

## 'Tangible Steps': German Parliamentary Delegation Hold Bilateral Talks in Liberia

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Foreign Minister Augustine Ngafuan in talks with visiting German parliamentarians.

Monrovia - A high level visiting Parliamentarian Delegation from the Federal Republic of Germany Wednesday held bilateral talks with Foreign Minister Augustine Kpehe Ngafuan at the Foreign Ministry. The talks were aimed at strengthening relations between both countries and took place in the conference room where the Delegation paid a courtesy call on the Minister.

The visiting delegation which constitutes members of the Committee on Human Rights from the Federal Bundestag is headed by Christoph Strasser and was accompanied by His Excellency, Dr. Bodo Erich Werner Schaff, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Federal Republic of Germany to Liberia.

Other members of the delegation include Prof.

Egon Juttner, Ute Granold, Ullrich Mebmer, Annette Groth and Kai Gehring.

Speaking at the ceremony, Foreign Minister Ngafuan welcomed the visiting team and lauded Germany for its significant assistance towards postwar reconstruction efforts of Liberia.

Minister Ngafuan recalled the historic ties of friendship subsisting between both countries described Germany as a strong bilateral partner that has been robust in supporting the country's recovery initiatives, adding that Germany has contributed to the investment climate of prewar Liberia with the establishment of the Bong Mining Company (BMC) and other German investments to boost the country's economic.

Commenting on the country's post war challenges, Foreign Minister Ngafuan stressed youth unemployment as a major propriety of the Unity Party-led administration.

Minister Ngafuan also said the building of infrastructures including roads and power-supply are part of the many challenges faced by the Liberian Government.

He emphasized that Liberia has taken tangible steps aimed at rebuilding the country, adding that the country looks forward to Germany's continued assistance to enhance national development agenda as well as to foster peace and democracy after the United Nations Mission In Liberia (UNMIL) shall have departed the country.

For his part, the head of the visiting delegation extolled Minister Ngafuan and the Liberian Government for the warm reception accorded his team since their arrival into the country and pledged his country's desire to strengthen cooperation with Liberia.

Mr. Strasser further indicated that Germany and Liberia have a longstanding traditional relationship marked by mutual cooperation and respect which he said needs to be further enhanced.

The German parliamentarian also expressed his government's concern over the disturbing news of security threats along the



Liberian-Ivorian border and called on the two countries to restore sanity to the border.

Visiting German parliamentarians with Foreign Minister Augustine Ngafuan.

In response to the regional security issue, Foreign Minister Ngafuan said Liberia has an excellent relationship with its neighbor, Cote d'Ivoire.

Disclosing the historicity of the conflict at the border, the Minister said the complication of the cross-border conflict can be attributed to the shared culture and ethnicity on both sides of the border.

According to him, Liberia is playing a pivotal role through its leadership President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf in ensuring that peace and stability return to the region, particularly the Republics of Mali and Guinea Bissau.

He named the huge influx of Ivorian refugees into Liberia, the densely forested region and the porosity of the border as factors undermining security along the border and causing the insecurity in Cote d'Ivoire. He assured the Germans of Liberia's cooperation to in restoring peace along the border.

Minister Ngafuan also briefed the German delegation on efforts made by the Liberian Government in resolving the cross-border conflict including the outcome of the recent four-party meeting held in Abidjan between both governments and the two UN peacekeeping missions in both countries, the closure of the border on the Liberian side and suspending all illicit mining along the Liberian side of the border.

Foreign Minister Ngafuan lauded the European Union for its support towards the restoration of peace to the West Africa sub-region, particularly Mali and Guinea Bissau.

The visiting German parliamentarians' visit to the country concerns asserting issues of the UN peacekeeping missions, violence against women, regional issues, fight against corruption, reconciliation, among others.