including specialized modules for youth and women) and training platforms.

Technical support to the IIU-L will be crucial for developing expertise in international criminal investigation (including forensics, evidence management, witness protection, cybersecurity, legal analysis, and trauma support); budgeting and project management; and guidance on developing SOPs and internal policies. The overall objective will be to develop a high-level

Liberian corps of experts for sustainability of the process while meeting the immediate evidence-gathering needs for immediate future trials.

### **TRANSITION**

The IIU-L will collect, analyze, and preserve evidence within its mandate and in line with its investigation strategy. It will also produce comprehensive analytical reports to support future trials.

The IIU-L's progress will help identify the potential caseload for the Special WECC-L, which will assist in determining the most suitable final model and resource requirements for this mechanism. The investigations will also inform the strategic decisions on case selection, prioritization, and temporal and subject-matter jurisdiction.

The enabling legislative act will also ensure the IIU-L's primacy in entering into judicial cooperation agreements with foreign courts and investigative entities with overlapping jurisdiction to facilitate evidence sharing and witness coordination.

Last, upon the full establishment of the WECC-L, the IIU-L will formally hand over all relevant evidence, case files and analytical products and case files to the relevant WECC-L prosecuting body.

### **OWECC-L's ROLE**

O-WECC-L will continue to serve as the preparatory mechanism for the future court's institutional design and operationalization, while the IIU-L concentrates on investigations. The progress of the IIU-L in determining case volume and complexity will inform the final model selection for the WECC and NACC.

O-WECC-L will support the IIU-L as a focal point for capacity-building, technical assistance, cooperation, and resource mobilization. As part of its outreach mandate, it will develop a communications strategy that conveys IIU-L's progress to the public while maintaining confidentiality, proactively addressing misinformation, and integrating gender analysis.

The OWECC-L will simultaneously develop the draft Statute for the War and Economic Crimes Court (WECC) and Statute for the National Anti-Corruption Court (NACC). This parallel drafting process will ensure both institutions are designed with complementary jurisdictions and procedures, while addressing their distinct mandates effectively.

**OWECC-L  
TECHNICAL PAPER:  
THE PIONEER  
ACCOUNTABILITY  
PROGRAM**

## Technical paper: The Pioneer Accountability Program

### I. Introduction

This document was prepared by the Office for the Establishment of War and Economic Crimes Court (O-WECC-L), to outline the concept for the "Pioneer Accountability Program" (PAP), as part of the implementation of the Roadmap for the establishment of a Special War Economic Crimes Court for Liberia (SWCCL).

The Roadmap consists of a phased approach to establishing the SWCCL through capacity-building (Phases 1 and 2), specialized investigation through the Independent Investigation Unit for Liberia (IIU-L) (Phase 3), Trial before the SWECCCL (Phase 4), and Transition (Phase 5).

The PAP is intended to be implemented during Phases 1 and 2 of the Roadmap, and is a specialized and strategic capacity-building initiative designed to prepare a cadre of qualified experts to investigate, prosecute and adjudicate international crimes in the Liberian context. The cadre will be eligible to integrate into the IIU-L in Phase 3 and the SWECCCL in Phase 4. The program will include a vetting and selection process for prospective trainees, curriculum design, implementation, and evaluation.

### II. Specialization gap

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) of Liberia compiled extensive documentation and testimonies on human rights violations. However, it was not designed as an investigative body with the aim of collecting evidence admissible before criminal proceedings. Instead of applying the "beyond reasonable doubt" standard required for criminal prosecutions, the TRC applied the lower "more likely than not" threshold when assessing evidence and making determinations.

Furthermore, the TRC report in 2009 itself acknowledged that not all violence during its mandated period was documented, noting that for security, historical, accessibility, and social reasons, certain crimes were substantially under-reported, with sexual and gender-based violence being particularly under-documented despite their widespread occurrence during the conflicts.

Since 2009, very little and in fact, no comprehensive efforts have been made by the Government of Liberia to ensure national accountability for war crimes and crimes against humanity in Liberia, or to build a minimum national capacity or expertise in these areas for future prosecutions. All substantive accountability efforts to date have been undertaken in a foreign jurisdiction, based on initial evidence gathered by small teams of investigators employed under the auspices of a Liberian non-governmental organization. **The existence of very little national capacity represents a critical expertise gap directly impacting Liberia's ability to fulfill its accountability obligations.**

These challenges are exacerbated by the **deterioration of evidence**, witness mortality, and memory degradation, which hamper essential follow-up investigations and authentication for admissibility in court. Effective prosecution is undermined by the lack of clarity on legal and institutional responsibilities for investigation and prosecution of international crimes in Liberia. Information gathering is further obstructed by **security risks** to potential witnesses and inadequate psycho-social and mental health support.

While the establishment of a specialized accountability mechanism (for investigation and prosecution) is essential in the medium term, the current lack of specialized knowledge and skills requires **immediate targeted training interventions** on war crimes and crimes against humanity. This will contribute significantly to the creation of a financially sustainable, Liberian-led and owned accountability mechanism.

While not explicitly detailed in this paper, matters of detention are equally important. Existing gaps in the Liberian correctional system – both in terms of infrastructure and capacity – will need to be addressed to manage high-risk/high-profile prisoners. Throughout Phases 1 and 2, attention will also need to be paid to preparing for the detention of high-risk/high-profile individuals who may be indicted by the SWECCCL or the National Anti-Corruption Court (NACC). This will require a detailed plan on the management of such prisoners, as well as accompanying capacity-building to ensure that corrections officers have the requisite skills and knowledge to safely, securely, and humanely detain such individuals.

### **III. Training objectives**

The Office for the Establishment of War and Economic Crimes Court for Liberia (OWECC-L), specifically its Division of War and Economic Crimes Court will be the focal point for the PAP, as the Division’s mission is to “recruit and enhance the skills and knowledge of judicial and investigative personnel to ensure the effective function of the court”.<sup>1</sup> As the focal point, OWECC-L will conduct ongoing training needs assessments, maintain participation records, coordinate with training providers, and develop an evaluation framework to monitor and assess participants’ progress.

#### **A. Target group**

The program will target key professionals essential for the effective functioning of the War and Economic Crimes Court and National Anti-Corruption Court, including investigators, judges, prosecutors, defense attorneys, registry staff, and witness protection officers.

Admission to the PAP is open to former judicial actors or police officers who performed investigative duties, specialized investigators, and other practitioners with human rights investigative experience or experience in case management and registry functions. Admission can also include current judicial actors or police officers who are temporarily assigned to full-time training in the PAP per a memorandum of understanding signed between OWECC-L and the Ministry of Justice.

OWECC will develop specific qualification requirements for admission to the Program, to ensure gender-balance and diversity, a minimum level of specialized skills and competencies, good conduct and integrity, commitment during and after the training and ability to transfer knowledge to peers.

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<sup>1</sup> OWECC-L Financial Report, April 2025

## **B. Methodology**

The Program will provide an advanced and specialized practical training in complex investigations and prosecutions of war crimes and crimes against humanity in the context of the Liberian civil conflicts. This includes theoretical and practical knowledge of the Liberian Constitution, international criminal law, investigations in crimes against humanity and war crimes, management and administration of evidence, witness protection officers, and building a solid understanding of the place of victims in serious crimes proceedings. The Program design will use Bloom's Taxonomy to ensure knowledge acquisition through comprehension, application, analysis, evaluation, and, ultimately, the creation of investigation and prosecution strategies tailored to the Liberian context.

The advanced aspect of the Program will ensure it builds on the experience previously acquired through training in general criminal law, including investigation and prosecution of SGBV, forensic expertise, and data management. Prior experience in these areas will be taken into account in the admission process to the Program.

The Program aims to employ innovative training tools through practical exercises and simulations without engaging in active investigation. It will respect the integrity of evidence, data security, and ethical standards and operate under the supervision of competent legal counsel. The Program methodology will encourage problem-solving, peer interaction, and real-life application of acquired notions.

## **C. Institutional frameworks**

OWECC-L will be the central coordinating and managing body, responsible for logistical arrangements, training needs assessment, participant identification and admission, curriculum development, and liaison with experts and partners. Further, OWECC-L will maintain training records, conduct follow-up evaluations, document lessons learned, and continuously assess and improve the Program's impact.

OWECC-L will identify partnership opportunities with stakeholders engaged in capacity-building in the area of investigating and prosecuting war crimes and crimes against humanity. This includes:

- UN entities with relevant regional, country, and international expertise.
- Government entities (The Legislature, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Internal Affairs, Financial Intelligence Agency, Liberia National Police Academy & Training School, Academic institutions, INCHR, LACC)
- Foreign governments.
- Regional organizations (e.g. Mano River Union, ECOWAS, the African Union, and the European Union,).
- Specialized NGOs (e.g. LNBA, WONGOSOL, GJRP, CJA, Rural Women Association of Liberia, YOUNETPO, Integrity Watch, Ducor Institue, LIMASA, Civitas Maxima and IICI).

In its engagement with these entities, OWECC-L will explore opportunities for technical support and capitalize on past and ongoing regional initiatives that could contribute to the PAP. The Program will also prioritize knowledge transfer and the development of national training capacity to ensure the Program's sustainability

#### IV. Program modules

The PAP will provide an ongoing specialized professional development in the possible following topics, with a focus on the Liberian context and the nature of war crimes and crimes against humanity committed in Liberia between 1979 and 2003. Each topic will be developed into one or more modules with specific learning objectives, practical exercises, assessment criteria and indicators to monitor the participants’ progress and the module’s impact.

1. Identifying key **evidence sources** from the Liberian conflicts, including testimonials, documentary evidence from the TRC hearings and report, NGO archives, foreign proceedings related to Liberia under universal jurisdiction, media reports, UN reports and physical and digital evidence. This will include evidence assessment, authentication procedure and chain of custody protocols.
2. Investigating **Conflict-Related Sexual Violence (CRSV)** in the context of the Liberian conflict and addressing obstacles to collecting forensic evidence and establishing evidentiary links to the conflict through establishing a chain of command, criminal patterns, criminal responsibility for instigating, ordering, encouraging, or otherwise aiding the commission of the crimes. This topic will also include addressing challenges associated with SGBV investigations (stigma, trauma, and memory), conducting trauma-informed interviews, and role-play exercises.
3. Investigating crimes related to **Children Associated with Armed Forces and Armed Groups** and the various types of association, including recruitment or use of children by armed forces or groups, exploitation, and other crimes committed against children during the Liberian conflicts.
4. Adopting **trauma-informed and gender-sensitive strategies** in investigating and prosecuting serious crimes, especially CRSV and crimes committed against children, and taking into account the psycho-social impact of the Liberian conflicts. This will entail identifying and understanding specific vulnerable groups in the Liberian conflicts, including CRSV survivors and individuals who experienced and may have even participated in the conflicts as children.
5. Addressing **security concerns** of victims and witnesses involved with conflict-related investigations, and training on risk assessments, in-court and non-procedural protective measures. Establishing protocols on handling confidential information and contact with witnesses, designing and implementing witness protection plans and conducting threat assessment. Addressing **cultural and ethnic sensitivity** and potential community fatigue or reluctance. Exercises will include developing practical skills in assessing threats and creating protection plans based on the Liberian context.
6. **Practical training** including:
  - a. Archiving publicly available evidence (digital archiving, cross-referencing and verification), case-mapping, case management, and criminal analysis exercises (including information extraction, timeline analysis, command structure, criminal patterns, linkage evidence, geospatial mapping, metadata analysis, call data records analysis), and use of non-invasive investigation techniques (drone mapping, satellite imagery and reconstruction of historical scenes).
  - b. Mock investigations, simulation exercises, training on evidence handover (chain of custody), and trial preparation using Liberia-specific challenges.
  - c. Mock interviews, trial advocacy, witness examination, and cross-examination.

- d. Addressing challenges in **investigating historic crimes**, including physical and forensic evidence, memory degradation of eyewitnesses, and witness mortality. This includes cognitive interviewing, locating dispersed witnesses, verifying and authenticating previously collected evidence for admissibility, and addressing altered narratives over time.
- e. Participation in immersion and mentorship program.
7. **Forensic investigations**, including best practices on exhumations, identification and management of simulated grave sites, crime-scene triage and prioritization, analysis of skeletal trauma, and strategies for dealing with aged or degraded remains.
8. **Prosecution strategies and case prioritization** in light of high numbers of suspected perpetrators and resource constraints to pursue all incidents. Identification of Liberia-specific prioritization criteria (e.g. high impact, most serious, most responsible, symbolic, ready cases due to previous and ongoing investigations abroad, and prioritization of historically neglected cases such as CRSV crimes and the recruitment and use of children in hostilities).
9. **Financial investigations**, international cooperation and asset recovery, including tracing illicit wealth, economic pillage and exploitation of natural resources. This will include training on financial intelligence tools, tracing money trails in complex international transactions, as well as establishing evidentiary links to the conflict, where necessary.
10. **Mutual legal assistance in criminal matters** in the context of investigation and prosecution of war crimes and crimes against humanity in Liberia. This will entail understating the various cooperation frameworks, drafting requests for assistance and activating cooperation procedures with governments and international organizations.

## V. **Timeline**

In June-August 2025, OWECC-L will identify a Curriculum Design Consultant, and identify 20 practitioners who will form a starter group for an initial consultation on training needs to establish a competency baseline and help design relevant curriculum items. Curriculum design will include relevant training tasks, mock interviews, and other exercises and scenarios. It also will include assessment surveys for progress monitoring.

The Curriculum Design Consultant will deliver modules, specific scenarios and training tasks, as well as evaluation tools for the progress of the Program. The designing will also suggest specific and measurable Program results such as criminal analysis reports, databases and archiving products.

Throughout this period, OWECC-L will continue the scoping, search, and admission process to actively include many qualified participants in the Program, while ensuring gender representation and diversity. OWECC-L will also map the previous and existing national, regional, and international initiatives that contribute to the conduct of the Program's activities.

OWECC-L will engage with the Ministry of Justice to sign a memorandum of understanding that would provide for the detachment and secondment of active investigators and prosecutors to the Program. This would ensure participants have dedicated time for training activities and are remunerated. For such individuals, the training/learning process could be supplemented by continuous relevant work and evaluation by their relevant supervisors.

OWECC-L will also sign an MOU with the Liberian National Bar Association (LNBA) to facilitate participation and training and seek partnerships for training venues with relevant national institutions.

By October 2025 at the latest, initial training sessions will commence with participants admitted to the Program. These practitioners are expected to commit to the full training cycle, actively participate in all practical exercises and assessment activities.

## **VI. Initial mapping of past and ongoing initiatives**

**The Peacebuilding Fund—The Gambia: The Peacebuilding Fund's support for the Gambia's transitional justice process** includes capacity-building components for investigating human rights violations. Their training modules on evidence collection and witness protection could be adapted for the Liberian context.

**AU Strategic Programs on Transitional Justice:** This framework provides guidelines for accountability mechanisms across Africa. OWECC-L will explore how the AUTJP's training resources and expert network can contribute to the PAP's curriculum development.

**Spotlight Initiative:** This EU-UN partnership to eliminate violence against women and girls has developed specialized training on investigating and prosecuting SGBV cases. Given the widespread sexual violence during Liberia's conflicts, the Spotlight Initiative's trauma-informed investigation methodologies and survivor-centered approaches are particularly relevant for the PAP's SGBV modules. Their experience in West Africa provides contextually appropriate training materials and expert facilitators.

**WAPIS (West Africa Police Information System):** This ECOWAS-INTERPOL initiative enhances criminal data management and cross-border cooperation. The PAP could integrate WAPIS training to strengthen participants' capabilities in managing complex investigation data and facilitating regional cooperation on war crimes cases.

**UN Joint Rule of Law Program in Liberia:** This program implemented by UNDP, OHCHR, UN Women, UNICEF, and the Government of Liberia aims to, amongst other things, strengthen institutional capacity to deliver justice services, essential gender-sensitive police and prosecutorial services, especially for SGBV survivors.

**The United Nations Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict:** created by Security Council resolution 1888 (2009) to ensure criminal accountability for perpetrators of conflict-related sexual violence.

**Justice Rapid Response:** JRR's roster of trained experts in international criminal investigations offers potential trainers for the PAP. Their rapid deployment and evidence collection methodology in post-conflict settings is particularly relevant for addressing Liberia's deteriorating evidence challenges.

**Specialized training providers:** OWECC-L has identified organizations with proven expertise in delivering accountability training:

**United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute (UNICRI):** UNICRI provides expert training, including legacy projects and technical assistance to Member States, specialized degrees and practical seminars, to legal professionals on accountability for war crimes and crimes against humanity. UNICRI also develops targeted

curricula and e-learning resources and helps transfer knowledge from international tribunals to national jurisdictions to strengthen their prosecutorial capacity.

**Institute for International Criminal Investigations (IICI):** IICI has extensive experience training investigators in international crimes. It could provide specialized modules on evidence collection, crime scene management, and witness interviewing techniques tailored to the Liberian context.

**European Union Agencies:** such as the EU Agency for Criminal Justice Cooperation (EUROJUST). It offers expertise in mutual legal assistance and cross-border investigations, critical for cases involving perpetrators or assets located outside Liberia. The EU also offers a platform for colocation of expertise, mentoring, and exchange programs.

**The Argentinian Forensic Anthropology Team (eaaf.org):** It is an NGO that provides expertise and capacity-building in forensic investigations, among others, in the context of international humanitarian law and the collective right to truth and justice. Several internationalized courts have called them tribunals and bodies (including the ICTY, ICC, EAC, the ICRC, several UN commissions of inquiry, and national authorities)

**Past initiatives and other potential partners:**

OWECC-L identified past initiatives that could have relevant training products and contact information of experienced participants and trainers.

UN West African Coast Initiative  
(<https://peacekeeping.un.org/police/initiatives/waci.shtml>)

The Pan African Lawyers Union

West African Bar Association

IDLO Programme (Strengthening the Rule of Law, Justice and Security in Liberia)

