

Liberia



2016 Country Review

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Chapter 1

Country Overview

Country Overview

LIBERIA

Liberia is located in Western Africa, bordering the North Atlantic Ocean, between Cote d'Ivoire and Sierra Leone. The country was founded by freed slaves from the United States and the West Indies in 1820. More settlements in the following years culminated in the declaration of independence of the Republic of Liberia in July 1847. In Liberia's early years, the Americo-Liberian settlers periodically encountered stiff and sometimes violent opposition from indigenous Africans, who were excluded from citizenship in the new Republic until 1904. After a string of Americo-Liberian leaders, a military coup in April 1980 led by Samuel K. Doe resulted in the overthrow of the existing regime, the death of President William Tolbert, and the imposition of martial law. In 1985, civilian rule was restored in elections, and Doe retained power, although the elections were thought to be fraudulent. In December 1989, rebels led by Charles Taylor invaded from neighboring Cote d'Ivoire with the intention of overthrowing Doe's regime. A month later, the rebel forces assassinated Doe, the constitutional government was suspended, and civil war followed. A period of relative peace in 1997 allowed for elections that brought Taylor to power, but major fighting resumed in 2000. An August 2003 peace agreement ended the war and prompted the resignation of former president Charles Taylor who is facing war crimes charges in The Hague related to his involvement in Sierra Leone's civil war. After two years of rule by a transitional government, democratic elections in late 2005 brought President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf to power. The government of Liberia has since made progress in political stability and economic recovery, although the 2011 elections, in which the president was re-elected to power, were imbued by some degree of controversy.

Note: President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf won a non-electoral prize when she was named a co-recipient of the 2011 Nobel Peace Prize for her efforts in restoring peace to Liberia. In a country with widespread poverty, unemployment, and illiteracy, though, it was unlikely that this international prize would factor into the everyday experienced of Liberians.

Key Data

Key Data	
Region:	Africa
Population:	4195666
Climate:	tropical; hot, humid; dry winters with hot days and cool to cold nights; wet, cloudy summers with frequent, heavy showers.
Languages:	English (official), 20 local languages of the Niger-Congo language group
Currency:	1 Liberian dollar (L\$) = 100 cents
Holiday:	Independence Day is 26 July (1847), Tubman's Day is 29 November (1895)
Area Total:	111370
Area Land:	96320
Coast Line:	579

Liberia

Country Map



Africa

Regional Map



Chapter 2

Political Overview

History

Liberia's original inhabitants moved to the region between the 12th and the 16th centuries from northern and eastern Africa. Liberia is one of the few African countries that neither was encompassed into the sub-Saharan empires of that time, nor suffered from colonial rule in the 19th and 20th centuries. The area was not heavily populated before the arrival of the settlers in 1822 because of the dense tropical forests covering almost the entire country, although trade between Europe and coastal African groups was common between the late 15th century and the 19th century.

In the early 19th century, a private organization called The American Colonization Society was dedicated to the resettlement of freed slaves from the United States and the West Indies. The organization purchased some Grain Coast land from local Bassa tribe leaders and, by 1820, the first black American colonists arrived on the Grain Coast, which was later to become Liberia.

In 1822, the settlers proceeded down the coast and took possession of Providence Island, a tiny island between downtown Monrovia and the Port, and the annexation of surrounding lands began. Harper and Greenville were settled, and each of these settlements operated separately until 1846 when they merged in preparation for independence.

In 1847, after enjoying many years of virtually full internal self-government, the settlers proclaimed independence and Joseph Roberts was elected as the first president. Freed slaves continued to migrate to Liberia until the end of the American Civil War in 1865. The freed slaves who settled in Africa between 1820 and 1865 valued their independence very highly. This sentiment allowed them to accept and overcome the challenges they faced in their new home Liberia.

By the middle of the 19th century, however, of the 5,000 black Americans who had immigrated to Liberia, 2,000 had died of tropical diseases and several hundred returned to the U.S. The indigenous Liberians and the settled Liberians were not unified as a unit until 1904, when indigenous Liberians were granted the right to vote in Liberian elections.

The 19th and 20th centuries were also fraught with difficulties for the Liberian government who had to endure attempts at colonization by the British and the French, as well as conflict with

internal tribal rulers. By the end of the 19th century, Liberia had lost almost 50 percent of its land to the British and the French.

In addition, a conflict (supposedly engineered by the British) ensued, involving the purchase of new territories from the British in what is now called the Gahlinas War of 1871. During this altercation, a British trader, John Myers Harris, sustained losses to his operations. Under the pretext of demanding an indemnity from the Liberian government on behalf of Harris, the British government placed a claim with Liberia for 8,500 pounds sterling. Despite the Liberian government's refusal of the claim on two plausible grounds, the British Royal Navy forcibly seized the territories at issue.

In 1905, Liberia agreed to supply workers to Equatorial Guinea's cocoa plantations. The laborers received no salary until they returned to Liberia. As a result, the League of Nations published a scathing report equating the system to slavery and implicating both President Charles D.B. King, and his vice president, as part of a scandalous venture. This incident, in conjunction with bankruptcy and internal disorder, led to Liberia being placed under United States protection in 1911.

With a continually depressive economy during this period, Liberia welcomed the Firestone Corporation, a company that had been considering various global sites in its search for a cheaper source of rubber. In 1926, Firestone secured one million acres of land at an annual rent of only six cents per acre, with gross income taxed at only one percent.

Although Firestone built the largest rubber plantation in the world, and it helped to build a port, a railroad and a hydroelectric dam in Liberia, the company employed 20,000 workers and paid them very little compensation. Consequently, the League of Nations later criticized the government's complicity in Firestone's exploitation of both Liberian natural resources, and the Liberian people.

During World War II, Liberian-American relations were greatly solidified. American military bases were built in Liberia, and the United States dollar was made the official currency. Liberia joined the war against Germany, Italy and Japan, and signed the United Nations declaration in 1944.

Note on History: In certain entries, open source content from the State Department Background Notes and Country Guides have been used. A full listing of sources is available in the Bibliography.

Political Conditions

Post-Independence to Civil War

After a string of Americo-Liberian leaders, a coup d'etat in April 1980, led by Samuel K. Doe, resulted in the overthrow of the existing regime, the death of President William Tolbert, and the imposition of martial law. In 1985, civilian rule was restored in elections, and Doe retained power, although the elections were thought to be fraudulent.

In December 1989, rebels led by Charles Taylor invaded from neighboring Cote d'Ivoire, also known as Ivory Coast, with the intention of overthrowing Doe's regime. By August 1990, the instability of the country led United States Marines to rescue about 60 Americans from the United States Embassy in Monrovia. A month later, the rebel forces assassinated Doe, constitutional government was suspended, and civil war followed.

Doe was abducted by rebel forces loyal to rebel figure, Prince Johnson, in September 1990; Johnson then orchestrated the tortured and killing of Doe in 1990. Indeed, there was videotaped footage showing Johnson having a beer as he ordered Doe's ears to be cut off. Once an ally of Taylor, Johnson soon found himself out of favor with the other rebel leader, a power struggle that was accentuated when Johnson temporarily tried to claim leadership of Liberia. That attempt failed as rebel factions consolidated their support around Taylor and Johnson eventually left the country for a period of years.

In one of Africa's most brutal civil wars, tens of thousands of Liberians were killed, leading to the estimate that 10 percent of the total population had died as a result of the war. Another 80 percent of the total population fled to neighboring West African nations, and the rest were literally displaced. The war also drained the government of all its money, leaving Liberia with a tremendous debt.

Liberia's civil war was more than merely a struggle between warlords. It was, in part, a war between the American coast and the indigenous interior. The freed American slaves dominated Monrovia virtually since their first arrival. Even after decades of struggle in which the number of Americo-Liberians diminished to only a fraction of the population, they remained in control. Since Americo-Liberians were linked after World War II so closely to the United States, they came to represent modernity to Liberia. For this reason, the civil war in Liberia was also a war against modernity. The civil war thus brought a return to many customary practices. Despite Taylor's fight for tradition, the post-war era has seen a return to the pursuit of modernity. As one scholar notes, today it is more likely that you will see a Mickey Mouse mask in Monrovia than a ritually-carved,

symbolic wooden and raffia mask.

The Peace Process and Transition to Civilian Rule

American and African leaders both attempted to get the peace process back on track and to unify divided factions of the country. In 1995, the West African Peacekeeping Force was established and brokered a peace treaty in Abuja, Nigeria, setting in place an interim government and a program for return to regular civilian rule. In 1996, a further peace agreement was signed at an Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) conference. A disarmament program was also initiated under this 1996 peace agreement.

As a result of the new accord, a cease-fire was called. Sporadic fighting continued, however, exacerbated in part by the attempted assassination of Charles Taylor, as well as the attempted arrest of Taylor's rival warlord, Roosevelt Johnson. As a result of the political unrest, the United States airlifted Americans and citizens of other countries out of Liberia, in yet another evacuation since 1990.

By January 1997, the disarmament process had gone smoothly and the program was declared to be a success. Land mines were cleared and the country's roads were re-opened, allowing refugees to begin returning from neighboring countries and humanitarian aid to reach the previously inaccessible interior.

Later in 1997, civilian rule was restored and the United Nations drafted a program for the mass repatriation of Liberian refugees of the war. Military organizations were reconstructed into civilian parties, other inactive political parties re-emerged, and elections were set for later that year. Under considerable international scrutiny, presidential and legislative elections were held in July.

Taylor Elected as President

Charles Taylor was elected president by a landslide, and his political party, the National Patriotic Party, won a majority of seats in the National Assembly. The elections were judged free and fair by international election observers. While there were not significant technical violations, and although Charles Taylor emerged from the elections victorious as president, there were a number of factors contributing to his win.

First, his success was, undoubtedly, due in large part to the support he received from ECOWAS. Second, although the mechanics of elections of 1997 were deemed by international observers to be legitimately free (as noted above), Taylor's message "if you want peace, vote for me," was more than a rallying cry. It was a promise -- or threat -- that if he did not win he would return the

country to civil war. Opposition parties accused President Taylor of electoral fraud. Their claims received some validation through the president's subsequent actions as key opposition leaders, most notably the electoral runner-up Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, were charged with treason. They promptly fled the country to live in exile. Nevertheless, with peace as the most important factor in the election, Taylor's victory was assured.

The government of President Taylor faced several key challenges. First, the ongoing civil war continued to undermine security, national supremacy, and claim lives in the north of the country. Second, elections, intended to take place in 2003, began to bring about renewed political conflict. Third, Liberia continued to face structural challenges. And, fourth, the role of Liberia in the region, and its relationship to the diamond industry and the Sierra Leonean rebel force -- the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) -- continued to escalate tensions between Liberia and other countries.

The Re-emergence of Conflict

The 1997 Abuja Peace Accords ended the seven years of civil warfare. Since that time Taylor took steps to rebuild the economy and heal the wounds left from the Liberian civil war. The civil war killed more than 150,000 Liberians and displaced well over one million between 1989 and 1996. More than 20,000 of the estimated 33,000 factional fighters gave up their arms to the Cease-Fire Monitoring Group.

Despite his ascendancy to power, Charles Taylor has been criticized for his part in the civil war that deleteriously affected Liberia. Exiled citizens, as well as administrations from other countries such as Nigeria issued this critique. For his part, Taylor has made overtures suggesting his desire to appear as a peace-loving advocate of democracy in the post-war era. His critics, however, expressed the view that in order for Taylor to achieve such a reputation, the Liberian government would have to demonstrate a lasting commitment to democratization and human rights that surpass the electoral process.

To date, despite Taylor's declaration that Liberia has closed "a dark chapter" in its history after over a decade of conflict, challenges to peace have continued to emerge. For example, Liberia was supposed to have already undertaken a vast weapons destruction process. The administration did not provide access to the correct fuses for destroying landmines, and other such incidences have continued to stymie the process. War veterans of Liberia have been vocal in the criticism of the weapons destruction exercise.

Following his election in 1997, Taylor successfully ousted all former warlords from the country, squashing the lion's share of domestic opposition. While he has advocated an American-style system of democratic institutions and placed many well-meaning leaders in cabin positions, he has retained much of the real decision-making power of these offices for himself. Foreign investment

has generally been ratified only when it personally benefits the president or those closely associated with him. The legislature has made strides in gaining the power to act independently, but the army remains unprofessional. While the government laments the fact that more foreign firms have not come to Liberia, foreign observers note that, as one put it, Liberia is "a demented circus of crooks trying to outdo other crooks."

Rebel Activism Emerges

In 2001, the civil war tensions again began to mount. In March 2001, the rebel movement, Liberian United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD), carried out an offensive in the northern country of Lofa.

After four months of fighting and the displacement of nearly 50,000 persons, the tensions began to ease. However, a government offensive to retake the county capital, Voinjama, re-ignited the conflagration in early November 2001. While government forces succeeded, the conflict raged on. In November 2001 more than 2000 refugees crossed the border into neighboring Côte d'Ivoire, and the majority of the town's population fled. The conflict became so intense that Western aid groups seeking to help refugees were forced to pull out. There was some controversial evidence that former RUF strongman, Sam "Mosquito" Bokarie, was held up in Voinjama and continued to stoke the conflict in the region. ("Mosquito" operated from Sierra Leone.)

Clearly rebel actions played a significant role in instigating the conflict. However, the cleavage between the rebel forces and the government have not always been clear, and certainly, have avoided the overtly simplistic label of "tribalism" given by some of the Western media. As scholar Bill Berkeley points out, "tribalism" is no less orchestrated in Africa than in Serbia or other places where dictators use ethnicity as a machination in pursuit of power and loot. From this perspective, the culture of fear bred by President Taylor also plays a significant role in stoking identity and resource conflicts.

Elections

The elections of 1997 failed to bring about the transition to democracy that many had hoped. However, President Taylor placed high expectations on the upcoming presidential elections of 2003. In an important step, on July 26, 2001, President Taylor offered amnesty to all those who were charged with treason, specifically noting Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, stating "Wherever you are, I am the president for all. Come home, brothers and sisters, come home. This is a land of liberty." Opposition leaders did, in fact, return and immediately began questioning the viability of elections in the current political climate. In advance of the elections, they seemed to focus on the need for increased governance, the transition of patronage networks to a robust civil society, the inclusion of

economic issues more poignantly on the agenda, and the forging of a national vision.

Dr. Tipoteh, leader of the Liberian People's Party, or LPP, remarked in October 2001 that a viable electoral commission must be put in place and the threat that President Taylor would likely cancel elections must be removed. He went on to argue that free and fair elections in 2003 would require an orchestrated effort by all political parties including Charles Taylor's party, the Liberian Armed Forces would have to be reformed to ensure an appropriate security environment, transparency had to be sought in the financing of political parties, and a population census must be conducted. Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf echoed these concerns, stating that more had to be done for reconciliation. The confidence of the people was yet to be developed, and more equal opportunities for parties must be supported. She stated poignantly that she was not optimistic about the prospects of a free and fair election, given the conditions at the time.

Structural Crises

The structural crises faced by President Taylor have been multifaceted. The legislature and the justices have been embroiled in an ongoing conflict, students at the University of Liberia continue to propel civil society towards the disruption of state affairs, and the security framework founded in the Abuja Accords has become weakened and, perhaps, unviable. Most importantly, over the past twenty years, life for the average Liberian has become significantly more difficult economically. Services are sparse, much of the country has no access to safe water or electricity, and even the capital suffers from such regular power failures that most large stores and people of means have so many of their own generators that one report indicated that private generators alone could power the city.

In late March 2001, security forces stormed the campus of the University of Liberia to confront demonstrators against the Taylor government. Men were killed, women were raped, and more than 100 were injured. Skirmishes between students and state security personnel continued on the campus thereafter. In Liberia, the student community has long played a critical role in the maintenance of rule. For instance, students played a critical role in supporting Samuel K. Doe's defeat of President Tolbert. Yet, by 1984 he had marginalized his student support. On Aug. 24, 1984, Doe invaded the LU campus. When his army chief of staff, Grady D. Allison, hesitated at using excessive force in putting down what had turned into a large rebellion, Doe announced-with national television cameras recording live-"Mr. chief of staff, move or be removed!"

While hundreds of students died in a vicious attack, by November 1985, the students were supporting a group of Sierra Leonean and other mercenaries in the overthrow of Doe. In order to maintain power, Doe had to tighten his military grip. Ultimately, Charles Taylor was able to exploit that intense hold in the overthrow of Doe. Later, it appeared that students were, once again, enacting their forceful providence, this time directing their efforts against Taylor.

Strife

Immediately following the civil war, Liberia faced land and food crisis. In a 1997 editorial, former United States President Jimmy Carter stated that "within 50 miles of Monrovia none of us ever saw an animal of any kind, except for one dead cat that was being offered for sale." In 1998 and 1999 food became available in Liberia, but prices were untenable. Professional salaries average a mere \$25 per month whereas rice (a food staple) during this period cost approximately \$40 per 50 kilo bag-about enough to feed a family of four for one month. While prices have leveled off in recent years, they have not decreased and salaries have not augmented to any significant degree. As Taylor has been unable to confront this very real crisis, his grip on power has slipped. He has reacted, like so many self-seeking rulers, by relying on force instead of legitimacy.

Human rights abuses also continue to challenge Taylor's Liberia. Fighting in Lofa country in 1999 led Amnesty International to charge Taylor with using his military as a weapon of fear and oppression. While his party, National Front of Liberia, that brought Taylor to power was supposed to have been disarmed following the 1997 peace agreement, it never actually happened. As a result, forces loyal to president predominate throughout the countryside. Journalists have been detained on politically-motivated charges, and human rights defenders, such as members of the non-governmental children's organization FOCUS, have been threatened and harassed. Human Rights Watch has argued that Liberians continued to fight regular harassment, extortion, mistreatment and torture by both police and the armed forces.

On Feb. 21, 2001, four Liberian journalists were detained. Joseph Bartuah, Jerome Dalieh, Abdulai Dukuly and Bobby Tapson were all charged with espionage. The West African Journalists Association and the Liberian Contemporary Opposition, or LCO, joined with human rights organizations to condemn this charge which, following conviction, carries with it the penalty of death. The LCO, in fact, used this event to rally support for a news blackout, clergy, civil service and teachers strike, the freeing of political prisoners, and the more vocalized support of Liberians living in Diaspora against the Taylor regime.

International Condemnation

By April 2001, the situation in Liberia appeared to be becoming more dire. At work were both exogenous and domestic forces. In December 2000, the United Nations released a document outlining the findings on a fact-finding mission to Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea. The document detailed evidence that President Taylor had an ongoing relationship with the Sierra Leone rebel faction, the RUF and he was selling Sierra Leonean diamonds -- so called "blood diamonds" or "conflict diamonds" -- through the De Beers corporation in Monrovia and passing them off as

Liberian diamonds. In evidence, the document noted that according to official figures in 1998 total Liberian diamond exports totaled 8,000 carats valued at US \$800,000. In the same year, however, "Belgium recorded imports from Liberia by 26 companies totaling 2.56 million carats, valued at US \$217 million." The diamond giant, De Beers, defended its purchasing of blood diamonds, and by extension Liberia, stating that it marked Russian diamonds as Liberian in an effort to avoid the three percent in taxes levied against diamonds from European sources. The international community, however, did not accept this explanation.

The reaction of the international community was swift. The United States, the United Kingdom, and several partners called for United Nations sanctions against Liberia. In March 2001, the United Nations passed a resolution authorizing sanctions against Liberia.

The terms of the sanctions, however, were not cause for great despair in Monrovia. First, Liberia was given two months to prove to the United Nations that it has halted the sale of Sierra Leonean diamonds and severed its relationship with the RUF. This gave Taylor the opportunity to close the RUF office in Monrovia. RUF faction leader Foday Sankoh had been taken into custody by United Nations forces back in 2000, but the other RUF faction leader, Sam "Mosquito" Bokarie (mentioned above) had the opportunity to apply for Liberian citizenship and has always moved easily across the borders in the region. Second, the enactment of sanctions are limited. There are certainly other, less direct, avenues through which Taylor can channel illicit Sierra Leonean diamonds thus skirting sanctions. In addition, the sanctions do not affect Taylor's great source of personal wealth, the Liberian timber industry.

United States Congressman Ed Royce and United States Senator Russ Feingold joined with other United States observers and the French government in arguing that the sanctions do not go far enough and that Taylor has become an expert at using treaties and limited sanctions as a trap for his enemies. They challenge Jimmy Carter and other Taylor advocates as well-intentioned victims of Taylor's trickery. There is also significant support for Taylor from the Pan-Africanist community, but their position has been presented as that of good-intentioned leaders who have been hoodwinked by a formidable leader. Some support has, undoubtedly, been bought with the promise of diamond riches.

Senator Feingold joined with a bipartisan committee comprised of Senators Richard Durbin, Judd Gregg and Michael Dewine to introduce the Senate version of the Clean Diamonds Act (S. 1084) in November 2001. They argued that the United States purchases 65 percent of the world's diamonds and, thus, domestic legislation could play an important role in curtailing the sale of blood diamonds. They scolded the House of Representatives for defeating an earlier bill on the topic.

On Nov.28, 2001, the United States House of Representatives passed HR 2722 "to implement effective measures to stop trade in conflict diamonds, and for other purposes." Critics argued that in order to protect against a presidential veto the bill became so watered down that its effects had

become insignificant. Further criticism focuses on Section 4.b.3., which stated that paper and packaging must indicate that they are not diamonds procured through illegitimate means. No mechanisms of control, however, were mentioned. Finally, critics pointed to Section 6 of the bill, which discussed enforcement. This section indicated that if someone was caught with blood diamonds, the diamonds would be seized and the perpetrators would be subject to the United States justice system. No specific indication of the crime that would be violated was mentioned. As a result, critics argued that the successful enactment of the bill by legislative bodies and the executive branch would lead to no more than a hand slap for a deterrent.

Political Developments (2002)

As government forces were having difficulty holding back rebels who were gaining control over cities including Key, just 40 km north of Monrovia, displaced persons were numbering in the tens of thousands. As such, President Taylor, in February 2002, declared a state of emergency. He blamed the state of emergency on the arms embargo, which he claimed gave an unfair advantage to the rebel movement (LURD). Taylor also called on the international community, especially the United States and the United Kingdom, to intervene in the conflict on the government's behalf.

Shortly thereafter, there were reports of human rights abuses and a crackdown on civil liberties under the heightened state of emergency. Amnesty International and other human rights groups reported young men and boys being forced to fight with government soldiers; numerous cases of arbitrary arrests and detention of alleged LURD supporters were reported; the independent newspaper, *The Analyst*, was shut down and persons critical of the state of emergency were arrested including journalists, a newspaper editor, members of the Human Rights Center of Liberia and the head of the Justice of Peace Commission. In late April 2002, President Taylor banned political rallies, threatening to arrest those who participated in demonstrations. Furthermore, IRIN reported that critics of Taylor were suspicious that the state of emergency had been staged by the Liberian government to force the United Nations into lifting the year-old arms embargo.

In March 2002, for the first time since the uprising in 2001, LURD leaders and government officials met in Abuja, Nigeria for the first direct peace talks organized by ECOWAS. A reconciliation meeting between the warring parties was scheduled for mid-2002.

In April, a panel of United Nations experts reviewed the arms embargo and sanctions placed on Liberia and decided they should be kept in place. The experts also recommended a ban on the sale of arms to LURD.

It appeared that Charles Taylor might be heading down a similar path to his predecessor. There was growing intolerance on the part of the government. Security forces were deployed more regularly, and support for the once populist government within civil society was at an all-time low. As of mid-2002, Taylor's reaction to challenges to his authority from within followed those of

Doe's as he tightened his grip on military power.

At root in the Liberian conflict continued to be the disparity in resource distribution between a small number of elites and the rest of the population. Under Tolbert, those resources were controlled by Americo-Liberians at the expense of "indigenous" Liberians. Conflict was ethno-political in nature, though perhaps derived, at least in part, from Tolbert's efforts to encourage ethno-marginalism. Under Doe and now under Taylor, the advantage is held by the few who control the use of force. Some scholars have argued that the Taylor will continue on this path until the reasons for his original success are abrogated. Following this argument, the state of Liberia originally collapsed because the new post-Cold War environment forced the government to work with creditors. When, in compliance with IMF demands, leaders began dismantling the bloated bureaucracy, it also was forced to dismantle the old patronage networks that held the power structure in place. If leaders had turned merely to force, an anarchic condition similar to Somalia in which warlords and sub-warlords vie for power would likely have been the result.

Instead, it appears that Liberia's mineral wealth has led it to its current outcome. In search of new alliances, leaders have turned from the ethno-political patronage networks of the Tolbert era to international private firms, which, in turn, became surrogate providers of bureaucratic services in resource-rich areas. For example, the South African-based company Executive Outcomes was hired to maintain security in the face of challenges to mineral extraction. Well-endowed regions benefited from increased services by these private firms and less-endowed regions were left to stagnate. If this argument holds, then in order for Taylor to succeed in improving development and democracy he will need to dismantle the new international patronage networks and build new bureaucracies that service the country more or less evenly. Government will have to become less an exercise in resource extraction and more a system of institutions charged with managing state affairs. Given the constraints on bureaucracy-building imposed on Liberia by the Bretton Woods institutions (World Bank and IMF) and, more critically, Taylor's propensity towards quality power-management rather than quality governance, it seems unlikely that Liberia will employ the mechanism of the 2003 elections to deepen its democracy unless Taylor's ability to control the use of force is abrogated.

Political Developments (2003)

Following a tour of West Africa, the head of the United Nations refugee agency called for the resignation of Liberia's leader, Charles Taylor, from office. The United Nations official observed that the cycles of violence plaguing the western region of Africa had been spurred and exacerbated by the human rights abuses and gun trading orchestrated by the Liberian government leader. By 2003, multiple battlefields had emerged and the security situation in West Africa devolved.

The rebel group (mentioned above), Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD),

then became ensconced in a battle aimed at removing Liberian President Charles Taylor from office.

As LURD rebels advanced toward Liberia's capital city of Monrovia, fighting intensified throughout the first part of 2003. In the capital city itself, Liberian civilians attempted to flee to other parts of the country or across the borders, however, rebel forces blockaded roads, thus making it difficult for people to find escape routes. The number of displaced persons were estimated as being between 300,000 and 700,000. Many remaining civilians took refuge in a stadium in the capital city. Meanwhile, some 500 foreign nationals were evacuated from Monrovia and taken to a French ship off the coast, and French forces surrounded the European Union compound to secure the property.

By mid-June 2003, government sources stated that Liberian troops were resisting efforts by rebels to control the outskirts of the capital city of Monrovia; rebel forces were being driven toward the border with neighboring Sierra Leone. (No independent confirmation of this claim was provided since movement of reporters was highly restricted.) Government forces promised to continue to fight rebels until a ceasefire was established; meanwhile, rebels intermittently called for the resignation of President Taylor from office.

In a major turn of events, on June 17, 2003, Liberian President Charles Taylor committed to step down under a cease-fire agreement with rebel groups. The cease-fire agreement provided a 30-day deadline by which a comprehensive peace deal and transitional government would have to be established. Despite this agreement, government troops and rebels continued to be involved in skirmishes across Liberia. Taylor's government in Liberia also alleged that forces from Sierra Leone and Guinea were helping rebel efforts. The governments of the respective countries denied the allegations. For their part, LURD forces alleged that they had been attacked by government forces in clear violation of the cease-fire.

Since the announcement of the cease-fire and the news that Taylor would step down from office, the Liberian leader shifted his position. President Taylor said that he did not intend to step down until his term ended in 2004; he also predicted that he might run for re-election. Clarifying the contradictory messages on the matter, Taylor emphasized the fact that he had said he was "prepared to step aside" and he had not unequivocally said that he would step down from office permanently. The terms of the cease-fire agreement, however, expressly exclude him from a position of political power. Faced with these details, Taylor explained that he commanded substantial support across the country. Soon thereafter, approximately 500 people were killed in fighting, followed by an uneasy calm in the capital city of Monrovia.

A few weeks later, Liberia's main rebel group, LURD, advanced again toward the capital city of Monrovia, but were stopped by government forces from entering the city center. Meanwhile, President Charles Taylor accepted an offer of asylum from the government of Nigeria and said that

he would step down from office under a cease-fire agreement with the rebel group. No timetable was set for Taylor's resignation although the Liberian leader said that he would only step down if there was an orderly transition of power. In the face of the president's reluctance to resign -- despite the provisions of the cease-fire -- LURD rebels decided to intensify their efforts to force the removal of Taylor from office.

In the chaos that surrounded the advance of the the rebels, mortar bombs exploded across Monrovia, even smashing into the United States embassy compound. Embassy staff, media journalists and civilians who had taken refuge, were moved down to the basement area for safety reasons. Evacuations of foreign nationals in other parts of the city were facilitated with the arrival of United States marines who had been called in to protect the embassy. Across the city, the death toll rose by another 100. A week later, fighting between LURD and government forces increased around the area of two key bridges in Monrovia. Another rebel group entered the Liberian port city of Buchanan.

On Aug. 11, 2003, President Charles Taylor finally resigned from office and surrendered power to his successor, Vice President Moses Blah. After several commitments to step down from office, which were repeatedly reneged upon, Taylor resigned, went into exile in Nigeria, and leaders of neighboring African countries said that an era of bloodshed was over.

The country's main rebel groups said that they would not relax their efforts until Taylor left the country. Rebel groups had managed to consolidate their control over much of the country, with the exception of the downtown areas of the capital city of Monrovia. Rebels as well as anti-Taylor factions referred to this area of the country as "Taylor's Federal Republic of Central Monrovia." Rebels also expressed their derision for the new Liberian president, whom they claim is an ally of Taylor. They demanded a neutral candidate lead a transitional government, and they called for new elections.

By August 2003, with most outstanding issues resolved, it was expected that Liberia's warring governmental and rebel factions would sign a power-sharing agreement aimed at ending several years of conflict. LURD was demanding that it be represented in government in the office of the Vice Presidency. International mediators, however, threatened to abandon the talks if LURD continued to press for their demands. Moses Blah left the discussions in protest. LURD backed away from their demand saying that they wanted to show that they were not simply interested in grabbing positions of power.

The power-sharing agreement that was ultimately established provided for the establishment of a transitional government in October 2003, followed by democratic elections in two years. A democratically elected government will be inaugurated in 2006. Meanwhile, provisions for and access to humanitarian aid organizations were agreed upon. Moses Blah was to function as Taylor's replacement until the transitional entity went into effect in October; at that time, the

transitional entity was headed by a Monrovia businessman, Gyude Bryant.

Meanwhile, the first contingent of peacekeepers from West Africa arrived in the Liberian capital of Monrovia in early August 2003. Local Liberians cheered the arrival of the peacekeeping forces. The soldiers' presence has been aimed at ending several months of conflict between government forces and Liberian main rebel groups. The United States deployed three warships off the coast of Liberia and has provided \$10 million to fund peacekeeping operations. Because of the two countries' historic relationship, there have been calls for the United States be involved in the Liberian crisis, however, the United Nations resolution authorizing the deployment of a regional peacekeeping force does not mention United States forces.

Since the start of the fighting, the death toll rose steadily and was estimated to be one thousand, while the number of people injured numbered several thousand. Those displaced by the fighting number in the hundreds of thousands. With food and water running short, there were increasing fears of a humanitarian crisis.

Also in 2003, President Taylor became the second sitting world leader to be indicted for war crimes (the first was Slobodan Milosevic of the former Yugoslavia). After years of trans-border war and bloodshed across West Africa, the Liberian leader was indicted for his involvement in the vicious war that plagued Sierra Leone and drew in many neighboring countries.

The United Nations also ordered that Taylor's bank accounts in Switzerland be frozen. The prosecutor for the Special Court on Sierra Leone noted that the money in the Swiss bank accounts might function as evidence of the criminal activities alleged by the court. Spokespersons from the United Nations Special Court on Sierra Leone have maintained their stance that Taylor will not be able to evade the charges or the court case against him. Nevertheless, with Taylor seeking asylum in Nigeria, he would effectively escape international prosecution for war crimes.

Political Developments (late 2003 to 2004)

The power-sharing, transitional government took power in October 2003 with Gyude Bryant as its head. A 21-person cabinet was installed with representatives from the armed factions and the former government. LURD representative, George Dweh, was elected speaker of the Assembly. Perhaps augured by the fighting between LURD forces and the government just a week before the transitional government took power, problems arose immediately. In November, LURD leader, Sekou Conneh, called for Bryant to step down after the LURD list of ministers was not approved. Bryant ended the conflict by saying he would reconsider his decision.

The transitional government was also threatened by a power-struggle within the LURD. In January 2004, LURD commanders claimed that Sekou Conneh was no longer their leader. Conneh dismissed these claims. However, later that month, Conneh's wife, Aisha, came out and

claimed control of the LURD and said that she would work with Bryant to bring peace to Liberia. The struggle was short-lived, however, as Aisha later renounced her claims and Sekou was back at the helm.

Bryant's government also faces the enormous challenge of maintaining day-to-day operations. The infrastructure of Monrovia has been devastated by the civil war and looting and destruction have left most government buildings without the bare necessities for operation. Government offices are also occupied by Liberians who have been displaced by the fighting.

In September 2003, the United Nations approved a plan for a peacekeeping force of 15,000 to monitor the peace agreement and disarm the country's 40,000 fighters; once in place, the force was expected to be the largest peacekeeping force ever. The 3500 West African peacekeepers, Ecomil, were then placed under the control of the United Nations. Eight-hundred Bangladeshi troops arrived in October. Until the United Nations forces arrived, the West African peacekeepers had not been able to respond to violations of the ceasefire in the outlying areas of Liberia, due to ongoing violence in Monrovia. With more peacekeepers coming into the country, the force gradually moved into the surrounding areas. In early 2004, the United Nations called for, and received, pledges of \$500 million for the rebuilding of Liberia.

The disarmament program got off to a shaky start. With a plan to offer \$300, food, and counseling to each fighter turning in weapons, the response was initially overwhelming. However, disagreements over the amount to be paid resulted in violent displays by some fighters. The disarmament was then postponed to allow for an information campaign to educate the fighters on the process and its benefits. After a few false starts, the disarmament program resumed in April 2004. By the end of that month, 20,000 fighters had turned in their weapons. However, in early May, riots broke out when some fighters, apparently confused about the terms of the disarmament, realized they would not receive the money all at once. Fighters were to receive half of the money up front and the other half when they had returned to their home villages.

In October 2004, the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) announced it had begun its repatriation of 100,000 Liberian refugees.

Political Developments (2005)

In early May 2005, as the head of the United Nations peacekeeping force in Liberia - Jacques Klein - ended his tenure, he said that more progress could have been made if the mission had been afforded a stronger mandate. In this regard, Klein said it would have been preferable to have had the United Nations take charge of the administration of the Liberian government. Yet Klein oversaw what became the largest peacekeeping operation by the United States in the world. Indeed, perhaps in part due to his strong-handed approach of parading troops visibly in the streets, after over two decades of civil war and chaos, Liberia has found some degree of peace. Still,

government corruption -- one of the original causes of the war -- remained unresolved. As Klein left his mission, he called for the United Nations to retain a mission in Liberia until the close of 2006.

In June 2005, the United Nations extended a ban on the exportation of Liberian diamonds -- a key source of funding used to finance the civil war. The United Nations also called on Liberia to freeze Charles Taylor's assets. Both measures were oriented toward improving Liberia's record within the global community in its post-war period. To this end, and also in an effort to stamp out corruption, Liberia later signed a concord under which its finances would be administered by an international body.

Elections of 2005

In August 2005, Liberian football hero George Weah was given permission by the country's election commission to contest the presidential election. In this way, Weah was named as one of 22 candidates cleared to run in the election contest scheduled for October 2005. Weah's inclusion in the list was a personal victory for the man whose credentials had been questioned on the basis of his citizenship. Opponents had launched a complaint against Weah, which suggested that his French citizenship barred him from standing for election. The international football star, who had played for Paris St. Germaine, adopted French citizenship in 1993. The Liberian election authorities concluded that his French citizenship did not prohibit Weah from running for office in his homeland of Liberia and dismissed the complaint.

With nothing stopping him from contesting the election, Weah was then regarded as a favorite to win the country's highest office. Weah had been chosen by the political party, the Congress for Democratic Change, as its presidential contender. Weah has said that peace is his priority for Liberia. In addition to Weah, the two other main presidential contenders were Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf of the Unity Party, a technocrat from the World Bank, who ran against former Liberian leader Charles Taylor in the 1997 election, and former Senate leader, Charles Brumskine.

Voters were expected to choose a successor to the transitional president, Gyude Bryant, who assumed office in 2003, succeeding Taylor in the aftermath of Liberia's long and bloody civil war. Legislative elections were also to be held for the Senate and the lower house.

October 2005 marked Liberia's first democratic elections following the end of its 14-year long civil war. Observers lauded the smooth voting process, which was free from both fraud and violence. United Nations contingents had aided the election process by delivering paper ballots to polling stations in remote areas via helicopter. Turnout was reported to have been high.

The October 2005 elections were intended to settle the question of who would lead Liberia in its

post-war years at the executive level and also within the bicameral legislative chambers. Early election results suggested that former football star, George Weah, was running ahead of World Bank technocrat Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf in the presidential race. Charles Brumskine trailed in third place, but still ahead of the remaining 19 candidates. Unless one of the presidential contenders secured a majority, a second round of voting was anticipated at the close of October 2005.

Most Liberians interviewed as they waited in long lines to vote said they were hoping for a peaceful future after many years of violence and brutality.

Following the second round of voting for the presidential election, Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, known as "the Iron Lady" appeared to be in lead to win the election and, as such, was set to become Africa's first elected female leader. With very few votes still being counted, Johnson-Sirleaf carried 59 percent of the votes cast and her rival, Weah held 41 percent of the votes cast.

Weah also made charges about fraud, ballot tampering and voter intimidation during the run-off election and filed an official complaint over the matter. Weah's supporters also stood en masse outside the party headquarters for the Congress for Democratic Change chanting, "No Weah, no peace." The National Elections Commission, which Weah also criticized, responded by saying they would promptly investigate his claims.

Nevertheless, the head of the United Nations mission on the ground in Liberia asserted that the election had been fair, peaceful and transparent. An unidentified diplomat stated that although there had been occasional incidences of irregularities, the overall election had gone smoothly. As well, international observers from the United Nations, European Union and the Carter Centre in the United States expressed the belief that the election was mostly free and fair.

A day after Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf claimed victory, Weah's supporters took to the streets to protest. Clashes with United Nations troops stationed in Liberia left a few people injured as forces fired tear gas at the crowd located close to the United States embassy in the capital city of Monrovia.

For his part, Weah asked his supporters demonstrating in the streets to retrain themselves from violence saying, "But the streets of Monrovia do not belong to violent people. Do not, in the name of peace, go on the streets... Leave the streets of Monrovia; people are frightened. They want no more war." Instead, Weah opted for legal action with his party filing a "writ of prohibition with the Supreme Court of to intervene and stop the counting process." The objective of this action was to stop the vote counting so that Johnson-Sirleaf could not be officially declared president.

Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, however, called the allegations of fraud and vote-rigging "absurd" and expressed little anxiety over the crowds of protestors. In an interview with British television she said, "Once they have got this out of their system and realize I will be a leader for all Liberians, they will settle down and we will work together for the good of our country."

Meanwhile, parliamentary elections were also held in October 2005. In the Senate, Coalition for the Transformation of Liberia or COTOL took the plurality of seats. National Patriotic Party or NPP secured four seats. Weah's Congress for Democratic Change or CDC, Johnson-Sirleaf's Unity Party or UP and Brumskine's Liberty Party or LP took three seats respectively. The Alliance for Peace and Democracy or APD also took three seats. The rest went to various others. In the House of Representatives, the CDC had 15 seats, LP took 9, UP secured 8, COTOL 8 garnered, APD acquired 5, NPP won 4, and others took the remaining seats at stake numbering 15 in total.

Liberia's New Leader

On Jan. 16, 2006, Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf was sworn in as the new Liberian president and Africa's first female elected leader. The swearing-in ceremony also formalized Johnson-Sirleaf's position as Liberia's first elected head of state since the end of the war in 2003. Johnson-Sirleaf won the November run-off election against Liberian soccer star, George Weah, by garnering an overwhelming 59 percent of the votes cast.

On the eve of her inauguration, she promised to restore hope after years of civil war and acknowledged the enormity of the task in front of her. In these regards, she said: "I am excited by the potential of what I represent - the aspirations and expectations of women in Liberia, African women and women all over the world. I am also humbled, humbled by the enormity of the challenge we face." She also noted that law and order were the main challenges facing Liberia. Johnson-Sirleaf has gained significant technocratic experience as a former World Bank economist and has been nicknamed the "Iron Lady."

Her inauguration took place under a cloak of tremendous security provided by Liberian police and around 500 United Nations peacekeepers, and with the added benefit of two United States Navy warships stationed off Liberia's coast. The ceremony itself was a modest affair since most of the capital city of Monrovia lies in a fairly dilapidated state after 14 years of war. Nevertheless, attendees included United States First Lady Laura Bush; United States Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice; President Thabo Mbeki of South Africa; President Abdoulaye Wade of Senegal; President John Kufuor of Ghana; President Laurent Gbagbo of Ivory Coast and the Foreign Minister of China.

In July 2006, as Liberia was preparing for official independence day celebrations, a fire broke out at the presidential complex of President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf. The fire was apparently located on the fourth floor of the Executive Mansion and was extinguished before anyone was hurt. The incident squashed the independence celebration, which was to be hosted by the president and attended by several heads of states from neighboring countries. Indeed, the leaders of Ghana,

Cote d'Ivoire and Sierra Leone were at the premises for the occasion.

There was no cause immediately stated for the fire, however, officials said that there would be an investigation. The fire began in an area of the Executive Mansion where the president's office was situated, and occurred shortly after President Johnson-Sirleaf turned on streets lights --via a generator -- in the capital city of Monrovia. It was intended to be a momentous occasion in a country that has not had electrical power for 15 years. Only the day before, water was made available via pipes in the capital for the first time in several years. Meeting these basic infrastructural needs had been one of the priorities of President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf when she came to power.

Charles Taylor Revisited

In March 2006, Liberia issued a formal request for the extradition of deposed leader Charles Taylor, who was living in political exile in Nigeria. If the request was granted, Taylor would then be sent on to Sierra Leone, in accordance with instructions given to United Nations peacekeepers in Liberia to transfer him to the Special Court for Liberia if he ever set foot on Liberian soil again.

After consulting with other members of the African community, Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo said that Liberia's new government was free to take Taylor into custody. In the past, President Obasanjo refused to send Taylor to Sierra Leone, saying he would only extradite the deposed leader if such a request came from an elected Liberian leader. Clearly, the election of Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf as the new Liberian leader in 2005 and her accession to power in January 2006 changed the political landscape in some measure.

One of the spokespersons for Taylor's National Patriotic Party said that the possible extradition of their leader were in breach of the 2003 peace deal, which ended 14 years of civil war in Liberia. In the view of Taylor and his supporters, exile was a crucial aspect of the agreement. Human rights observers, however, have countered that Taylor himself has rendered the agreement void by violating its provisions in his attempts to influence Liberian politics.

The situation intensified when Desmond de Silva, the Chief Prosecutor of the United Nations-backed tribunal in Sierra Leone, warned that the government of Nigeria should quickly detain Taylor in order to ensure he did not flee before he facing trial for war crimes. Echoing this warning, Richard Dicker of Human Rights Watch urged the government of Nigeria to tighten security around Taylor's home in order to preclude his possible escape.

Just after these warnings were issued, news emerged suggesting that Taylor was missing and had apparently tried to elude the authorities, in anticipation of his possible extradition. Nigeria faced grave criticism for allowing Taylor to flee. Nonetheless, hours later, Taylor was caught and sent

back to Liberia. Once there, in the capital city of Monrovia, he was taken in the United Nations custody and transferred to the United Nations-backed war crimes tribunal in Sierra Leone. In April 2005, Taylor made his first appearance in the court where he entered a plea of "not guilty."

In June 2006, the United Nations agreed to transfer former Liberian leader, Charles Taylor, from prison in Sierra Leone to The Hague where he was expected to face trial for crimes against humanity. The Dutch government had said that it would host Taylor's trial so long as he would be imprisoned in another country if he was convicted. Then, the British agreed to allow Taylor to serve out a possible prison sentence in the United Kingdom, if he was found guilty after facing trial in The Hague.

The transfer from custody in Sierra Leone to The Hague had been precipitated upon the notion that placing Taylor on trial in West Africa would only lead to the destabilization of the region. Indeed, Liberian President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf expressed worry that placing Taylor on trial in West Africa might result in renewed chaos.

June 2007 saw the start of the war crimes trial of Taylor in The Hague. At issue were 11 charges of war crimes, crimes against humanity, and violations of international law at the United Nations-backed Special Court for Sierra Leone. These crimes and violations included specific charges of cannibalism, murder, rape, sexual slavery, enslavement, use of child soldiers, torture, looting, the hacking of limbs by Sierra Leone rebels, as well as the sale of weapons and ammunition in exchange for so-called "blood" or "conflict" diamonds. The trial was expected to last a year and a half.

Taylor boycotted the first day of the trial at The Hague a year later, but the judge ordered that the case carry on in his absence. Since 2007, the prosecution has detailed a litany of brutal and gruesome crimes committed at the behest of Taylor.

With Taylor on trial for war crimes at the international court in The Hague, the government of Liberia commenced its efforts to seize his assets. The move, which was legally set forth in legislation to be passed in parliament, included provisions for the seizure of the assets of Taylor's family and associates. The proposed legislation also sought assistance from other countries in "tracking, freezing and confiscating the funds, properties and assets" of Taylor and his inner circle, which have been held abroad under a United Nations order in 2004. In July 2007, the legislation was submitted for discussion in parliament, prior to passage. Some parliamentarians characterized it as being problematic since Taylor was not yet convicted of any crimes.

January 2008 saw the war crimes trial of former President Charles Taylor resume at The Hague after a six-month delay. Proceedings had been halted as a result of Taylor's firing of his defense lawyer and his boycott of the opening of the trial.

In the early part of 2009, President Johnson-Sirleaf acknowledged to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission that she had supported former President Charles Taylor when he launched the 14-year civil war in 1989. She noted that her backing of Taylor was a grave error.

In July 2009, former Liberian President Charles Taylor's lawyer -- Courtenay Griffiths-- was set to begin the defense. Griffiths said in an interview with the Associated Press, "His case is that he was not involved... That he was a peacemaker, not a warmonger." Griffiths was set to make an opening statement on July 13, 2009 while Taylor was expected to testify in court the day after on July 14, 2009.

In February 2011, former Liberian President Charles Taylor and his lawyer, Courtenay Griffiths, walked out of the court during closing arguments of Taylor's war crimes trial at The Hague. The prosecution was carrying out its oral submission, paving the way for the defense to commence its own arguments. However, the court refused to accept the final trial brief since it was submitted after the Jan. 14, 2011, deadline. The Special Court for Sierra Leone at The Hague instructed Griffiths to apologize for his behavior and return to the legal proceedings, or risk sanctions. But a day later on Feb. 9, 2011, neither Taylor nor Griffiths appeared in court, prompting the trial to be adjourned temporarily. While the trial was set to resume on Feb. 11, 2011, Griffiths told reporters that he would not be in court because of the refusal to accept his late legal brief. In an interview with the BC, he said, "If the appeals chamber take the view that the judges acted perfectly reasonably in refusing to accept our final brief then effectively I have no further role in these proceedings." The scenario has created something of a legal impasse and with the court perhaps unable to go forward with the schedule for closing oral arguments.

By March 2011, Taylor's defense team won its appeal to file its final brief. Then, once proceedings had resumed, Griffiths -- the lawyer for Liberia's former President Charles Taylor -- asserted that the prosecution had turned the war crimes trial into a "21st century form of neo-colonialism." This assertion was made during his closing arguments at the special war crimes trial at The Hague. Griffiths argued that justice should be applied fairly and equally; given those parameters, he asked why Libyan leader Colonel Muammar Qadhafi was not on trial at The Hague. Left unsaid was the fact that Qadhafi had, indeed, been referred to the International Criminal Court for an investigation into crimes against humanity. Now in its final phase, the trial would determine if Taylor was guilty of the long list of crimes detailed below.

Editor's Note:

Former Liberian President Charles Taylor has been accused of supporting the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) rebels in neighboring Sierra Leone in their 11-year campaign of brutality and bloodshed that left thousands dead and even more maimed. The conflict also gained world attention largely because of the RUF practice of abducting youth to be child soldiers, as well as the clandestine sale of "conflict" or "blood" diamonds to fund the civil war. Indeed, the RUF carried

out a vicious campaign of terror in which rape, murder, and the hacking off the limbs of victims, were commonplace tactics.

In June 2006, the United Nations agreed to transfer former Liberian leader, Charles Taylor, from prison in Sierra Leone to The Hague where he was expected to face trial for crimes against humanity. The Dutch government had said that it would host Taylor's trial so long as he would be imprisoned in another country if he was convicted. Then, the British agreed to allow Taylor to serve out a possible prison sentence in the United Kingdom, if he was found guilty after facing trial in The Hague.

In the realm of jurisprudence, Taylor was faced with 11 charges of war crimes, crimes against humanity, and violations of international law at the United Nations-backed Special Court for Sierra Leone. These crimes included specific charges of cannibalism, murder, rape, sexual slavery, enslavement, use of child soldiers, torture, looting, the hacking of limbs by Sierra Leone rebels, as well as the sale of weapons and ammunition in exchange for so-called "blood" or "conflict" diamonds.

Taylor's trial at The Hague commenced in 2007 with the former Liberian leader boycotting the opening arguments. Over 100 witnesses spoke before the court in the international court. As of the first part of 2011, the prosecutors were offering closing arguments in Taylor's trial at The Hague. Ultimately, if he is convicted, Taylor would serve his prison sentence in the United Kingdom.

Primer on Presidential and Parliamentary Elections in Liberia

Presidential and parliamentary elections were scheduled to be held in Liberia on Oct. 11, 2011. At stake was the presidency; if a candidate did not win an outright majority in the first round, a second round would be held on Nov. 8, 2011. Also at stake were all seats in the 64-member House of Representatives and half of the seats in the 30-member Senate. The election was to be overseen by the Liberian National Elections Commission (NEC).

At the presidential level, incumbent President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, who was elected in 2005 and inaugurated into office in January 2006, was seeking another term. Johnson-Sirleaf was a Harvard-educated economist who earned the distinction of becoming the first democratically elected female president in Africa.

Also contesting the election was Liberty Party leader Charles Brumskine. The Congress for Democratic Change (CDC) nominated Winston Tubman, the nephew of former President William Tubman, as its candidate for the presidency. Earlier, in September 2010, Prince Johnson -- one of Liberia's most notorious and violent warlords -- was cleared to contest the country's upcoming presidential election. The National Elections Commission explained that Prince Johnson's party, the National Union for Democratic Progress, met the constitutional requirements to contest in the 2011

elections.

Clearly, the government commission's quest to bring Johnson to trial for crimes against humanity was not a factor in the decision. Prince Johnson's most significant claim to fame was the fact that he tortured and killed the country's former President Samuel K. Doe in 1990. Indeed, there was videotaped footage showing Johnson having a beer as he ordered Doe's ears to be cut off. Once an ally of former President Charles Taylor, who was now on trial at The Hague for war crimes, Johnson soon fell out of favor with Taylor. The power struggle between the two notorious rebel figures was accentuated when Johnson tried to claim leadership of Liberia in 1990. That attempt failed as rebel factions consolidated their support around Taylor and Johnson eventually left the country for a period of years.

Given the country's dark recent history, marked by the ravages of a brutal civil war fought by child soldiers and involving cannibalism, the resurgence of Prince Johnson on Liberia's now peaceful landscape was being viewed by human rights activists as worrying.

Note that in mid-September 2011, Liberia's opposition Movement for Progressive Change (MPC) was attempting to legally block a number of leading candidates for the presidency from contesting the election. The MPC argued that incumbent President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, Charles Brumskine of the Liberty Party, and Winston Tubman of the CDC, should be respectively disqualified since they did not meet residency requirements to contest the presidency, set forth in the constitution. They pointed to a clause that states: "No person shall be eligible to hold the office of president or vice president, unless that person is resident in the Republic 10 years prior to his election." However, legal experts have argued that the constitutional provision does not explicitly call for residency 10 years "immediately" prior to election. It should also be noted that the provision was not applicable in the 2005 election that brought Johnson-Sirleaf to power since the constitution was suspended at that time.

Regardless, the Supreme Court was expected to quickly hear the case, given the stakes and the timing only weeks away from election day. The general consensus was that the Supreme Court, which has close ties to the government, would validate all the candidacies of the already-registered candidates." To that end, by the start of October 2011, as expected, incumbent President Johnson-Sirleaf and a number of other candidates were deemed qualified to contest the presidential election by the Supreme Court. The court ruled that despite claims of ambiguity, the constitution did indeed refer to ten years of residency immediately preceding the presidential election, and that standard should apply in the future. That being said, the court noted that due to the Liberian civil war, which lasted for 14 years and necessitated the flight of citizens from the country, it was impossible that the framers of the constitution could have contemplated the circumstances of civil crisis. Thus, those circumstances should not disqualify candidates from the contesting the presidency in this case.

Ahead of election day, President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf won a non-electoral prize when she was

named a co-recipient of the 2011 Nobel Peace Prize for her efforts in restoring peace to Liberia. In a country with widespread poverty, unemployment, and illiteracy, though, it was unlikely that this international prize would factor into the voting choices of Liberians at the polls.

Her main rival, Winston Tubman, dismissed Johnson-Sirleaf's Nobel Peace Prize, instead pointing to the presence of United Nations troops still in Liberia. He said, "We have peace and stability here now, in my view, largely because the United Nations presence is still here. "What effort has been made to really unite our people and heal the wound?" Other critics have suggested that Johnson-Sirleaf has received credit for things she had not actually accomplished.

On election day, voter turnout was said to be high, but results were not immediately available. Days later, it was revealed that a second election round was in the offing between President Johnson-Sirleaf of the ruling Unity Party and Tubman of the opposition Congress for Democratic Change (CDC). The incumbent president had 44 percent of the vote share while Tubman had 33 percent; other candidates made up the rest of the votes. No one candidate apparently secured 50 percent of the vote share, therefore necessitating a run-off between the two top candidates. To that end, a second round between President Johnson-Sirleaf and Tubman was tentatively scheduled to be held on Nov. 8, 2011.

That being said, amidst complaints of fraud, the opposition Congress for Democratic Change (CDC) warned that it would not take part in the November 8, 2011 presidential run-off election. The CDC called for Liberia's National Elections Commission (NEC) to be replaced, accusing the NEC of participating in ballot stuffing, to the benefit of the incumbent president. In an attempt to quiet claims of fraud and to ensure the integrity of the electoral process, the chairman of the NEC, James Fromayan, announced that he was stepping aside. Yet despite this development, the CDC decided to boycott a peace negotiations conference intended to discuss for course forward and the conduct of the second round of the elections.

By Nov. 5, 2011, Tubman was making it clear that he would not take part in the presidential run off, set to take place in only days. Tubman instead accused incumbent President Johnson-Sirleaf of trying to reinstate a one-party state in Liberia. "We will never reward fraud and abuse of power and will never grant legitimacy to a corrupt political process," Tubman said.

President Johnson-Sirleaf responded to the latest developments by urging Liberians to go to the polls and vote anyway, saying, "Mr. Winston Tubman has called on Liberians to give up their franchise, their right to vote. He has called people to violate the constitution." She continued, "When you start violating the constitution, where do you stop? If this is how they run their party, think of how they would have run our country! The Constitution governs us; it protects us; it is the thread that holds us all together."

Meanwhile, voices from various quarters, including the United States, the European Union, and the African Union, urged Tubman to reconsider his decision to pull out of the race, warning that a

boycott and the associated dissension could risk destabilizing the country. To that end, on the eve of the run off election, riots erupted across Liberia, leading to some deaths. Tubman did little to alleviate the state of unrest when he said that a deadly shooting at a rally was an attempt to assassinate him; Liberian police dismissed his claim, characterizing it as colossally far-fetched. In an interview with Agence France Presse, Police Inspector General Marc Amblard said, "You would have to be monumentally stupid to make an attempt to assassinate not only Mr. Tubman, but any political figure. It wasn't the plan then, now or tomorrow."

On the day of the second round of the election, voters returned to the polls. The results were tallied, although the outcome was certainly a foregone conclusion. Given the opposition's boycott and the fact that many voters stayed away from the polls, fearing violence, President Johnson-Sirleaf was expected to hold onto the presidency of Liberia. Indeed, President Johnson-Sirleaf was re-elected with 90.8 percent of the vote.

With Tubman refusing to accept the results of the elections, the legitimacy of the presidency of Johnson-Sirleaf was expected to undergo grave challenges. That being said, Tubman met in a closed door meeting with Sirleaf-Johnson. It was hoped that the meeting would thaw the climate of tension.

Special Report:

Former Liberian President Charles Taylor found guilty of war crimes; charges upheld

(Note that portions of this Special Report includes content covered above.)

Summary --

In September 2013, the war crimes conviction against former Liberian President Charles Taylor was upheld by a United Nations-backed Special Court for Sierra Leone at The Hague in the Netherlands. The Special Court for Sierra Leone determined that the convictions against Taylor had been proved beyond doubt, effectively upholding his war crimes convictions, and ordered the sentence against Taylor be imposed immediately in light of the grave war crimes committed.

More than a year prior, in April 2012, Taylor was found guilty of 11 counts of war crimes and crimes against humanity by the Special Court for Sierra Leone. At issue were charges that the Liberian leader supported the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) rebels in neighboring Sierra Leone in their 11-year campaign of brutality and bloodshed that left thousands dead and even more maimed. Taylor went into exile in Nigeria but was arrested in 2006 and repatriated to Liberia, before being sent onto Sierra Leone. That year, the United Nations agreed to transfer Taylor from prison in Sierra Leone to The Hague in the Netherlands where he faced trial for war crimes and

crimes against humanity. The Dutch government had said it would host Taylor's trial so long as he would be imprisoned in another country if he was convicted. The British government agreed to allow Taylor to serve out a possible prison sentence in the United Kingdom, if he was found guilty.

Taylor's trial before the Special Court for Sierra Leone at The Hague commenced in 2007 with the former Liberian leader boycotting the opening arguments. Over 100 witnesses spoke before the court in the international court. In 2011, the prosecutors offered closing arguments; in 2012, Taylor was convicted of war crimes; and as noted here, in 2013, that conviction was upheld by the special court. Having been found guilty on 11 counts and sentenced to 50 years in jail, Taylor has the dubious distinction of being the first head of state to be convicted of war crimes since the Nuremberg trials.

Background --

In March 2006, Liberia issued a formal request for the extradition of deposed leader Charles Taylor, who was living in political exile in Nigeria. At issue were accusations that Taylor supported the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) rebels in neighboring Sierra Leone in their 11-year campaign of brutality and bloodshed that left thousands dead and even more maimed. The conflict also gained world attention largely because of the RUF practice of abducting youth to be child soldiers, as well as the clandestine sale of "conflict" or "blood" diamonds to fund the civil war. Indeed, the RUF carried out a vicious campaign of terror in which rape, murder, and the hacking off the limbs of victims, were commonplace tactics.

After consulting with other members of the African community, then-Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo said that Liberia's new government was free to take Taylor into custody. In the past, President Obasanjo refused to send Taylor to Sierra Leone, saying he would only extradite the deposed leader if such a request came from an elected Liberian leader. Clearly, the election of Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf as the new Liberian leader in 2005 and her accession to power in January 2006 changed the political landscape in some measure.

One of the spokespersons for Taylor's National Patriotic Party said that the possible extradition of their leader was in breach of the 2003 peace deal, which ended 14 years of civil war in Liberia. In the view of Taylor and his supporters, exile was a crucial aspect of the agreement. Human rights observers, however, have countered that Taylor himself has rendered the agreement void by violating its provisions in his attempts to influence Liberian politics.

The situation intensified when Desmond de Silva, the Chief Prosecutor of the United Nations-backed tribunal in Sierra Leone, warned that the government of Nigeria should quickly detain Taylor in order to ensure he did not flee before he facing trial for war crimes. Echoing this warning, Richard Dicker of Human Rights Watch urged the government of Nigeria to tighten security around Taylor's home in order to preclude his possible escape.

Just after these warnings were issued, news emerged suggesting that Taylor was missing and had apparently tried to elude the authorities, in anticipation of his possible extradition. Nigeria faced grave criticism for allowing Taylor to flee. Nonetheless, hours later, Taylor was caught and sent back to Liberia. Once there, in the capital city of Monrovia, he was taken in the United Nations custody and transferred to the United Nations-backed war crimes tribunal in Sierra Leone. In April 2005, Taylor made his first appearance in the court where he entered a plea of "not guilty."

In June 2006, the United Nations agreed to transfer the former Liberian leader, Charles Taylor, from prison in Sierra Leone to The Hague where he was expected to face trial for crimes against humanity. The Dutch government had said that it would host Taylor's trial so long as he would be imprisoned in another country if he was convicted. Then, the British agreed to allow Taylor to serve out a possible prison sentence in the United Kingdom, if he was found guilty after facing trial in The Hague.

The transfer from custody in Sierra Leone to The Hague had been precipitated upon the notion that placing Taylor on trial in West Africa would only lead to the destabilization of the region. Indeed, Liberian President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf expressed worry that placing Taylor on trial in West Africa might result in renewed chaos.

The Case Against Charles Taylor --

June 2007 saw the start of the war crimes trial of Taylor in The Hague. At stake were charges of war crimes, crimes against humanity, and violations of international law at the United Nations-backed Special Court for Sierra Leone. These crimes and violations included specific charges of cannibalism, murder, rape, sexual slavery, enslavement, use of child soldiers, torture, looting, the hacking of limbs by Sierra Leone rebels, as well as the sale of weapons and ammunition in exchange for so-called "blood" or "conflict" diamonds. The trial was expected to last a year and a half.

Taylor boycotted the first day of the trial at The Hague a year later, but the judge ordered that the case carry on in his absence. Since 2007, the prosecution has detailed a litany of brutal and gruesome crimes committed at the behest of Taylor. Over 100 witnesses spoke before the court in the international court.

With Taylor on trial for war crimes at the international court in The Hague, the government of Liberia commenced its efforts to seize his assets. The move, which was legally set forth in legislation to be passed in parliament, included provisions for the seizure of the assets of Taylor's family and associates. The proposed legislation also sought assistance from other countries in "tracking, freezing and confiscating the funds, properties and assets" of Taylor and his inner circle, which have been held abroad under a United Nations order in 2004. In July 2007, the legislation was submitted for discussion in parliament, prior to passage. Some parliamentarians characterized

it as being problematic since Taylor was not yet convicted of any crimes.

January 2008 saw the war crimes trial of former President Charles Taylor resume at The Hague after a six-month delay. Proceedings had been halted as a result of Taylor's firing of his defense lawyer and his boycott of the opening of the trial.

In July 2009, former Liberian President Charles Taylor's lawyer -- Courtenay Griffiths-- was set to begin the defense. Griffiths said in an interview with the Associated Press, "His case is that he was not involved... That he was a peacemaker, not a warmonger." Griffiths was set to make an opening statement on July 13, 2009 while Taylor was expected to testify in court the day after on July 14, 2009.

The trial went on for two more years. Indeed, it was only in 2011 that closing arguments were being offered in regard to Taylor's trial at The Hague.

Earlier in that year -- February 2011, to be precise -- former Liberian President Charles Taylor and his lawyer, Courtenay Griffiths, walked out of the court during Taylor's war crimes trial at The Hague. The prosecution was carrying out its oral submission, paving the way for the defense to commence its own arguments. However, the court refused to accept the final trial brief since it was submitted after the Jan. 14, 2011, deadline. The Special Court for Sierra Leone at The Hague instructed Griffiths to apologize for his behavior and return to the legal proceedings, or risk sanctions. But a day later on Feb. 9, 2011, neither Taylor nor Griffiths appeared in court, prompting the trial to be adjourned temporarily. While the trial was set to resume on Feb. 11, 2011, Griffiths told reporters that he would not be in court because of the refusal to accept his late legal brief. In an interview with BBC News, he said, "If the appeals chamber take the view that the judges acted perfectly reasonably in refusing to accept our final brief then effectively I have no further role in these proceedings." The scenario created something of a legal impasse and with the court unable to go forward with the schedule for closing oral arguments.

By March 2011, Taylor's defense team won its appeal to file its final brief. Then, once proceedings had resumed, Taylor's lawyer, Griffiths, asserted that the prosecution had turned the war crimes trial into a "21st century form of neo-colonialism." Griffiths argued that justice should be applied fairly and equally. Given those parameters, he asked why Libyan leader Colonel Muammar Qadhafi was not on trial at The Hague. Left unsaid was the fact that Qadhafi had, indeed, been referred to the International Criminal Court for an investigation into crimes against humanity. Now in its final phase, the trial would determine if Taylor was guilty of the long list of crimes detailed below.

To recapitulate: In the realm of jurisprudence, Taylor was faced with 11 charges of war crimes, crimes against humanity, and violations of international law at the United Nations-backed Special Court for Sierra Leone. These crimes included specific charges of cannibalism, murder, rape,

sexual slavery, enslavement, use of child soldiers, torture, looting, the hacking of limbs by Sierra Leone rebels, as well as the sale of weapons and ammunition in exchange for so-called "blood" or "conflict" diamonds.

Recent Developments --

On April 26, 2012, former Liberian President Charles Taylor was found guilty of 11 counts of war crimes and crimes against humanity by the Special Court for Sierra Leone. Taylor has the dubious distinction of being the first head of state to be convicted of war crimes since the Nuremberg trials.

The Special Court for Sierra Leone found that myriad crimes were proved to have been committed by the armed forces allied with Taylor and that the former Liberian leader held personal responsibility for the acts at stake, given his command role over the armed forces actually carrying out their crimes, which the court said were committed "in furtherance of the Joint Criminal Enterprise." Stated differently, the court decided that Taylor was a party to war during the Sierra Leone civil war that lasted for over a decade from 1991 to 2002.

The 11-count indictment with associated verdicts was as follows --

Count 1 : Acts of Terrorism - Guilty

Count 2: Murder - Guilty

Count 3: Violence to life, health and physical or mental well-being of persons, in particular, murder - Guilty

Count 4: Rape - Guilty

Count 5: Sexual Slavery - Guilty

Count 6: Outrages upon personal dignity Guilty

Count 7: Violence to life, health and physical or mental well-being of persons, in particular, cruel treatment - Guilty

Count 8: Other inhumane acts - Guilty

Count 9: Conscripting or enlisting children under 15 into the armed forces - Guilty

Count 10: Enslavement - Guilty

Judge Richard Lussick said Taylor had been found guilty beyond reasonable doubt in connection with 11 counts of war crimes and crimes against humanity.

Lussick also said that in his capacity as Liberian leader, Taylor offered "sustained and significant" support to the RUF rebels in neighbouring Sierra Leone. Lussick moreover made mention of the fact that Taylor sold so-called "blood or "conflict" diamonds and bought weapons on behalf of the RUF. That being said, Lussick said that these crimes did not extend to effective command and control over the rebels. To this end, Lussick said: "The trial chamber finds the accused cannot be held responsible for ordering the crimes."

Referring to the fact that Taylor was cleared expressly ordering war crimes, David Crane -- the first prosecutor for the Special court for Sierra Leone who signed the indictment against Taylor -- expressed the view that it was more important that the former Liberian leader was being held to account in whatever way possible. As reported by BBC News, Crane said, "When I drafted that indictment and signed it there were three [charges] and you only had to [find him guilty on] one, so therefore at the end of the day it's what they did with the charges that matters, and they found him guilty as charged... of the horror story in Sierra Leone."

Chief prosecutor, Brenda Hollis, noted that the ruling served as "confirmation of what the people in Sierra Leone told us from the beginning of our investigations, and that is that Mr. Taylor was one of those who bore greatest responsibility for the crimes against them."

Human rights groups also welcomed the guilty verdict against former Liberian leader Charles Taylor. In an interview with BBC News, Elise Keppler of Human Rights Watch said, "This is an incredibly significant decision. Charles Taylor has been called to account for the crimes in Sierra Leone. It is an incredible day for international justice but most of all for victims in Sierra Leone and everywhere." Amnesty International hailed the verdict, noting that it delivered an important message to all powerful leaders that they cannot function with impunity.

Not surprisingly, the defense team for Taylor had a very different view of the ruling. Defense lawyer, Courtenay Griffiths, claimed that the trial was not a fair one and that it had been spurred by "political imperatives."

Taylor faced a sentencing hearing on May 16, 2012, with the actual sentence scheduled to be handed down on May 30, 2012. On that day, Taylor was sentenced to 50 years in jail with the Special Court for Sierra Leone concluding that the five-decades long sentence reflected his betrayal of public trust as a head of state. The sentence fell short of the 80 years requested by the prosecution; however, the judges felt that such a sentence would be excessive, given Taylor's limited involvement in the planning operations in Sierra Leone. Nevertheless, as noted by Judge Richard Lussick, "While Mr. Taylor never set foot in Sierra Leone, his heavy footprint is there." Judge Lussick pointed to the flow of so-called "conflict diamonds," the provision of weaponry as well as support by Taylor to the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) rebels, as he said: "The lives of many more innocent civilians in Sierra Leone were lost or destroyed as a direct result of his actions."

It should be noted that there remained backers of Taylor expressing enduring support for the former leader. It should also be noted that Taylor enjoyed the right to appeal his conviction to the Special Court's Appeals Chamber.

To that latter end, on Sept. 26, 2013, the Special Court for Sierra Leone determined that the convictions against Taylor had been proved beyond doubt, effectively upholding his war crimes

convictions. As stated by Judge George King, "The appeals chamber... affirms the sentence of 50 years in prison and orders that the sentence be imposed immediately." Judge King continued, "The Appeals Chamber is of the opinion that the sentence imposed by the trial chamber is fair in the light of the totality of the crimes committed." Taylor would, therefore, soon be transferred from the Netherlands to permanent prison in the United Kingdom or another destination (quite possibly Rwanda or Sweden), in keeping with an agreement made prior to Taylor's transfer to The Hague for trial.

Ultimately, on Oct. 15, 2013, Taylor was finally transferred to the United Kingdom where he would serve out his prison sentence for the litany of war crimes detailed above.

Conclusion:

As discussed above, on April 26, 2012, former Liberian President Charles Taylor was found guilty of 11 counts of war crimes and crimes against humanity by the Special Court for Sierra Leone. On May 30, 2012, he was sentenced to 50 years in jail. On Sept. 26, 2013, the special court rejected Taylor's appeal, effectively upholding his war crimes convictions. The judge said that sentence of 50 years should be imposed immediately. Taylor would, therefore, soon be transferred from the Netherlands to permanent prison. Taylor would more than likely serve his prison sentence in the United Kingdom.

There were high hopes that the conviction of Taylor of war crimes and crimes against humanity would bring a sense of justice to the tens of thousands of victims of the civil war in Sierra Leone. In Liberia after his conviction in 2012, media reports characterized the guilty verdict against Taylor as justice being served. In 2013, following the decision by the court to reject Taylor's appeal, Amnesty International released the following statement: "The conviction of those responsible for crimes committed during Sierra Leone's conflict has brought some measure of justice for the tens of thousands of victims. The conviction of Charles Taylor must pave the way for further prosecutions."

Taylor has the dubious distinction of being the first head of state to be convicted of war crimes since the Nuremberg trials. As a matter of interest, it should be noted that Admiral Donitz -- technically the head of state after the death of Adolph Hitler -- was convicted at Nuremberg; the crimes for which Donitz were convicted were committed in the period prior to his tenure as head of state.

Special Report on Ebola in "hot zone" of West Africa

The year 2014 was marked by a horrific outbreak of the highly dangerous hemorrhagic disease Ebola in west Africa. By October 2014, the World Health Organization (WHO) reported that the

death toll from the Ebola epidemic had climbed to approximately 5,000 out of the more than 10,000 known cases in eight countries. The majority of deaths to this point were in Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea. Senegal and Nigeria had been able to successfully contain outbreaks and were declared free of the disease. Outside of Africa, Spain and the United States had reported isolated cases. WHO reports, however, that the number of actual cases is likely much higher than what has been recorded globally.

In a new development, the virus had reached Mali, where a two-year-old girl died on Oct. 24, 2014. There was concern that many people in the country – which had become the sixth nation in West Africa to confirm the virus - had been exposed because the girl had been taken across the country while ill. As such, WHO was treating the situation in Mali as an emergency and officials in neighboring Mauritania had closed its borders with Mali in response. Meanwhile, the virus was also now threatening Cote d'Ivoire, since it had infected people virtually all along its borders with Guinea and Liberia.

As concerns over Ebola increased, there was a positive development in Liberia -- the country hardest hit by Ebola -- where the pace of infection was slowing. This mode, if sustained, would be a welcome surprise, given the WHO's warnings of an increased pace of infection in the offing. Still, the WHO warned that the crisis was not yet over.

At the same time, health experts were looking at the Nigerian model to stymie the spread of Ebola in that country, pointing to the excellent polio prevention infrastructure that had been implemented by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (founders of Microsoft), as well as the concerted effort by health professionals to trace and follow up with individuals believed to have had contact with Ebola patients across that country.

Meanwhile, in an attempt to quell the epidemic, WHO said that Ebola vaccines could begin in West Africa in December 2014 and that hundreds of thousands of doses should be ready for use by the middle of 2015.

NOTE:

The next elections in Liberia were set to be held in 2017.

-- January 2015

Written by Dr. Denise Youngblood Coleman, Editor in Chief and Executive Vice President, www.countrywatch.com; see Bibliography for reference sources.

Political Risk Index

Political Risk Index

The **Political Risk Index** is a proprietary index measuring the level of risk posed to governments, corporations, and investors, based on a myriad of political and economic factors. The [Political Risk Index](#) is calculated using an established methodology by CountryWatch's Editor-in-Chief and is based on varied criteria* including the following consideration: political stability, political representation, democratic accountability, freedom of expression, security and crime, risk of conflict, human development, jurisprudence and regulatory transparency, economic risk, foreign investment considerations, possibility of sovereign default, and corruption. Scores are assigned from 0-10 using the aforementioned criteria. A score of 0 marks the highest political risk, while a score of 10 marks the lowest political risk. Stated differently, countries with the lowest scores pose the greatest political risk. A score of 0 marks the most dire level of political risk and an ultimate nadir, while a score of 10 marks the lowest possible level of political risk, according to this proprietary index. Rarely will there be scores of 0 or 10 due to the reality that countries contain complex landscapes; as such, the index offers a range of possibilities ranging from lesser to greater risk.

Country	Assessment
Afghanistan	2
Albania	4

Algeria	6
Andorra	9
Angola	4
Antigua	8
Argentina	4
Armenia	4-5
Australia	9.5
Austria	9.5
Azerbaijan	4
Bahamas	8.5
Bahrain	6
Bangladesh	3.5
Barbados	8.5-9
Belarus	3
Belgium	9
Belize	8
Benin	5
Bhutan	5

Bolivia	5
Bosnia-Herzegovina	4
Botswana	7
Brazil	7
Brunei	7
Bulgaria	6
Burkina Faso	4
Burma (Myanmar)	4.5
Burundi	3
Cambodia	4
Cameroon	5
Canada	9.5
Cape Verde	6
Central African Republic	3
Chad	4
Chile	9
China	7
China: Hong Kong	8

China: Taiwan	8
Colombia	7
Comoros	5
Congo DRC	3
Congo RC	4
Costa Rica	8
Cote d'Ivoire	4.5
Croatia	7
Cuba	4-4.5
Cyprus	5
Czech Republic	8
Denmark	9.5
Djibouti	4.5
Dominica	7
Dominican Republic	6
East Timor	5
Ecuador	6
Egypt	5

El Salvador	7
Equatorial Guinea	4
Eritrea	3
Estonia	8
Ethiopia	4
Fiji	5
Finland	9
Fr.YugoslavRep.Macedonia	5
France	9
Gabon	5
Gambia	4
Georgia	5
Germany	9.5
Ghana	6
Greece	4.5-5
Grenada	8
Guatemala	6
Guinea	3.5

Guinea-Bissau	3.5
Guyana	4.5
Haiti	3.5
Holy See (Vatican)	9
Honduras	4.5-5
Hungary	7
Iceland	8.5-9
India	7.5-8
Indonesia	6
Iran	3.5-4
Iraq	2.5-3
Ireland	8-8.5
Israel	8
Italy	7.5
Jamaica	6.5-7
Japan	9
Jordan	6.5
Kazakhstan	6

Kenya	5
Kiribati	7
Korea, North	1
Korea, South	8
Kosovo	4
Kuwait	7
Kyrgyzstan	4.5
Laos	4.5
Latvia	7
Lebanon	5.5
Lesotho	6
Liberia	3.5
Libya	2
Liechtenstein	9
Lithuania	7.5
Luxembourg	9
Madagascar	4
Malawi	4

Malaysia	8
Maldives	4.5
Mali	4
Malta	8
Marshall Islands	6
Mauritania	4.5-5
Mauritius	7
Mexico	6.5
Micronesia	7
Moldova	5
Monaco	9
Mongolia	5
Montenegro	6
Morocco	6.5
Mozambique	4.5-5
Namibia	6.5-7
Nauru	6
Nepal	4

Netherlands	9.5
New Zealand	9.5
Nicaragua	5
Niger	4
Nigeria	4.5
Norway	9.5
Oman	7
Pakistan	3.5
Palau	7
Panama	7.5
Papua New Guinea	5
Paraguay	6.5-7
Peru	7
Philippines	6
Poland	8
Portugal	7.5
Qatar	7.5
Romania	5.5

Russia	5.5
Rwanda	5
Saint Kitts and Nevis	8
Saint Lucia	8
Saint Vincent and Grenadines	8
Samoa	7
San Marino	9
Sao Tome and Principe	5.5
Saudi Arabia	6
Senegal	6
Serbia	5
Seychelles	7
Sierra Leone	4.5
Singapore	9
Slovak Republic (Slovakia)	8
Slovenia	8
Solomon Islands	6
Somalia	2

South Africa	7
Spain	7.5
Sri Lanka	5
Sudan	3.5
Suriname	5
Swaziland	5
Sweden	9.5
Switzerland	9.5
Syria	2
Tajikistan	4.5
Tanzania	6
Thailand	6.5
Togo	4.5
Tonga	7
Trinidad and Tobago	8
Tunisia	6
Turkey	7
Turkmenistan	4.5

Tuvalu	7
Uganda	6
Ukraine	3.5-4
United Arab Emirates	7
United Kingdom	9
United States	9.5
Uruguay	8
Uzbekistan	4
Vanuatu	7
Venezuela	4
Vietnam	5
Yemen	3
Zambia	4.5
Zimbabwe	3

*Methodology

The [Political Risk Index](#) is calculated by CountryWatch's Editor-in-Chief and is based on the combined scoring of varied criteria as follows --

1. political stability (record of peaceful transitions of power, ability of government to stay in office and carry out policies as a result of productive executive-legislative relationship, perhaps with

popular support vis a vis risk of government collapse)

2. political representation (right of suffrage, free and fair elections, multi-party participation, and influence of foreign powers)
3. democratic accountability (record of respect for political rights, human rights, and civil liberties, backed by constitutional protections)
4. freedom of expression (media freedom and freedom of expression, right to dissent or express political opposition, backed by constitutional protections)
5. security and crime (the degree to which a country has security mechanisms that ensures safety of citizens and ensures law and order, without resorting to extra-judicial measures)
6. risk of conflict (the presence of conflict; record of coups or civil disturbances; threat of war; threats posed by internal or external tensions; threat or record of terrorism or insurgencies)
7. human development (quality of life; access to education; socio-economic conditions; systemic concern for the status of women and children)
8. jurisprudence and regulatory transparency (the impartiality of the legal system, the degree of transparency within the regulatory system of a country and the durability of that structure)
9. economic conditions (economic stability, investment climate, degree of nationalization of industries, property rights, labor force development)
10. corruption (the degree of corruption in a country and/or efforts by the government to address graft and other irregularities)

Editor's Note:

As of 2015, the current climate of upheaval internationally -- both politically and economically -- has affected the ratings for several countries across the world.

North Korea, [Afghanistan](#), [Somalia](#), and [Zimbabwe](#) -- retain their low rankings.

Several Middle Eastern and North African countries, such as [Tunisia](#), [Egypt](#), [Libya](#), [Syria](#), [Iraq](#) and [Yemen](#) were downgraded in recent years due to political instability occurring in the "season of unrest" sweeping the region since 2011 and continuing today. The worst downgrades affected [Syria](#) where civil war is at play, along with the rampage of terror being carried out by Islamist

terrorists who have also seized control over part of Syrian territory. [Iraq](#) has been further downgraded due to the rampage of Islamist terrorists and their takeover of wide swaths of Iraqi territory. [Libya](#) has also been downgraded further due to its slippage into failed state status; at issue in [Libya](#) have been an ongoing power struggle between rival militias. [Yemen](#) continues to hold steady with a poor ranking due to continued unrest at the hands of Houthi rebels, secessionists, al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula, and Islamic State. Its landscape has been further complicated by the fact that it is now the site of a proxy war between [Iran](#) and [Saudi Arabia](#). Conversely, [Tunisia](#) and [Egypt](#) have seen slight upgrades as these countries stabilize.

In Africa, [Zimbabwe](#) continues to be one of the bleak spots of the world with the Mugabe regime effectively destroying the country's once vibrant economy, and miring [Zimbabwe](#) with an exceedingly high rate of inflation, debilitating unemployment, devolving public services, and critical food shortages; rampant crime and political oppression round out the landscape. [Somalia](#) also sports a poor ranking due to the continuing influence of the terror group, al-Shabab, which was not operating across the border in [Kenya](#). On the upside, [Nigeria](#), which was ineffectively dealing with the threat posed by the terror group, Boko Haram, was making some strides on the national security front with its new president at the helm. [Mali](#) was slightly upgraded due to its efforts to return to constitutional order following the 2012 coup and to neutralize the threat of separatists and Islamists. But the [Central African Republic](#) was downgraded due to the takeover of the government by Muslim Seleka rebels and a continued state of lawlessness in that country. [South Sudan](#) -- the world's newest nation state -- has not been officially included in this assessment; however, it can be unofficially assessed to be in the vicinity of "3" due to its manifold political and economic challenges. [Burkina Faso](#), [Burundi](#) and [Guinea](#) have been downgraded due to political unrest, with [Guinea](#) also having to deal with the burgeoning Ebola crisis.

In Europe, [Ukraine](#) was downgraded due to the unrest facing that country following its Maidan revolution that triggered a pro-Russian uprising in the eastern part of the country. [Russia](#) was also implicated in the Ukrainian crisis due to its intervention on behalf of pro-Russian separatists, as well as its annexation of the Ukrainian territory of Crimea. Strains on the infrastructure of southern and eastern European countries, such as [Serbia](#), [Croatia](#), and [Hungary](#), due to an influx of refugees was expected to pose social and economic challenges, and slight downgrades were made accordingly. So too, a corruption crisis for the Romanian prime minister has affected the ranking of that country. Meanwhile, the rankings for [Spain](#), [Portugal](#), [Ireland](#), and [Italy](#) were maintained due to debt woes and the concomitant effect on the euro zone. [Greece](#), another euro zone nation, was earlier downgraded due to its sovereign debt crisis; however, no further downgrade was added since the country was able to successfully forge a bailout rescue deal with creditor institutions. Cyprus' exposure to Greek banks yielded a downgrade in its case.

In Asia, [Nepal](#) was downgraded in response to continuous political instability and a constitutional crisis that prevails well after landmark elections were held. Both [India](#) and China retain their rankings; [India](#) holds a slightly higher ranking than [China](#) due to its record of democratic

representation and accountability. Increasing violence and political instability in [Pakistan](#) resulted in a downgrade for this country's already low rating. Meanwhile, [Singapore](#) retained its strong rankings due to its continued effective stewardship of the economy and political stability.

In the Americas, ongoing political and economic woes, as well as crime and corruption have affected the rankings for [Mexico](#), [Guatemala](#), and [Brazil](#). [Argentina](#) was downgraded due to its default on debt following the failure of talks with bond holders. [Venezuela](#) was downgraded due to its mix of market unfriendly policies and political oppression. For the moment, the [United States](#) maintains a strong ranking along with [Canada](#), and most of the English-speaking countries of the Caribbean; however, a renewed debt ceiling crisis could cause the [United States](#) to be downgraded in a future edition. Finally, a small but significant upgrade was attributed to [Cuba](#) due to its recent pro-business reforms and its normalization of ties with the United States.

Source:

Dr. Denise Youngblood Coleman, Editor in Chief, CountryWatch Inc. www.countrywatch.com

Updated:

2015

Political Stability

Political Stability

The **Political Stability Index** is a proprietary index measuring a country's level of stability, standard of good governance, record of constitutional order, respect for human rights, and overall strength of democracy. The [Political Stability](#) Index is calculated using an established methodology* by CountryWatch's Editor-in-Chief and is based on a given country's record of peaceful transitions of power, ability of a government to stay in office and carry out its policies vis a vis risk credible risks of government collapse. Threats include coups, domestic violence and instability, terrorism, etc. This index measures the dynamic between the quality of a country's government and the threats that can compromise and undermine stability. Scores are assigned from 0-10 using the aforementioned criteria. A score of 0 marks the lowest level of political stability and an ultimate nadir, while a score of 10 marks the highest level of political stability possible, according to this proprietary index. Rarely will there be scores of 0 or 10 due to the reality that countries

contain complex landscapes; as such, the index offers a range of possibilities ranging from lesser to greater stability.

Country	Assessment
Afghanistan	2
Albania	4.5-5
Algeria	5
Andorra	9.5
Angola	4.5-5
Antigua	8.5-9
Argentina	7
Armenia	5.5
Australia	9.5
Austria	9.5
Azerbaijan	5
Bahamas	9
Bahrain	6
Bangladesh	4.5

Barbados	9
Belarus	4
Belgium	9
Belize	8
Benin	5
Bhutan	5
Bolivia	6
Bosnia-Herzegovina	5
Botswana	8.5
Brazil	7
Brunei	8
Bulgaria	7.5
Burkina Faso	4
Burma (Myanmar)	4.5
Burundi	4
Cambodia	4.5-5
Cameroon	6
Canada	9.5

Cape Verde	6
Central African Republic	3
Chad	4.5
Chile	9
China	7
China: Hong Kong	8
China: Taiwan	8
Colombia	7.5
Comoros	5
Congo DRC	3
Congo RC	5
Costa Rica	9.5
Cote d'Ivoire	3.5
Croatia	7.5
Cuba	4.5
Cyprus	8
Czech Republic	8.5
Denmark	9.5

Djibouti	5
Dominica	8.5
Dominican Republic	7
East Timor	5
Ecuador	7
Egypt	4.5-5
El Salvador	7.5-8
Equatorial Guinea	4.5
Eritrea	4
Estonia	9
Ethiopia	4.5
Fiji	5
Finland	9
Fr.YugoslavRep.Macedonia	6.5
France	9
Gabon	5
Gambia	4.5
Georgia	5

Germany	9.5
Ghana	7
Greece	6
Grenada	8.5
Guatemala	7
Guinea	3.5-4
Guinea-Bissau	4
Guyana	6
Haiti	3.5-4
Holy See (Vatican)	9.5
Honduras	6
Hungary	7.5
Iceland	9
India	8
Indonesia	7
Iran	3.5
Iraq	2.5
Ireland	9.5

Israel	8
Italy	8.5-9
Jamaica	8
Japan	9
Jordan	6
Kazakhstan	6
Kenya	5
Kiribati	8
Korea, North	2
Korea, South	8.5
Kosovo	5.5
Kuwait	7
Kyrgyzstan	5
Laos	5
Latvia	8.5
Lebanon	5.5
Lesotho	5
Liberia	3.5-4

Libya	2
Liechtenstein	9
Lithuania	9
Luxembourg	9.5
Madagascar	4
Malawi	5
Malaysia	8
Maldives	4.5-5
Mali	4.5-5
Malta	9
Marshall Islands	8
Mauritania	6
Mauritius	8
Mexico	6.5-7
Micronesia	8
Moldova	5.5
Monaco	9.5
Mongolia	6.5-7

Montenegro	8
Morocco	7
Mozambique	5
Namibia	8.5
Nauru	8
Nepal	4.5
Netherlands	9.5
New Zealand	9.5
Nicaragua	6
Niger	4.5
Nigeria	4.5
Norway	9.5
Oman	7
Pakistan	3
Palau	8
Panama	8.5
Papua New Guinea	6
Paraguay	8

Peru	7.5
Philippines	6
Poland	9
Portugal	9
Qatar	7
Romania	7
Russia	6
Rwanda	5
Saint Kitts and Nevis	9
Saint Lucia	9
Saint Vincent and Grenadines	9
Samoa	8
San Marino	9.5
Sao Tome and Principe	7
Saudi Arabia	6
Senegal	7.5
Serbia	6.5
Seychelles	8

Sierra Leone	4.5
Singapore	9.5
Slovak Republic (Slovakia)	8.5
Slovenia	9
Solomon Islands	6.5-7
Somalia	2
South Africa	7.5
Spain	9
Sri Lanka	5
Sudan	3
Suriname	5
Swaziland	5
Sweden	9.5
Switzerland	9.5
Syria	2
Tajikistan	4.5
Tanzania	6
Thailand	6

Togo	5
Tonga	7
Trinidad and Tobago	8
Tunisia	5
Turkey	7.5
Turkmenistan	5
Tuvalu	8.5
Uganda	6
Ukraine	3.5-4
United Arab Emirates	7
United Kingdom	9
United States	9
Uruguay	8.5
Uzbekistan	4
Vanuatu	8.5
Venezuela	4.5-5
Vietnam	4.5
Yemen	2.5

Zambia	5
Zimbabwe	3

*Methodology

The Political Stability Index is calculated by CountryWatch's Editor-in-Chief and is based on the combined scoring of varied criteria as follows --

1. record of peaceful transitions of power (free and fair elections; adherence to political accords)
2. record of democratic representation, presence of instruments of democracy; systemic accountability
3. respect for human rights; respect for civil rights
4. strength of the system of jurisprudence, adherence to constitutional order, and good governance
5. ability of a government to stay in office and carry out its policies vis a vis risk credible risks of government collapse (i.e. government stability versus a country being deemed "ungovernable")
6. threat of coups, insurgencies, and insurrection
7. level of unchecked crime and corruption
8. risk of terrorism and other threats to national security
9. relationship with regional powers and international community; record of bilateral or multilateral cooperation
10. degree of economic strife (i.e. economic and financial challenges)

Editor's Note:

As of 2015, the current climate of upheaval internationally -- both politically and economically -- has affected the ratings for several countries across the world. The usual suspects -- North Korea, [Afghanistan](#), and [Somalia](#) -- retain their low rankings. The reclusive and ultra-dictatorial North

Korean regime, which has terrified the world with its nuclear threats, has exhibited internal instability. Of note was a cut-throat purge of hundreds of high ranking officials deemed to be a threat to Kim Jung-un. Despite their attempts to recover from years of lawlessness, war, and warlordism, both [Afghanistan](#) and [Somalia](#) continue to be beset by terrorism and turmoil. In [Afghanistan](#), while international forces have seen success in the effort against the terror group, al-Qaida, the other Islamist extremist group, the Taliban, continues to carry out a vicious insurgency using terrorism. In [Somalia](#), while the government attempts to do the nation's business, the terror group, al-Shabab continues to make its presence known not only in [Somalia](#), but across the border into [Kenya](#) with devastating results/ Also in this category is [Iraq](#), which continues to be rocked by horrific violence and terrorism at the hands of Islamic State, which has taken over wide swaths of Iraqi territory.

Syria, [Libya](#), and [Yemen](#) have been added to this unfortunate echelon of the world's most politically unstable countries. [Syria](#) has been mired by the twin hazards of 1. a civil war as rebels oppose the Assad regime; and 2. the rampage of terror being carried out by Islamic State, which also seized control over vast portions of Syrian territory. Meanwhile, the post-Qaddhafi landscape of [Libya](#) has devolved into chaos as rival militias battle for control -- the elected government of the country notwithstanding. Rounding out this grim triad is [Yemen](#), which was dealing with a Houthi rebellion, secessionists in the south, as well as the threat of terrorism from al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula as well as Islamic State, while also being the site of a proxy war between Shi'a [Iran](#) and Sunni [Saudi Arabia](#).

Meanwhile, several Middle Eastern and North African countries, such as [Tunisia](#), [Egypt](#), and [Bahrain](#) were downgraded in recent years due to political instability occurring in the "season of unrest" sweeping the region since 2011 and continuing today. All three of these countries have stabilized in recent years and have been upgraded accordingly. In [Bahrain](#), the landscape had calmed. In [Egypt](#), the secular military-backed government has generated criticism for its crackdown on the Muslim Brotherhood; however, the country had ratified the presidency via democratic elections and were on track to hold parliamentary elections as the country moved along the path of democratization. Perhaps the most impressive story was coming out of [Tunisia](#) -- the country whose Jasmine Revolution sparked the entire Arab Spring -- and where after a few years of strife, a new progressive constitution was passed into law and a secular government had been elected to power. [Tunisia](#), [Egypt](#), and [Bahrain](#) have seen slight upgrades as these countries stabilize.

In Africa, the [Central African Republic](#) was downgraded the previous year due to the takeover of the government by Muslim Seleka rebels. Although the country has been trying to emerge from this crisis, the fact of the matter was that it was difficult to halt the precipitous decline into lawlessness in that country. [Zimbabwe](#) has maintained its consistently poor ranking due to the dictatorial regime of Mugabe, who continues to hold a tight grip on power, intimidates the opposition, squashes dissent, and oppresses the white farmer population of the country. Moving in

a slightly improved direction is [Nigeria](#), which has sported abysmal ratings due to the government's fecklessness in dealing with the threat posed by the Islamist terror group, Boko Haram. Under its newly-elected government, there appears to be more of a concerted effort to make national security a priority action item. [Mali](#) was also slightly upgraded due to its efforts to return to constitutional order following the 2012 coup and to neutralize the threat of separatists and Islamists. Political instability has visited [Burkina Faso](#) and [Burundi](#) as the leaders of those countries attempted to side-step constitutional limits to hold onto power. In [Burundi](#), an attempted coup ensued but quelled, and the president won a (questionable) new term in office; unrest has since punctuated the landscape. In [Burkina Faso](#), the political climate has turned stormy as a result of a successful coup that ended the rule of the president, and then a putsch against the transitional government. These two African countries have been downgraded as a result.

It should be noted that the African country of South [Sudan](#) -- the world's newest nation state -- has not been officially included in this assessment; however, it can be unofficially assessed to be in the vicinity of "3" due to its manifold political and economic challenges. [Guinea](#) has endured poor rankings throughout, but was slightly downgraded further over fears of social unrest and the Ebola heath crisis.

In Europe, [Ukraine](#) was downgraded due to the unrest facing that country following its Maidan revolution that triggered a pro-Russian uprising in the eastern part of the country. [Russia](#) was also implicated in the Ukrainian crisis due to its intervention on behalf of pro-Russian separatists, as well as its annexation of the Ukrainian territory of Crimea. [Serbia](#) and [Albania](#) were slightly downgraded due to eruptions of unrest, while [Romania](#) was slightly downgraded on the basis of corruption charges against the prime minister. [Spain](#), [Portugal](#), [Ireland](#), and [Italy](#) were downgraded due to debt woes and the concomitant effect on the euro zone. [Greece](#), another euro zone nation, was downgraded the previous year due to its sovereign debt crisis; however, the country successfully forged a rescue deal with international creditors and stayed within the Euro zone. Greek voters rewarded the hitherto unknown upstart party at the polls for these efforts. As a result, [Greece](#) was actually upgraded slightly as it proved to the world that it could endure the political and economic storms. Meanwhile, [Germany](#), [France](#), [Switzerland](#), the [United Kingdom](#), the [Netherlands](#), and the Scandinavian countries continue to post impressive ranking consistent with these countries' strong records of democracy, freedom, and peaceful transfers of power.

In Asia, [Nepal](#) was downgraded in response to continuous political instability well after landmark elections that prevails today. [Cambodia](#) was very slightly downgraded due to post-election instability that has resulted in occasional flares of violence. Despite the "trifecta of tragedy" in [Japan](#) in 2011 -- the earthquake, the ensuing tsunami, and the resulting nuclear crisis -- and the appreciable destabilization of the economic and political terrain therein, this country has only slightly been downgraded. Japan's challenges have been assessed to be transient, the government remains accountable, and there is little risk of default. Both [India](#) and China retain their rankings; [India](#) holds a slightly higher ranking than [China](#) due to its record of democratic representation and

accountability. Increasing violence and political instability in [Pakistan](#) resulted in a downgrade for this country's already low rating.

In the Americas, [Haiti](#) retained its downgraded status due to ongoing political and economic woes. [Mexico](#) was downgraded due to its alarming rate of crime. [Guatemala](#) was downgraded due to charges of corruption, the arrest of the president, and uncertainty over the outcome of elections. [Brazil](#) was downgraded due to the corruption charges erupting on the political landscape, the stalling of the economy, and the increasingly loud calls for the impeachment of President Rousseff. [Argentina](#) was downgraded due to its default on debt following the failure of talks with bond holders. [Venezuela](#) was downgraded due to the fact that the country's post-Chavez government is every bit as autocratic and nationalistic, but even more inclined to oppress its political opponents. [Colombia](#) was upgraded slightly due to efforts aimed at securing a peace deal with the FARC insurgents. A small but significant upgrade was attributed to [Cuba](#) due to its recent pro-business reforms and its normalization of ties with the United States. Meanwhile, the [United States](#), [Canada](#), [Costa Rica](#), [Panama](#), and most of the English-speaking countries of the Caribbean retain their strong rankings due to their records of stability and peaceful transfers of power.

In the Pacific, [Fiji](#) was upgraded due to its return to constitutional order and democracy with the holding of the first elections in eight years.

In Oceania, [Maldives](#) has been slightly downgraded due to the government's continued and rather relentless persecution of the country's former pro-democracy leader - former President Nasheed.

Source:

Dr. Denise Youngblood Coleman, Editor in Chief, CountryWatch Inc. www.countrywatch.com

Updated:

2015

Freedom Rankings

Freedom Rankings

Freedom in the World

Editor's Note: This ranking by Freedom House quantifies political freedom and civil liberties into a single combined index on each sovereign country's level of freedom and liberty. The initials "PR" and "CL" stand for Political Rights and Civil Liberties, respectively. The number 1 represents the most free countries and the number 7 represents the least free. Several countries fall in the continuum in between. The freedom ratings reflect an overall judgment based on survey results.

Country	PR	CL	Freedom Status	Trend Arrow
Afghanistan	6 ?	6	Not Free	
Albania*	3	3	Partly Free	
Algeria	6	5	Not Free	
Andorra*	1	1	Free	
Angola	6	5	Not Free	
Antigua and Barbuda*	3 ?	2	Free	
Argentina*	2	2	Free	
Armenia	6	4	Partly Free	
Australia*	1	1	Free	
Austria*	1	1	Free	
Azerbaijan	6	5	Not Free	

Bahamas*	1	1	Free	
Bahrain	6 ?	5	Not Free ?	
Bangladesh*	3 ?	4	Partly Free	
Barbados*	1	1	Free	
Belarus	7	6	Not Free	
Belgium*	1	1	Free	
Belize*	1	2	Free	
Benin*	2	2	Free	
Bhutan	4	5	Partly Free	
Bolivia*	3	3	Partly Free	
Bosnia-Herzegovina*	4	3	Partly Free	
Botswana*	3 ?	2	Free	
Brazil*	2	2	Free	
Brunei	6	5	Not Free	
Bulgaria*	2	2	Free	
Burkina Faso	5	3	Partly Free	
Burma	7	7	Not Free	
Burundi*	4	5	Partly Free	↑

Cambodia	6	5	Not Free	↓
Cameroon	6	6	Not Free	
Canada*	1	1	Free	
Cape Verde*	1	1	Free	
Central African Republic	5	5	Partly Free	
Chad	7	6	Not Free	
Chile*	1	1	Free	
China	7	6	Not Free	
Colombia*	3	4	Partly Free	
Comoros*	3	4	Partly Free	
Congo (Brazzaville)	6	5	Not Free	↓
Congo (Kinshasa)	6	6	Not Free	↓
Costa Rica*	1	1	Free	
Cote d'Ivoire	6	5	Not Free	
Croatia*	1 ?	2	Free	
Cuba	7	6	Not Free	
Cyprus*	1	1	Free	
Czech Republic*	1	1	Free	

Denmark*	1	1	Free	
Djibouti	5	5	Partly Free	
Dominica*	1	1	Free	
Dominican Republic*	2	2	Free	↓
East Timor*	3	4	Partly Free	
Ecuador*	3	3	Partly Free	
Egypt	6	5	Not Free	
El Salvador*	2	3	Free	
Equatorial Guinea	7	7	Not Free	
Eritrea	7	7 ?	Not Free	
Estonia*	1	1	Free	
Ethiopia	5	5	Partly Free	↓
Fiji	6	4	Partly Free	
Finland*	1	1	Free	
France*	1	1	Free	
Gabon	6	5 ?	Not Free ?	
The Gambia	5	5 ?	Partly Free	
Georgia	4	4	Partly Free	

Germany*	1	1	Free	
Ghana*	1	2	Free	
Greece*	1	2	Free	
Grenada*	1	2	Free	
Guatemala*	4 ?	4	Partly Free	
Guinea	7	6 ?	Not Free	
Guinea-Bissau*	4	4	Partly Free	
Guyana*	2	3	Free	
Haiti*	4	5	Partly Free	
Honduras	4 ?	4 ?	Partly Free	
Hungary*	1	1	Free	
Iceland*	1	1	Free	
India*	2	3	Free	
Indonesia*	2	3	Free	
Iran	6	6	Not Free	↓
Iraq	5 ?	6	Not Free	
Ireland*	1	1	Free	
Israel*	1	2	Free	

Italy*	1	2	Free	
Jamaica*	2	3	Free	
Japan*	1	2	Free	
Jordan	6 ?	5	Not Free ?	
Kazakhstan	6	5	Not Free	↓
Kenya	4	4 ?	Partly Free	
Kiribati*	1	1	Free	
Kosovo	5 ?	4 ?	Partly Free ?	
Kuwait	4	4	Partly Free	
Kyrgyzstan	6 ?	5 ?	Not Free ?	
Laos	7	6	Not Free	
Latvia*	2	1	Free	
Lebanon	5	3 ?	Partly Free	
Lesotho*	3 ?	3	Partly Free ?	
Liberia*	3	4	Partly Free	
Libya	7	7	Not Free	
Liechtenstein*	1	1	Free	
Lithuania*	1	1	Free	

Luxembourg*	1	1	Free	
Macedonia*	3	3	Partly Free	↑
Madagascar	6 ?	4 ?	Partly Free	
Malawi*	3 ?	4	Partly Free	
Malaysia	4	4	Partly Free	
Maldives*	3 ?	4	Partly Free	
Mali*	2	3	Free	
Malta*	1	1	Free	↓
Marshall Islands*	1	1	Free	
Mauritania	6	5	Not Free	
Mauritius*	1	2	Free	
Mexico*	2	3	Free	
Micronesia*	1	1	Free	
Moldova*	3 ?	4	Partly Free	
Monaco*	2	1	Free	
Mongolia*	2	2	Free	↑
Montenegro*	3	2 ?	Free ?	
Morocco	5	4	Partly Free	↓

Mozambique	4 ?	3	Partly Free	
Namibia*	2	2	Free	
Nauru*	1	1	Free	
Nepal	4	4	Partly Free	
Netherlands*	1	1	Free	
New Zealand*	1	1	Free	
Nicaragua*	4	4 ?	Partly Free	
Niger	5 ?	4	Partly Free	
Nigeria	5	4	Partly Free	↓
North Korea	7	7	Not Free	↓
Norway*	1	1	Free	
Oman	6	5	Not Free	
Pakistan	4	5	Partly Free	
Palau*	1	1	Free	
Panama*	1	2	Free	
Papua New Guinea*	4	3	Partly Free	
Paraguay*	3	3	Partly Free	
Peru*	2	3	Free	

Philippines	4	3	Partly Free	↓
Poland*	1	1	Free	
Portugal*	1	1	Free	
Qatar	6	5	Not Free	
Romania*	2	2	Free	
Russia	6	5	Not Free	↓
Rwanda	6	5	Not Free	
Saint Kitts and Nevis*	1	1	Free	
Saint Lucia*	1	1	Free	
Saint Vincent and Grenadines*	2	1	Free	
Samoa*	2	2	Free	
San Marino*	1	1	Free	
Sao Tome and Principe*	2	2	Free	
Saudi Arabia	7	6	Not Free	
Senegal*	3	3	Partly Free	
Serbia*	2 ?	2	Free	
Seychelles*	3	3	Partly Free	
Sierra Leone*	3	3	Partly Free	

Singapore	5	4	Partly Free	
Slovakia*	1	1	Free	↓
Slovenia*	1	1	Free	
Solomon Islands	4	3	Partly Free	
Somalia	7	7	Not Free	
South Africa*	2	2	Free	
South Korea*	1	2	Free	
Spain*	1	1	Free	
Sri Lanka*	4	4	Partly Free	
Sudan	7	7	Not Free	
Suriname*	2	2	Free	
Swaziland	7	5	Not Free	
Sweden*	1	1	Free	
Switzerland*	1	1	Free	↓
Syria	7	6	Not Free	
Taiwan*	1 ?	2 ?	Free	
Tajikistan	6	5	Not Free	
Tanzania	4	3	Partly Free	

Thailand	5	4	Partly Free	
Togo	5	4 ?	Partly Free	
Tonga	5	3	Partly Free	
Trinidad and Tobago*	2	2	Free	
Tunisia	7	5	Not Free	
Turkey*	3	3	Partly Free	↓
Turkmenistan	7	7	Not Free	
Tuvalu*	1	1	Free	
Uganda	5	4	Partly Free	
Ukraine*	3	2	Free	
United Arab Emirates	6	5	Not Free	
United Kingdom*	1	1	Free	
United States*	1	1	Free	
Uruguay*	1	1	Free	
Uzbekistan	7	7	Not Free	
Vanuatu*	2	2	Free	
Venezuela	5 ?	4	Partly Free	
Vietnam	7	5	Not Free	↓

Yemen	6 ?	5	Not Free ?	
Zambia*	3	4 ?	Partly Free	
Zimbabwe	6 ?	6	Not Free	

Methodology:

PR and CL stand for political rights and civil liberties, respectively; 1 represents the most free and 7 the least free rating. The ratings reflect an overall judgment based on survey results.

? ? up or down indicates a change in political rights, civil liberties, or status since the last survey.

↑ ↓ up or down indicates a trend of positive or negative changes that took place but that were not sufficient to result in a change in political rights or civil liberties ratings of 1-7.

* indicates a country's status as an electoral democracy.

Source:

This data is derived from the latest edition of Freedom House's Freedom in the World 2010 edition.

Available at URL: <http://www.freedomhouse.org>

Updated:

Reviewed in 2015

Human Rights

Human Rights in Liberia**Editor's Note:**

Former Liberian President Charles Taylor has been accused of supporting the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) rebels in neighboring Sierra Leone in their 11-year campaign of brutality and

bloodshed that left thousands dead and even more maimed. The conflict also gained world attention largely because of the RUF practice of abducting youth to be child soldiers, as well as the clandestine sale of "conflict" or "blood" diamonds to fund the civil war.

In June 2006, the United Nations agreed to transfer former Liberian leader, Charles Taylor, from prison in Sierra Leone to The Hague where he was expected to face trial for crimes against humanity. The Dutch government had said that it would host Taylor's trial so long as he would be imprisoned in another country if he was convicted. Then, the British agreed to allow Taylor to serve out a possible prison sentence in the United Kingdom, if he was found guilty after facing trial in The Hague.

In the realm of jurisprudence, Taylor was faced with 11 charges of war crimes, crimes against humanity, and violations of international law at the United Nations-backed Special Court for Sierra Leone. These crimes included specific charges of cannibalism, murder, rape, sexual slavery, enslavement, use of child soldiers, torture, looting, the hacking of limbs by Sierra Leone rebels, as well as the sale of weapons and ammunition in exchange for so-called "blood" or "conflict" diamonds. As of 2010, the war crimes trial of Taylor was ongoing at The Hague.

Overview

In November 2005, Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf was elected president of the Republic of Liberia. The election marked a step towards the consolidation of Liberia's transition from a near failed state to a democratic one. The elections followed the 2003 peace accords which ended three years of internal armed conflict.

Corruption in both the public and private sectors is endemic in Liberia and has contributed to the nation's political instability and subsequent armed conflicts. The legacy of corruption continues to impede the human rights situation in the nation.

From 2003 to 2005, more than 101,000 former combatants were disarmed, demobilized and reintegrated into civil society. Some 43,000 were left out of the reintegration process and have been heavily recruited by the Ivorian government.

In 2003, the Security Council mandated the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) to assist in restructuring and training the police, army, and judicial system. While there have been improvements in these areas, lack of donor support and judicial infrastructure have stalled the country's ability to establish the law. Many Liberian National Police continue to engage in criminal activities.

In June 2005, the Liberian Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) was signed. The TRC's intent is to investigate human rights violations committed between January 1978 and October 2003. The TRC began functioning in early 2006. Little is known on its actions as of press time.

Human trafficking, societal ethnic discrimination, child labor and child abuse, as well as ritualistic killings and deaths from mob violence are also issues of concern in Liberia.

Human Development Index (HDI) Rank:

See full listing of the Human Development Index located in the Social Overview of this report for this country's current rank.

Human Poverty Index Rank:

Not Ranked

Gini Index:

N/A

Life Expectancy at Birth (years):

41 years

Unemployment Rate:

85%

Population living on \$1 a day (%):

N/A

Population living on \$2 a day (%):

N/A

Population living beneath the Poverty Line (%):

80%

Internally Displaced People:

464,000

Note-Some 26,000 refugees from Sierra Leone and Cote d'Ivoire are currently seeking asylum in Liberia

Total Crime Rate (%):

N/A

Health Expenditure (% of GDP):

Public: N/A

% of GDP Spent on Education:

N/A

Human Rights Conventions Party to:

- International Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide
- International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination
- International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
- International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
- Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
- Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment
- Conventions on the Rights of the Child
- Convention relating to the Status of Refugees
- International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families (Signed but not yet ratified)
- Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court

*Human Development Index (HDI) is a composite index that measures the level of well-being in 177 nations in the world. It uses factors such as poverty, literacy, life-expectancy, education, gross domestic product, and purchasing power parity to assess the average achievements in each nation. It has been used in the United Nation's Human Development Report since 1993.

*Human Poverty Index Ranking is based on certain indicators used to calculate the Human Poverty Index. Probability at birth of not surviving to age 40, adult literacy rate, population without sustainable access to an improved water source, and population below income poverty line are the indicators assessed in this measure.

*The Gini Index measures inequality based on the distribution of family income or consumption. A value of 0 represents perfect equality (income being distributed equally), and a value of 100 perfect inequality (income all going to one individual).

*The calculation of the total crime rate is the % of the total population which has been effected by property crime, robbery, sexual assault, assault, or bribery (corruption) related occurrences.

Government Functions

The constitution of Liberia is modeled after the United States (U.S.) Constitution, with an elected president and bicameral legislature. The most recent Liberian Constitution was adopted on Jan. 6, 1986 and amended in July 1988. The constitution provides for a multiparty system of government

and incorporates powers to prevent the declaration of a one-party state, the dissolution of the legislature or the suspension of the judiciary. The constitution may be amended by a two-thirds majority of both National Assembly houses.

The government is divided into three independent branches: the executive, the legislature and the judiciary. The details of the three branches of government are discussed as follows:

Executive power is vested in the president, who is the head of state, head of government and commander in chief of the armed forces. The president is elected by universal adult suffrage for a six-year term; there is no presidential term limit. Following Article 63 of the constitution, if the president should die, resign, be impeached, or be declared incapable of carrying out his duties while in office he is to be succeeded by the vice president. The vice president is to serve out the remainder of the term without a provision for special elections.

Legislative power is vested in the bicameral National Assembly, comprised of the 30-member Senate and the 64-member House of Representatives. Members of both houses are directly elected by popular vote; members of the Senate are elected for nine-year terms, and members of the House are elected for six-year terms.

The principal judiciary body is the People's Supreme Court, headed by the chief justice and comprised of associate justices. The president appoints all justices. The judicial system also includes circuit and magisterial courts.

Government Structure

Names:

conventional long form:

Republic of Liberia

conventional short form:

Liberia

Type:

Republic

Executive Branch:

Chief of state and head of government:

President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf (won election in 2005 and inaugurated into power January 2006; she was re-elected most recently in 2011); the president is elected by popular vote for a six-year term and was eligible for a second term; see "Primer" below for details about the last elections of 2011.

2011 Elections:

Sirleaf-Johnson re-elected in second round of 2011 elections. See "Primer" below

Cabinet:

Appointed by the president

Legislative Branch:

Bicameral National Assembly:

Consists of the Senate and the House of Representatives

Senate:

30 members; directly elected by popular vote for nine-year terms in two-seat constituencies

House of Representatives:

73 members; directly elected by popular vote for six-year terms in single-seat constituencies

2011 elections:

Senate --

elections last held on October 11, 2011

election results for Senate --

percent of vote by party - NA; seats by party - UP 10, NPP 6, CDC 3, ADP 2, NUDP 2, LDP 1, LP 1, NDC 1, NDP 1, independents 3

House of Representatives --

elections last held on October 11, 2011

election results for House of Representatives --

percent of vote by party - NA; seats by party - UP 24, CDC 11, LP 7, NUDP 6, NDC 5, ADP 3,

NPP 3, MPC 2, LDP 1, LTP 1, NRP 1, independents 9

See "Primer" below for more information on 2011 elections

Primer on 2011 Presidential and Parliamentary Elections in Liberia:

(first round held on Oct. 11, 2011; second round to be held on Nov. 8, 2011)

Presidential and parliamentary elections were scheduled to be held in Liberia on Oct. 11, 2011. At stake was the presidency; if a candidate did not win an outright majority in the first round, a second round would be held on Nov. 8, 2011. Also at stake were all seats in the House of Representatives and half of the seats in the 30-member Senate. The election was to be overseen by the Liberian National Elections Commission (NEC).

At the presidential level, incumbent President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, who had been inaugurated into office in January 2006, was seeking another term. Johnson-Sirleaf was a Harvard-educated economist who earned the distinction of becoming the first democratically elected female president in Africa.

Also contesting the election was Liberty Party leader Charles Brumskine. The Congress for Democratic Change (CDC) nominated Winston Tubman, the nephew of former President William Tubman, as its candidate for the presidency. Earlier, in September 2010, Prince Johnson -- one of Liberia's most notorious and violent warlords -- was cleared to contest the country's upcoming presidential election. The National Elections Commission explained that Prince Johnson's party, the National Union for Democratic Progress, met the constitutional requirements to contest in the 2011 elections.

Clearly, the government commission's quest to bring Johnson to trial for crimes against humanity was not a factor in the decision. Prince Johnson's most significant claim to fame was the fact that he tortured and killed the country's former President Samuel K. Doe in 1990. Indeed, there was videotaped footage showing Johnson having a beer as he ordered Doe's ears to be cut off. Once an ally of former President Charles Taylor, who was now on trial at The Hague for war crimes, Johnson soon fell out of favor with Taylor. The power struggle between the two notorious rebel figures was accentuated when Johnson tried to claim leadership of Liberia in 1990. That attempt failed as rebel factions consolidated their support around Taylor and Johnson eventually left the country for a period of years.

Given the country's dark recent history, marked by the ravages of a brutal civil war fought by child soldiers and involving cannibalism, the resurgence of Prince Johnson on Liberia's now peaceful landscape was being viewed by human rights activists as worrying.

Note that in mid-September 2011, Liberia's opposition Movement for Progressive Change (MPC)

was attempting to legally block a number of leading candidates for the presidency from contesting the election. The MPC argued that incumbent President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, Charles Brumskine of the Liberty Party, and Winston Tubman of the CDC, should be respectively disqualified since they did not meet residency requirements to contest the presidency, set forth in the constitution. They pointed to a clause that states: "No person shall be eligible to hold the office of president or vice president, unless that person is resident in the Republic 10 years prior to his election." However, legal experts have argued that the constitutional provision does not explicitly call for residency 10 years "immediately" prior to election. It should also be noted that the provision was not applicable in the 2005 election that brought Johnson-Sirleaf to power since the constitution was suspended at that time.

Regardless, the Supreme Court was expected to quickly hear the case, given the stakes and the timing only weeks away from election day. The general consensus was that the Supreme Court, which has close ties to the government, would validate all the candidacies of the already-registered candidates." To that end, by the start of October 2011, as expected, incumbent President Johnson-Sirleaf and a number of other candidates were deemed qualified to contest the presidential election by the Supreme Court. The court ruled that despite claims of ambiguity, the constitution did indeed refer to ten years of residency immediately preceding the presidential election, and that standard should apply in the future. That being said, the court noted that due to the Liberian civil war, which lasted for 14 years and necessitated the flight of citizens from the country, it was impossible that the framers of the constitution could have contemplated the circumstances of civil crisis. Thus, those circumstances should not disqualify candidates from the contesting the presidency in this case.

Ahead of election day, President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf won a non-electoral prize when she was named a co-recipient of the 2011 Nobel Peace Prize for her efforts in restoring peace to Liberia. In a country with widespread poverty, unemployment, and illiteracy, though, it was unlikely that this international prize would factor into the voting choices of Liberians at the polls.

Her main rival, Winston Tubman, dismissed Johnson-Sirleaf's Nobel Peace Prize, instead pointing to the presence of United Nations troops still in Liberia. He said, "We have peace and stability here now, in my view, largely because the United Nations presence is still here. "What effort has been made to really unite our people and heal the wound?" Other critics have suggested that Johnson-Sirleaf has received credit for things she had not actually accomplished.

On election day, voter turnout was said to be high, but results were not immediately available. Days later, it was revealed that a second election round was in the offing between President Johnson-Sirleaf of the ruling Unity Party and Tubman of the opposition Congress for Democratic Change (CDC). The incumbent president had 44 percent of the vote share while Tubman had 33 percent; other candidates made up the rest of the votes. No one candidate apparently secured 50 percent of the vote share, therefore necessitating a run-off between the two top candidates. To that end, a second round between President Johnson-Sirleaf and Tubman was tentatively

scheduled to be held on Nov. 8, 2011.

That being said, amidst complaints of fraud, the opposition Congress for Democratic Change (CDC) warned that it would not take part in the November 8, 2011 presidential run-off election. The CDC called for Liberia's National Elections Commission (NEC) to be replaced, accusing the NEC of participating in ballot stuffing, to the benefit of the incumbent president. In an attempt to quiet claims of fraud and to ensure the integrity of the electoral process, the chairman of the NEC, James Fromayan, announced that he was stepping aside. Yet despite this development, the CDC decided to boycott a peace negotiations conference intended to discuss for course forward and the conduct of the second round of the elections.

By Nov. 5, 2011, Tubman was making it clear that he would not take part in the presidential run off, set to take place in only days. Tubman instead accused incumbent President Johnson-Sirleaf of trying to reinstate a one-party state in Liberia. "We will never reward fraud and abuse of power and will never grant legitimacy to a corrupt political process," Tubman said.

President Johnson-Sirleaf responded to the latest developments by urging Liberians to go to the polls and vote anyway, saying, "Mr. Winston Tubman has called on Liberians to give up their franchise, their right to vote. He has called people to violate the constitution." She continued, "When you start violating the constitution, where do you stop? If this is how they run their party, think of how they would have run our country! The Constitution governs us; it protects us; it is the thread that holds us all together."

Meanwhile, voices from various quarters, including the United States, the European Union, and the African Union, urged Tubman to reconsider his decision to pull out of the race, warning that a boycott and the associated dissension could risk destabilizing the country. To that end, on the eve of the run off election, riots erupted across Liberia, leading to some deaths. Tubman did little to alleviate the state of unrest when he said that a deadly shooting at a rally was an attempt to assassinate him; Liberian police dismissed his claim, characterizing it as colossally far-fetched. In an interview with Agence France Presse, Police Inspector General Marc Amblard said, "You would have to be monumentally stupid to make an attempt to assassinate not only Mr. Tubman, but any political figure. It wasn't the plan then, now or tomorrow."

On the day of the second round of the election, voters returned to the polls. The results were tallied, although the outcome was certainly a foregone conclusion. Given the opposition's boycott and the fact that many voters stayed away from the polls, fearing violence, President Johnson-Sirleaf was expected to hold onto the presidency of Liberia. Indeed, President Johnson-Sirleaf was re-elected with 90.8 percent of the vote.

With Tubman refusing to accept the results of the elections, the legitimacy of the presidency of Johnson-Sirleaf was expected to undergo grave challenges. That being said, Tubman met in a closed door meeting with Sirleaf-Johnson. It was hoped that the meeting would thaw the climate

of tension.

At the legislative level, see election results listed above.

Judicial Branch:

Supreme Court

Constitution:

Jan. 6, 1986; amended July 1988

Legal System:

Dual system of statutory law based on Anglo-American common law for the modern sector and customary law based on unwritten tribal practices for indigenous sector

Administrative Divisions:

15 counties; Bomi, Bong, Gbarpolu, Grand Bassa, Grand Cape Mount, Grand Gedeh, Grand Kru, Lofa, Margibi, Maryland, Montserrado, Nimba, River Cess, River Gee, Sinoe

Political Parties and Leaders:

Alliance for Peace and Democracy or APD [Marcus S. G. DAHN]

Alternative National Congress or ANC [Orishil GOULD]

Congress for Democratic Change or CDC [George WEAH]

Liberia Destiny Party or LDP [Nathaniel BARNES]

Liberia Transformation Party or LTP [Julius SUKU]

Liberty Party or LP [J. Fonati KOFFA]

Movement for Progressive Change or MPC [Simeon FREEMAN]

National Democratic Coalition or NDC [Dew MAYSON]

National Democratic Party of Liberia or NDPL [D. Nyandeh SIEH]

National Patriotic Party or NPP [Theophilus C. GOULD]

National Reformist Party or NRP [Maximillian T. W. DIABE]

National Union for Democratic Progress or NUDP [Victor BARNEY]

Unity Party or UP [Varney SHERMAN]

Suffrage:

18 years of age; universal

Principal Government Officials

Government of Liberia:

Pres. Ellen JOHNSON SIRLEAF
Vice Pres. Joseph BOAKAI
Min. of Agriculture Florence CHENOWETH
Min. of Commerce & Industry Axel Marcel ADDY
Min. of Education Etmonia David TARPEH
Min. of Finance & Development Planning Amara KONNEH
Min. of Foreign Affairs Augustine Kpehe NGAFUAN
Min. of Gender & Development Julia DUNCAN-CASSELL
Min. of Health & Social Welfare Walter GWENINGALE
Min. of Information, Culture, & Tourism Lewis BROWN
Min. of Internal Affairs Morris DUKULY
Min. of Justice Christiana TAH
Min. of Labor Juah LAWSON
Min. of Land, Mines, & Energy Patrick SENDOLO
Min. of National Defense Brownie SAMUKAI
Min. of Posts & Telecommunications Frederick NORKEH
Min. of Public Works Antoinette WEEKS
Min. of Transportation S. Tornolah VARPILAH
Min. of Youth & Sport Eugene NAGBE
Min. of State for Presidential Affairs Edward MCLAIN, Jr.
Executive Governor, Central Bank of Liberia Joseph MILLS JONES
Ambassador to the US Jeremiah SULUNTEH
Permanent Representative to the UN, New York Marjon Vashti KAMARA

-- as of 2015

Leader Biography

Leader Biography

Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf is the first elected female leader in Africa. On Jan. 16, 2006, she was sworn in as the new Liberian president. The swearing-in ceremony also formalized Johnson-Sirleaf's position as Liberia's first elected head of state since the end of the war in 2003. Johnson-Sirleaf won the November run-off election against Liberian soccer star, George Weah, by garnering an overwhelming 59 percent of the votes cast.

On the eve of her inauguration, she promised to restore hope after years of civil war and acknowledged the enormity of the task in front of her. In these regards, she said: "I am excited by the potential of what I represent - the aspirations and expectations of women in Liberia, African women and women all over the world. I am also humbled, humbled by the enormity of the challenge we face." She also noted that law and order were the main challenges facing Liberia. Johnson-Sirleaf has gained significant technocratic experience as a former World Bank economist and has been nicknamed the "Iron Lady."

Her inauguration took place under a cloak of tremendous security provided by Liberian police and around 500 United Nations peacekeepers, and with the added benefit of two United States Navy warships stationed off Liberia's coast. The ceremony itself was a modest affair since most of the capital city of Monrovia lies in a fairly dilapidated state after 14 years of war. Nevertheless, attendees included United States First Lady Laura Bush; United States Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice; President Thabo Mbeki of South Africa; President Abdoulaye Wade of Senegal; President John Kufuor of Ghana; President Laurent Gbagbo of Ivory Coast and the Foreign Minister of China.

Note that presidential elections were to held in 2011. With the results were tallied, the outcome was

certainly a foregone conclusion. Given the opposition's boycott and the fact that many voters stayed away from the polls, fearing violence, President Johnson-Sirleaf was expected to hold onto the presidency of Liberia. Indeed, President Johnson-Sirleaf was re-elected with 90.8 percent of the vote.

With Tubman refusing to accept the results of the elections, the legitimacy of the presidency of Johnson-Sirleaf was expected to undergo grave challenges. That being said, Tubman met in a closed door meeting with Sirleaf-Johnson. It was hoped that the meeting would thaw the climate of tension.

NOTE: President Johnson-Sirleaf was the co-recipient of the 2011 Nobel Peace Prize; see "Political Conditions" for details. She was re-elected to power in late 2011; see "Political Conditions" for details.

Foreign Relations

General Relations

Liberia was a charter member of the United Nations and remains a staunch supporter of the United Nations' (U.N.) specialized agencies. Liberia has also been a leader in pan-African affairs and has played an important role in the founding of the Organization of African Unity. The government is represented at most major conferences of African leaders.

Regional Relations

ECOWAS

Liberia's interest in the development of regional economic organizations contributed to the creation of the Economic Community of West African States, also known as ECOWAS. It also cooperated in economic development and customs matters with Sierra Leone and Guinea in the Mano River Union.

ECOWAS played a significant military role in the region during the 1990s. The organization set up mechanisms in 1990 to mediate disputes between its members, all of whom are pledged to mutual non-aggression. In the same year the ECOWAS Monitoring Group, or ECOMOG, a peacekeeping force, was sent to Liberia to try to mediate a civil war. ECOWAS efforts to finalize a peace settlement and establish a government acceptable to all Liberian factions failed initially, and fighting continued through 1993. However, by the end of that year ECOWAS had helped to oversee the negotiation of a peace treaty and the creation of a transitional government, which took power in 1994. When fighting again erupted between factions in early 1996, ECOMOG forces occupied the Liberian capital of Monrovia.

Sierra Leone

In July 1999, Liberian President Charles Taylor, announced what he described as a "new initiative" to further the peace process in Sierra Leone. He promised to draw upon the Liberian experience to impress upon RUF leader Corporal Foday Sankoh the need for a negotiated settlement in Sierra Leone.

President Taylor was sufficiently criticized by Western powers, and especially the United States (U.S.), for his role in supporting Sankoh's rebel faction during Sierra Leone's civil war. Taylor has also been accused of trafficking diamonds out of Sierra Leone and weapons into Sierra Leone.

The arrest of Sankoh by U.N. forces in 2000 did not appear to have diminished Liberian-Libyan relations. Sankoh, Taylor and Burkina Faso President, Blaise Compaore, all trained together under the tutelage of Libyan President Muammar al-Qadhafi in the mid-1980s. Qadhafi has shown his unbending support for his prodigies in power and was expected to continue to support the Taylor regime despite mounting international opposition. Sankoh, meanwhile, died in 2003 before facing prosecution.

In 2003, President Taylor became the second sitting world leader to be indicted for war crimes (the first was Slobodan Milosevic of the former Yugoslavia). After years of trans-border war and bloodshed across West Africa, the Liberian leader was indicted for his involvement in the vicious war that plagued Sierra Leone and that drew in many neighboring countries, as discussed above.

The U.N. also ordered that Taylor's bank accounts in Switzerland be frozen. The prosecutor for the Special Court on Sierra Leone noted that the money in the Swiss bank accounts might function as evidence of the criminal activities alleged by the court. Spokespersons from the United Nations

Special Court on Sierra Leone maintained their stance that Taylor will not be able to evade the charges or the court case against him. Nevertheless, because Taylor -- who stepped down from office -- actually sought asylum in Nigeria, he could effectively escape international prosecution for war crimes.

Note that as of 2012, Taylor was found guilty of war crimes at The Hague; see "Political Conditions" for details.

Africa Union

At its July 2-11, 2001, meeting in Lusaka, Zambia, the Organization of African Unity officially approved the transformation of the Organization of African Unity into the new African Union. Former foreign minister of Cote d'Ivoire, Amara Essy, was elected the first Secretary-General of the African Union. United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan, reacted with the statement that, "This historic effort will require leadership, courage and willingness to depart from the ways of the past, if it is to do for Africa what the European Union has done for Europe." The goal of the African Union is to be a continental body that will pave the way to a better life for all Africans. Where the OAU was criticized for its lack of action on economic and social fronts, the African Union is charged with development as its primary task. Following a model based on the European Union, the Africa Union is intended to bridge the economic gaps between African countries and thrust the continent onto the world economic stage as a single entity. The African Union Bill was based on a convergence of South African president Thabo Mbeki's African development plan, and the Plan Omega proposed by Senegalese president Abdoulaye Wade. It therefore adds to its economic mandate the political mandate that all of Africa should seek democratic consolidation.

There are significant criticisms to the new African Union, though. Some fear that too much faith is being placed in a document that makes more sense in theory than in practice. The strongest criticism, however, is that the African Union's largest force has been Libyan President Muammar al-Qadhafi. The U.S. has made its objections to the Union clear no doubt due to a lack of trust in Qadhafi's motives. Many African leaders backed the Union even though they also demonstrated a lack of faith in Qadhafi's motives. At the opening of the meeting of the OAU leaders noted that Qadhafi failed to mention Africa's founding fathers despite the fact that it was Ghana's Kwame Nkrumah who was the founder of pan-Africanism some forty years ago. Indeed, Qadhafi has backed groups that are markedly anti-pan-Africanist in his own country. Other comments challenged the controversial role Libyan nationals often play in sub-Saharan African countries. Yet the most controversial position of Qadhafi no doubt was his statement that "We cannot be neutral here. We are here for the Africans, not the Europeans. We are here for the blacks, not for the whites." With Louis Farrakhan, leader of the U.S.-based Nation of Islam movement, standing behind him, this statement was taken as an affront to increased western relations as opposed to the Union's goal of increasing economic ties with wealthier countries.

Other Significant Relations

Relations between Liberia and the United States have been friendly for most of the period since Liberia's independence in 1847. Official U.S. policy has focused on maintaining and strengthening those ties.

World War II further consolidated Liberian-American relations. The U.S. built air bases and one of Africa's first international airports at Robertsfield. About 5,000 black American troops were stationed in Liberia during the war and seaplane anti-submarine patrols were flown from Lake Piso, near Robertsport.

America built a number of military installations in Liberia during the Cold War, including a radio transmitter (Voice of America) near Monrovia that transmits to the entire continent, and a satellite tracking station (Omega), one of seven such installations in the world.

Numerous military and private investments were made to Liberia in exchange for Liberian land and loyalty during and after World War II.

Following Liberia's civil war, the U.S. began investing significantly in Liberian peace. As noted by former U.S. President Jimmy Carter in 1997, the success of Liberia and its continued stability are largely contingent on whether the "international community will be generous in supporting this troubled nation's effort to come back to life."

Following concerns over Liberia's human rights record, its role in the Sierra Leone civil war, and a questionable commitment to reforms aimed at enhancing the quality of governance, the U.S. dramatically reduced its presence in Liberia in 1999 and early 2000. However, the USAID continues to assist and support Liberia's efforts to improve the welfare of its people, requesting \$7.3 million in development assistance and \$17.6 million overall from the U.S. Congress for Liberian programs for FY 2000. Additional U.S. support has come from private businesses, as well as missionary and educational organizations.

In July 2000, President Taylor met with U.S. Under-Secretary of State Thomas Pickering. Even though Pickering acknowledged that Taylor's role in Sierra Leone had decreased since the arrest of Sankoh in May 2000, he still expressed great alarm, accusing Taylor of playing a large and negative role in Sierra Leone's diamond trade and smuggling arms into Sierra Leone for profit. The U.S. threatened to further downgrade its relations with Monrovia and perhaps even impose sanctions if Taylor did not halt these practices. See above for further details about the United Nations' indictment against Taylor.

With the outbreak of hostilities between Taylor's government and rebels in 2003, the United States

sent a small contingent of marines to Liberia to help in peacekeeping activities.

Meanwhile, in August 1999, the United Nations World Food Program, or WFP, approved US\$106 million dollars. The amount is to feed nearly two million refugees who have been displaced by the civil wars in Liberia and Sierra Leone. WFP announced this in Abidjan and said the program would provide 173,000 tons of food over a one-year period. The aid will go to refugees now living in Guinea, Ivory Coast and Ghana. The aid will also cover those internally displaced in Liberia and Sierra Leone. The WFP aid program will provide funding or reconstruction efforts to help refugees resettle in their homes.

Also, the European Union gave ECOWAS US\$2.3 million in 1999 to bring the total EU aid to the region to US\$50 million. The amount was to be used for conflict prevention and resolution. ECOWAS and the EU signed the agreement for the grant in Abidjan, Cote d'Ivoire. ECOWAS officials said the agreement would enable it to monitor conflicts in the sub-region. ECOWAS will also open observer offices in Benin, Liberia, The Gambia and Burkina Faso. Most of the funds were to go to Liberia, to help maintain peace. However, the EU, expressing similar concerns about human rights abuses and Liberia's role in Sierra Leone, suspended \$50 million in development aid.

The transitional government took power in October 2003 with Gyude Bryant at its head. The election, which was held in 2005, was intended to bring a democratizing and stabilizing influence to post-war Liberia. The government was working closely with the U.N. to bring peace to the country and begin rebuilding efforts. While U.N. countries pledged donations of \$500 million to make this possible, the U.N. also announced that timber and diamond sanctions would remain in place until the transitional government demonstrated its ability to maintain peace.

Editor's Note:

The indictment of Charles Taylor by the U.N., followed by his conviction of war crimes in 2012, was expected to change the climate of international relations regarding Liberia, however, the full impact remains yet unknown. The country's reputation was helped by the decision to grant President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf -- the first elected female leader in Africa -- the Nobel Peace Prize in 2011. See "Political Conditions" for details regarding these key developments.

Written by Dr. Denise Youngblood Coleman, Editor in Chief at CountryWatch.com; see Bibliography for research sources. Supplementary sources: Africa Confidential, the Economist, Lexis-Nexis, USAID, the World Bank.

National Security

External Threats

Coupled with its own civil war, regional instability has posed an ongoing threat to Liberia's security. What began as two distinct insurgent movements in Liberia and Sierra Leone gradually developed into a tripartite affair that involved Guinea, as well. Rampant instability and ultimately one of Africa's bloodiest civil wars began to unfold in Liberia in 1985. Similarly, violence erupted in Sierra Leone in 1991. In 1999, under President Charles Taylor, the government of Liberia allegedly began to provide support to the principle rebel force in Sierra Leone, the Revolutionary United Front (RUF), in a lucrative exchange for diamonds. That same year, Liberian rebels based near the Guinean border began to attack Taylor's forces. The Guinean government accused Liberian forces of violating Guinea's territorial integrity in pursuit of the rebels. Likewise, Taylor alleged that Guinean forces had launched cross-border attacks into Liberia. With support from Taylor, Guinean dissidents and the RUF commenced major strikes against targets in Guinea in September 2000. The violence killed approximately 1,000 Guineans and displaced an additional 100,000, as well as many foreign refugees residing in Guinea. Guinea responded by providing support to a Liberian insurgent movement, the Liberians United For Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD), in its bid to oust Charles Taylor. In September 2000, Guinean soldiers, police, and civilian militia groups rounded up several thousand Liberian and Sierra Leonean refugees residing in Guinea, some of whom they proceeded to beat and rape. Approximately 3,000 refugees were ultimately detained. Guinean authorities had released most by the end of 2000. In late 2000, Guinean forces also began to attack RUF bases in Sierra Leone.

Hostilities in the region have generally subsided, leading to greater stability in Liberia, Guinea and Sierra Leone. Per the July 1999 Lome Peace Agreement, RUF leader Foday Sankoh became the vice president of Sierra Leone and several RUF members were appointed to cabinet-level positions. The RUF's repeated, egregious violations of the terms of the agreement, including incursions into Guinea, however, led to their removal from office and the subsequent arrests of Sankoh, as well as other RUF officials. A second agreement in 2001 met with greater success and ultimately contributed to a reduction of hostilities along the border between Guinea and Sierra Leone. In January 2002, Sierra Leone's President, Ahmad Kabbah, officially declared an end to the nation's longstanding civil war. In the summer of 2002, a special court was created in Sierra Leone to bring those guilty of perpetuating the intense violence there to justice. Liberian President Charles Taylor and jailed RUF leader Foday Sankoh were among those ultimately indicted. The latter died in prison in July 2003. In August, under intense pressure from the international community, Taylor accepted exile in neighboring Nigeria. A multinational peacekeeping force entered Liberia. A peace

accord facilitated the ended hostilities there and established an interim government (see also below section on insurgencies).

In addition to hostilities with Guinea, instability in Côte d'Ivoire has posed an ongoing threat to Liberia's security. After a comparatively stable post-colonial history, Côte d'Ivoire fell into disarray in 1999. A faltering economy, coupled with government mismanagement and corruption, precipitated the nation's first military coup in December of that year, under the direction of General Robert Guei. Laurent Gbagbo subsequently wrested control of the country from him, but violence between the rival factions continued. Gbagbo survived coup attempts in January 2001 and September 2002. In the aftermath of the second, the central government took drastic measures to stave off future insurrection. The crackdown fostered widespread hostility and a civil war erupted, pitting government troops against rebel forces. Between October 2002 and January 2003, French soldiers 1,200 troops from five West African nations deployed to the region on a peacekeeping mission. The French-brokered Linas-Marcoussis Accord led a cessation of hostilities. Most of the former rebels have accepted President Gbagbo's authority. Some continue to operate in the northern and western regions of the country, however, contributing to an ongoing security threat along the border between Côte d'Ivoire and Liberia. Furthermore, the government of Côte d'Ivoire has accused Liberia of supporting the remaining anti-government forces there, exacerbating tension between the two countries.

Although Liberia's domestic fighting among disputing factions was declared over in 2003, much civil unrest persisted, and some 315,000 refugees remained in neighboring countries. Also, since 2003, the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) has maintained about 18,000 peacekeepers in Liberia to help calm the situation. In 2005, elections took place and the country has been on more stable footing since that time.

Crime

The crime rate in Liberia is generally high, including incidences of petty theft, burglary, and armed robbery. Liberia serves as an interim destination for Southeast and Southwest Asian heroin and South American cocaine bound for the Europe and the United States. The United States (U.S.) Department of State also reports that business fraud has become prevalent in Liberia. Once generally confined to Nigeria, advance fee schemes have spread to other countries in the region. The perpetrators often target foreigners. One common variation begins with an unsolicited correspondence, generally an e-mail, which offers the recipient the promise of high returns on an investment. The hopeful victim is required to pay a series of advance fees before collecting any compensation. The criminals keep the fees, without fulfilling their obligation to pay the duped investor. Another familiar take on the advance fee scheme commences with a solicitation to assist in transferring a large sum of money out of the country. The addressee is promised compensation in return for facilitating the transaction, but is required to pay 'taxes' in advance or to provide confidential information, such as a blank, signed invoice or a bank account number, in turn used to

perpetrate a theft.

Insurgencies

Rampant political instability has plagued Liberia for much of the last two decades. Rigged elections brought Samuel Doe to power in 1985. His rule ushered in a period of rampant human rights abuses, corruption, and generally tumultuous conditions in a previously stable Liberia. Doe weathered an attempted military coup in 1985. Four years later, a group of rebels led by Charles Taylor invaded from a base in Côte d'Ivoire. The ensuing seven-year civil war claimed the lives of over 200,000 Liberians and displaced a million more. Doe himself was killed in 1990. After the warring factions negotiated a peace, Liberia held national elections in 1997, which confirmed Charles Taylor as the new president. Taylor's administration did not do much to improve conditions in Liberia. His support for Sierra Leone's ruthless insurgent movement, the Revolutionary United Front, in particular undermined the security of the entire region. Taylor faced substantial internal opposition, in the form of various Liberian insurgent movements.

Conditions in Liberia began to improve in 2002. That summer, a special court was created in Sierra Leone to bring those guilty of perpetuating the intense violence there to justice. Charles Taylor was among those ultimately indicted. In August, under intense pressure from the international community, Taylor accepted exile in neighboring Nigeria. A multinational peacekeeping force entered Liberia. A peace accord facilitated the end of hostilities there and established an interim government under Gyude Bryant. Elections took place in late 2005 and brought Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf to power. Until her inauguration in 2006, the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) was to maintain a presence there. While UNMIL has successfully restored a semblance of order to the capital of Monrovia, armed factions continued to operate throughout most of the rest of Liberia (see also sections on external threats and terrorism).

Terrorism

Under Charles Taylor, the Liberian government fomented strong ties to Sierra Leone's main insurgent movement, the Revolutionary United Front (RUF). Throughout its existence, RUF perpetrated numerous atrocities against non-combatants tantamount to acts of terrorism. In addition to attacks against government forces and civilians in Sierra Leone, it also participated in a major cross-border assault in Guinea in September 2000 that ultimately killed 1,000 individuals and displaced an additional 100,000. While there, RUF rebels allegedly kidnapped two foreign Catholic priests, who ultimately escaped. Other assaults against foreigners include the 2000 killing of a Togolese United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees staff employee and the kidnapping of an Ivorian secretary. RUF essentially ceased to exist after Sierra Leone's civil war ended in January 2002. In August 2003, Charles Taylor accepted exile in neighboring Nigeria (also see above sections on external threats and insurgencies).

Liberia is party to ten of the twelve international conventions and protocols pertaining to terrorism.

Defense Forces

Military Data

Military Branches:

Armed Forces of Liberia(AFL): Army, Navy, Air Force

Eligible age to enter service:

18 for voluntary service

Mandatory Service Terms:

No conscription

Manpower in general population-fit for military service:

males age 16-49: 524,243

females age 16-49: 544,349

Manpower reaching eligible age annually:

males: 36,585

females: 38,516

Military Expenditures-Percent of GDP:

0.82%

Chapter 3

Economic Overview

Economic Overview

Overview

Liberia is richly endowed with water, mineral resources, forests, and a climate favorable to agriculture. However, the economy was devastated by about fifteen years of intermittent civil war through 2003, and the country faces daunting reconstruction challenges. The physical infrastructure has been largely destroyed; government institutions lack the basic capacity for economic management, and the once considerable human capital has been significantly eroded.

Since taking office in January 2006, the new government under President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf has achieved significant progress in laying a sound foundation for the country's post-war reconstruction and sustaining growth. Progress has been made in strengthening public revenues and public finance management, improving governance, and strengthening the banking sector. These achievements owe much to the support from the international community. Liberia's long-standing arrears to the World Bank, African Development Bank, and the IMF have been cleared; considerable financial help from the donors has contributed to Liberia's reconstruction efforts; and the political and security situation in Liberia remains stable, with the United Nations peacekeeping force of 15,000 soldiers and police being the cornerstone of security for the country. Although the global economic crisis has adversely affected Liberia through falling exports and investment, economic growth remained positive in 2009, and was expected to pick up in 2010 with an improving external environment. Also, the Liberian government has continued implementing appropriate policies and structural reforms under difficult external circumstances.

With embargos on timber and diamond exports being lifted, the government is seeing new sources of revenue. For example, Liberia shipped its first major timber exports to Europe in 2010. The country also reached its Heavily Indebted Poor Countries initiative completion point in 2010, resulting in the permanent elimination of nearly \$5 billion of international debt. The new status will enable Liberia to establish a sovereign credit rating and issue bonds. Growth accelerated in 2011, supported by the resumption of iron ore production and increased output in the rubber and forestry sectors. The African Development Bank approved a grant of \$48 million in 2011 to support economic governance and competitiveness. Rebuilding infrastructure and raising incomes will depend on generous financial and technical assistance from donor countries and foreign investment in key sectors, such as infrastructure and power generation. In the first half of 2012, the International Monetary Fund completed the sixth review of Liberia's extended credit facility,

bringing total disbursements to over \$379 million. In May 2012, the IMF said the medium-term outlook for Liberia's economy remained favorable due to increasing exports, strong foreign investment, and rising activity in the services sector. But slowing global demand for commodities and volatile food and fuel prices pose challenges. Continued prudent macroeconomic policies will be important to consolidate the achievements thus far, tackle the vulnerabilities, support reduction in poverty, and mobilize donor support. Overall, growth continued to be strong in 2012 due to favorable world prices for the country's commodities.

In July 2013, President Johnson-Sirleaf dismissed Liberia's auditor-general and the head of the public procurement agency (GSA) in an effort to eradicate public sector corruption. A statement by the President's office said Auditor-General Robert Kilby was being let go for a clear conflict of interest related to his private business dealings. Nearly all the \$8 billion worth of resource contracts signed since 2009 violated Liberia's laws and showed irregularities, according to a recent audit of resource contracts by the accounting firm Moore Stephens cited in a Reuters article. Meanwhile, President Johnson-Sirleaf projected that economic growth could hit double digits within two years due to the impact of foreign investment.

In late September 2014, the IMF's executive board – in an expedited decision – approved US\$49 million in emergency financial assistance to Liberia to help the country respond to the Ebola outbreak. The money was meant to help cover part of the country's immediate balance of payments and fiscal needs.

While the crisis was still unfolding, preliminary IMF estimates indicated that growth could decline by at least 3 to 3.5 percent in Liberia in 2014 because of the outbreak.

Since Ebola was first detected in Guinea in March – spreading to neighboring Sierra Leone and Liberia – the Ebola epidemic as of late October 2014 had killed more than 4,900 people and was the world's worst recorded outbreak of the deadly hemorrhagic fever.

Liberia was the West African nation hardest hit by the Ebola outbreak. By October 2014, the country was facing recession and possibly in need of more aid from the IMF. "Our economy was projected to grow by 5.9 percent. That growth has been revised down to 1 percent," Finance Minister Amara Konneh told Reuters in late October 2014. "Technically, the economy is in recession."

Konneh added that the nation's service sector had taken the biggest hit with activity "declining significantly by some 10 percent." Meanwhile, the agricultural sector had shrunk by 12 percent, while mining and manufacturing were also under heavy pressure. Government revenues had dropped 20 percent. At the same time, Liberia has had to ramp up spending by some 35 percent, leaving a budget gap of around \$106 million, according to Konneh.

However, in 2014 as the Ebola virus began to spread, the economy declined and many businesses departed, taking capital and expertise with them. The epidemic forced the government to divert scarce resources to combat the spread of the virus, reducing funds available for needed public investment.

In September 2015, Liberia's president said in an interview with Reuters that the country would need two years to regain its economic footing after being battered by the Ebola epidemic, as it worked to boost access to electricity and infrastructure and diversify the economy.

Liberia was declared free of the Ebola virus for a second time on Sept. 3, 2015, entering a 90-day period of heightened surveillance. The country was previously declared Ebola-free in May 2015 but more cases appeared in late June. Meanwhile, the United States approved a \$257 million grant to Liberia under its Millennium Challenge Compact program, which President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf said she hoped to dedicate to expanding the country's power capacity.

Economic Performance

Supported by continued peace and large donor presence, economic recovery gathered momentum in 2006 and continued in 2007, with real GDP expanding, driven by construction, agriculture, mining, and services. GDP growth moderated in 2008 as an impact of rising world food and fuel prices, and declined further in 2009 as a result of the global economic crisis. By 2010, GDP growth had rebounded.

According to CountryWatch estimated calculations for 2014:

Real GDP growth rate was: 7.5 percent

The fiscal deficit/surplus as percent of GDP (%) was: -2.5 percent

Inflation was measured at: 9.9 percent

Updated in 2015

**Please note that the figures in our Economic Performance section are estimates or forecasts based on IMF-based data that are formulated using CountryWatch models of analysis.*

Supplementary Sources: The International Monetary Fund and Reuters

Nominal GDP and Components

Nominal GDP and Components					
	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Nominal GDP (LCU billions)	1.545	1.736	1.946	2.027	2.015
Nominal GDP Growth Rate (%)	19.549	12.301	12.158	4.136	-0.5920
Consumption (LCU billions)	1.928	1.991	2.143	2.390	2.362
Government Expenditure (LCU billions)	0.2348	0.2949	0.3540	0.3290	0.3252
Gross Capital Formation (LCU billions)	0.3870	0.4403	0.4652	0.4514	0.5112
Exports of Goods & Services (LCU billions)	0.4229	0.5611	0.6575	0.5222	0.4803
Imports of Goods & Services (LCU billions)	1.427	1.552	1.674	1.666	1.664

Population and GDP Per Capita

Population and GDP Per Capita					
	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Population, total (million)	3.876	3.977	4.081	4.187	4.296
Population growth (%)	2.594	2.606	2.615	2.597	2.603
Nominal GDP per Capita (LCU 1000s)	398.710	436.384	476.966	484.118	469.041

Real GDP and Inflation

Real GDP and Inflation					
	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Real Gross Domestic Product (LCU billions 2005 base)	0.7594	0.8145	0.8833	0.9025	0.9042
Real GDP Growth Rate (%)	7.721	7.245	8.445	2.179	0.1850
GDP Deflator (2005=100.0)	203.490	213.083	220.378	224.599	222.857
Inflation, GDP Deflator (%)	10.980	4.714	3.424	1.915	-0.7756

Government Spending and Taxation

Government Spending and Taxation					
	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Government Fiscal Budget (billions)	0.4470	0.5260	0.6440	0.6500	0.8240
Fiscal Budget Growth Rate (percentage)	6.429	17.673	22.433	0.9317	26.769
National Tax Rate Net of Transfers (%)	25.883	28.637	28.359	28.564	30.670
Government Revenues Net of Transfers (LCU billions)	0.4000	0.4970	0.5520	0.5790	0.6180
Government Surplus(-) Deficit(+) (LCU billions)	-0.0470	-0.0290	-0.0920	-0.0710	-0.2060
Government Surplus(+) Deficit(-) (%GDP)	-3.0413	-1.6710	-4.7264	-3.5027	-10.2233

Money Supply, Interest Rates and Unemployment

Money Supply, Interest Rates and Unemployment					
	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Money and Quasi-Money (M2) (LCU billions)	0.6170	0.6058	0.7253	0.8684	0.8632
Money Supply Growth Rate (%)	37.089	-1.8114	19.726	19.726	-0.5920
Lending Interest Rate (%)	13.751	13.518	13.489	11.275	16.573
Unemployment Rate (%)	3.674	3.935	3.922	3.901	3.561

Foreign Trade and the Exchange Rate

Foreign Trade and the Exchange Rate					
	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Official Exchange Rate (LCU/\$US)	1.004	0.9940	0.9921	1.007	1.000
Trade Balance NIPA (\$US billions)	-1.0009	-0.9969	-1.0241	-1.1359	-1.1838
Trade Balance % of GDP	-64.9948	-57.0963	-52.1984	-56.4263	-58.7513
Total Foreign Exchange Reserves (\$US billions)	0.5128	0.4972	0.4931	0.4890	0.4867

Data in US Dollars

Data in US Dollars					
	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Nominal GDP (\$US billions)	1.540	1.746	1.962	2.013	2.015
Exports (\$US billions)	0.4214	0.5645	0.6627	0.5186	0.4803
Imports (\$US billions)	1.422	1.561	1.687	1.654	1.664

Energy Consumption and Production Standard Units

Energy Consumption and Production Standard Units					
	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Petroleum Consumption (TBDP)	3.750	3.750	3.750	3.858	3.989
Petroleum Production (TBDP)	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Petroleum Net Exports (TBDP)	-3.7502	-3.7502	-3.7500	-3.8583	-3.9894
Natural Gas Consumption (bcf)	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Natural Gas Production (bcf)	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Natural Gas Net Exports (bcf)	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Coal Consumption (1000s st)	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Coal Production (1000s st)	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Coal Net Exports (1000s st)	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Nuclear Production (bil kwh)	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Hydroelectric Production (bil kwh)	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Renewables Production (bil kwh)	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000

Energy Consumption and Production QUADS

Energy Consumption and Production QUADS					
	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Petroleum Consumption (Quads)	0.0080	0.0080	0.0080	0.0082	0.0085
Petroleum Production (Quads)	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Petroleum Net Exports (Quads)	-0.0080	-0.0080	-0.0080	-0.0082	-0.0085
Natural Gas Consumption (Quads)	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Natural Gas Production (Quads)	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Natural Gas Net Exports (Quads)	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Coal Consumption (Quads)	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Coal Production (Quads)	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Coal Net Exports (Quads)	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Nuclear Production (Quads)	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Hydroelectric Production (Quads)	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Renewables Production (Quads)	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000

World Energy Price Summary

World Energy Price Summary					
	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Petroleum-WTI (\$/bbl)	95.054	94.159	97.943	93.112	48.709
Natural Gas-Henry Hub (\$/mmbtu)	3.999	2.752	3.729	4.369	2.614
Coal Thermal-Australian (\$/mt)	121.448	96.364	84.562	70.130	57.511

CO2 Emissions

CO2 Emissions					
	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Petroleum Based (mm mt C)	0.1789	0.1789	0.1789	0.1841	0.1903
Natural Gas Based (mm mt C)	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Coal Based (mm mt C)	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Total CO2 Emissions (mm mt C)	0.1789	0.1789	0.1789	0.1841	0.1903

Agriculture Consumption and Production

Agriculture Consumption and Production					
	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Corn Total Consumption (1000 metric tons)	14.896	15.230	15.500	15.500	15.012
Corn Production (1000 metric tons)	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Corn Net Exports (1000 metric tons)	-14.8960	-15.2300	-15.5000	-15.5000	-15.0124
Soybeans Total Consumption (1000 metric tons)	3.120	3.220	3.323	3.355	3.158
Soybeans Production (1000 metric tons)	3.104	3.194	3.280	3.286	3.053
Soybeans Net Exports (1000 metric tons)	-0.0159	-0.0258	-0.0430	-0.0692	-0.1049
Rice Total Consumption (1000 metric tons)	298.000	291.000	270.000	237.000	223.731
Rice Production (1000 metric tons)	298.201	290.995	269.882	236.907	221.241
Rice Net Exports (1000 metric tons)	0.2010	-0.0047	-0.1184	-0.0932	-2.4907
Coffee Total					

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Consumption (metric tons)	241.428	600.416	540.000	485.072	480.553
Coffee Production (metric tons)	630.873	676.716	665.902	701.964	664.896
Coffee Net Exports (metric tons)	389.445	76.300	125.902	216.892	184.343
Cocoa Beans Total Consumption (metric tons)	1,594.43	1,594.43	1,538.00	2,377.83	2,424.89
Cocoa Beans Production (metric tons)	11,829.91	12,455.97	8,911.29	9,447.27	9,572.11
Cocoa Beans Net Exports (metric tons)	10,235.48	10,861.54	7,373.29	7,069.44	7,147.21
Wheat Total Consumption (1000 metric tons)	14.257	14.618	14.438	14.438	14.438
Wheat Production (1000 metric tons)	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Wheat Net Exports (1000 metric tons)	-14.2570	-14.6180	-14.4375	-14.4375	-14.4375

World Agriculture Pricing Summary

World Agriculture Pricing Summary					
	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Corn Pricing Summary (\$/metric ton)	291.684	298.417	259.389	192.881	169.750
Soybeans Pricing Summary (\$/metric ton)	540.667	591.417	538.417	491.771	390.417
Rice Pricing Summary (\$/metric ton)	458.558	525.071	473.989	425.148	386.033
Coffee Pricing Summary (\$/kilogram)	5.976	4.111	3.076	4.424	3.526
Cocoa Beans Pricing Summary (\$/kilogram)	2.980	2.392	2.439	3.062	3.135
Wheat Pricing Summary (\$/metric ton)	316.264	313.242	312.248	284.895	203.177

Metals Consumption and Production

Metals Consumption and Production					
	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Copper Consumption (1000 mt)	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Copper Production (1000 mt)	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Copper Net Exports (1000 mt)	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Zinc Consumption (1000 mt)	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Zinc Production (1000 mt)	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Zinc Exports (1000 mt)	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Lead Consumption (1000 mt)	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Lead Production (1000 mt)	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Lead Exports (1000 mt)	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Tin Consumption (1000 mt)	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Tin Production (1000 mt)	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Tin Exports (1000 mt)	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Nickel Consumption (1000 mt)	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Nickel Production (1000 mt)	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Nickel Exports (1000 mt)	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Gold Consumption (kg)	448.000	641.000	600.000	579.487	540.154
Gold Production (kg)	468.676	659.833	622.393	605.283	607.771
Gold Exports (kg)	20.676	18.833	22.393	25.796	67.617
Silver Consumption (mt)	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Silver Production (mt)	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Silver Exports (mt)	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000

World Metals Pricing Summary

World Metals Pricing Summary					
	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Copper (\$/mt)	8,828.19	7,962.35	7,332.10	6,863.40	5,510.46
Zinc (\$/mt)	2,193.90	1,950.41	1,910.26	2,160.97	1,931.68
Tin (\$/mt)	26,053.68	21,125.99	22,282.80	21,898.87	16,066.63
Lead (\$/mt)	2,400.81	2,064.64	2,139.79	2,095.46	1,787.82
Nickel (\$/mt)	22,910.36	17,547.55	15,031.80	16,893.38	11,862.64
Gold (\$/oz)	1,569.21	1,669.52	1,411.46	1,265.58	1,160.66
Silver (\$/oz)	35.224	31.137	23.850	19.071	15.721

Economic Performance Index

Economic Performance Index

The Economic Performance rankings are calculated by CountryWatch's editorial team, and are based on criteria including sustained economic growth, monetary stability, current account deficits, budget surplus, unemployment and structural imbalances. Scores are assessed from 0 to 100 using this aforementioned criteria as well as CountryWatch's proprietary economic research data and models.

	Bank stability risk	Monetary/ Currency stability	Government Finances	Empl./ Unempl.	Econ.GNP growth or decline/ forecast
	0 - 100	0 - 100	0 - 100	0 - 100	%
North Americas					
Canada	92	69	35	38	3.14%
United States	94	76	4	29	3.01%
Western Europe					
Austria	90	27	30	63	1.33%
Belgium	88	27	19	23	1.15%
Cyprus	81	91	16	80	-0.69%
Denmark	97	70	45	78	1.20%
Finland	89	27	41	33	1.25%

France	87	27	18	27	1.52%
Germany	86	27	22	21	1.25%
Greece	79	27	5	24	-2.00%
Iceland	90	17	2	34	-3.04%
Italy	85	27	37	24	0.84%
Ireland	92	27	11	10	-1.55%
Luxembourg	99	27	28	66	2.08%
Malta	77	27	41	51	0.54%
Netherlands	91	27	26	74	1.30%
Norway	98	44	10	76	1.08%
Portugal	77	27	13	20	0.29%
Spain	83	27	9	3	-0.41%
Sweden	94	72	54	32	1.23%
Switzerland	97	86	55	77	1.53%
United Kingdom	85	12	9	37	1.34%
Central and Eastern Europe					
Albania	44	60	33	6	2.30%
Armenia	45	59	49	30	1.80%

Azerbaijan	56	4	84	99	2.68%
Belarus	59	21	83	98	2.41%
Bosnia and Herzegovina	34	68	69	N/A	0.50%
Bulgaria	58	75	88	49	0.20%
Croatia	69	68	94	9	0.18%
Czech Republic	80	89	29	70	1.67%
Estonia	72	90	66	92	0.80%
Georgia	36	60	53	56	2.00%
Hungary	70	66	26	54	-0.16%
Latvia	67	100	65	44	-3.97%
Lithuania	65	91	87	79	-1.65%
Macedonia (FYR)	53	69	56	2	2.03%
Moldova	23	36	81	67	2.50%
Poland	74	74	38	12	2.72%
Romania	62	56	70	62	0.75%
Russia	73	18	90	8	4.00%
Serbia	48	49	52	5	1.97%

Montenegro	39	27	73	1	-1.70%
Slovak Republic	80	62	30	14	4.06%
Slovenia	81	27	36	65	1.12%
Ukraine	41	11	57	N/A	3.68%
Africa					
Algeria	57	18	96	7	4.55%
Angola	49	1	97	N/A	7.05%
Benin	19	91	20	N/A	3.22%
Botswana	68	58	76	N/A	6.33%
Burkina Faso	16	91	13	N/A	4.41%
Burundi	2	91	6	N/A	3.85%
Cameroon	26	91	91	N/A	2.58%
Cape Verde	52	87	4	N/A	4.96%
Central African Republic	9	91	32	N/A	3.18%
Chad	22	91	89	N/A	4.42%
Congo	52	87	87	N/A	12.13%
Côte d'Ivoire	25	91	82	28	2.98%
Dem. Republic					

Congo	4	91	47	N/A	5.44%
Djibouti	31	76	50	N/A	4.47%
Egypt	37	20	24	69	5.01%
Equatorial Guinea	82	91	85	N/A	0.94%
Eritrea	1	3	1	18	1.81%
Ethiopia	6	45	8	N/A	6.96%
Gabon	64	91	96	N/A	5.36%
Gambia	8	48	86	N/A	4.82%
Ghana	9	11	69	N/A	4.50%
Guinea	10	7	91	N/A	3.03%
Guinea-Bissau	5	91	46	N/A	3.47%
Kenya	20	41	59	N/A	4.11%
Lesotho	13	40	12	N/A	2.98%
Liberia	12	73	74	N/A	5.92%
Libya	73	2	94	N/A	5.22%
Madagascar	4	22	24	N/A	-1.02%
Malawi	7	25	55	N/A	5.96%
Mali	20	91	82	N/A	5.12%

Mauritania	15	13	93	N/A	4.58%
Mauritius	65	52	56	55	4.10%
Morocco	37	72	48	26	3.23%
Mozambique	12	23	71	N/A	6.45%
Namibia	40	39	62	N/A	1.70%
Niger	10	91	21	N/A	4.41%
Nigeria	30	6	61	N/A	6.98%
Rwanda	21	40	68	N/A	5.39%
Sao Tome & Principe	1	61	100	N/A	3.40%
Senegal	24	91	63	N/A	3.44%
Seychelles	60	67	97	N/A	4.01%
Sierra Leone	5	10	39	N/A	4.77%
Somalia	2	38	59	N/A	3.19%
South Africa	61	37	70	N/A	2.59%
Sudan	16	5	73	N/A	5.52%
Swaziland	32	44	79	N/A	1.09%
Tanzania	15	45	32	N/A	6.17%
Togo	8	91	92	N/A	2.56%

Tunisia	50	61	44	39	4.00%
Uganda	11	17	54	N/A	5.59%
Zambia	29	20	49	N/A	5.84%
Zimbabwe	0	8	16	N/A	2.24%
South and Central America					
Argentina	66	3	80	36	3.50%
Belize	47	76	80	N/A	1.00%
Bolivia	32	51	61	81	3.99%
Brazil	71	47	78	11	5.50%
Chile	78	25	92	73	4.72%
Columbia	47	52	34	47	2.25%
Costa Rica	60	42	39	57	3.45%
Ecuador	43	76	75	64	2.51%
El Salvador	35	76	67	N/A	1.04%
Guatemala	46	59	58	N/A	2.52%
Honduras	27	47	58	N/A	2.00%
Mexico	69	42	52	61	4.07%
Nicaragua	23	49	42	N/A	1.75%

Panama	66	76	72	45	5.00%
Paraguay	35	46	66	16	5.27%
Peru	59	66	75	22	6.33%
Suriname	58	26	81	59	4.02%
Uruguay	70	26	27	N/A	5.71%
Venezuela	55	1	28	13	-2.63%
Caribbean					
Antigua & Barbuda	72	76	15	N/A	-2.01%
Bahamas	74	76	45	87	-0.50%
Barbados	67	76	33	15	-0.50%
Bermuda	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Cuba	45	76	18	95	0.25%
Dominica	53	76	65	N/A	1.40%
Dominican Republic	54	39	43	4	3.50%
Grenada	63	76	48	N/A	0.80%
Guyana	28	56	17	N/A	4.36%
Haiti	11	27	89	N/A	-8.50%
Jamaica	42	9	85	19	-0.28%

St Lucia	55	76	67	N/A	1.14%
St Vincent & Grenadines	49	76	95	N/A	0.50%
Trinidad & Tobago	82	37	77	72	2.13%
Middle East					
Bahrain	84	76	62	91	3.48%
Iran	51	19	40	58	3.01%
Iraq	48	9	8	N/A	7.27%
Israel	87	62	12	48	3.20%
Jordan	41	51	3	N/A	4.10%
Kuwait	96	4	99	N/A	3.10%
Lebanon	63	54	2	N/A	6.00%
Oman	76	16	88	N/A	4.71%
Qatar	99	16	83	N/A	18.54%
Saudi Arabia	76	8	98	N/A	3.70%
Syria	61	24	40	N/A	5.00%
Turkey	75	23	27	60	5.20%
United Arab Emirates	96	24	98	94	1.29%

Yemen	28	2	78	N/A	7.78%
Asia					
Afghanistan	17	70	74	N/A	8.64%
Bangladesh	13	43	25	N/A	5.38%
Bhutan	24	55	5	N/A	6.85%
Brunei	78	19	99	75	0.48%
Cambodia	18	67	42	N/A	4.77%
China	54	90	19	68	11.03%
Hong Kong	89	76	14	82	5.02%
India	31	38	34	35	8.78%
Indonesia	42	46	37	31	6.00%
Japan	88	89	6	71	1.90%
Kazakhstan	62	13	76	42	2.40%
Korea North	18	65	23	N/A	1.50%
Korea South	83	63	22	85	4.44%
Kyrgyz Republic	24	15	84	88	4.61%
Laos	17	54	7	N/A	7.22%
Macao	91	76	14	82	3.00%

Malaysia	68	65	44	90	4.72%
Maldives	44	55	17	N/A	3.45%
Mongolia	33	5	77	93	7.22%
Myanmar	3	41	72	N/A	5.26%
Nepal	3	14	25	N/A	2.97%
Pakistan	19	15	31	41	3.00%
Papua New Guinea	75	50	11	N/A	7.96%
Philippines	30	48	53	43	3.63%
Singapore	93	75	63	40	5.68%
Sri Lanka	38	22	10	N/A	5.50%
Taiwan	84	88	35	89	6.50%
Tajikistan	6	6	60	97	4.00%
Thailand	56	64	90	96	5.46%
Turkmenistan	51	53	68	N/A	12.00%
Uzbekistan	40	10	60	100	8.00%
Vietnam	25	12	20	N/A	6.04%
Pacific					
Australia	96	63	31	46	2.96%

Fiji	46	53	3	N/A	2.06%
Marshall Islands	27	76	46	N/A	1.08%
Micronesia (Fed. States)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
New Caledonia	96	73	51	52	2.00%
New Zealand	98	73	51	52	2.00%
Samoa	34	88	64	N/A	-2.77%
Solomon Islands	14	71	1	N/A	3.36%
Tonga	26	57	38	N/A	0.60%
Vanuatu	33	58	47	N/A	3.80%

Source:

CountryWatch Inc. www.countrywatch.com

Updated:

This material was produced in 2010; it is subject to updating in 2012.

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Chapter 4

Investment Overview

Foreign Investment Climate

Background

Liberia's economy was destroyed by both civil war and governmental mismanagement, and the infrastructure of the capital of Monrovia was devastated. This scenario led to decreased growth prospects for the foreseeable future. Much of the business class left the country taking capital and expertise with them. With the end of the war and the installation of a democratically-elected government in 2006, several have returned. Liberia is naturally endowed with water, mineral resources, forests, and a climate favorable to agriculture, helping them to become a producer and exporter of basic products (raw timber and rubber). Foreign owned manufacturing has been small in scope. The government since 2005 has taken steps to reduce corruption, build support from international donors, and encourage private investment. Embargos on timber and diamond exports have been lifted, opening new sources of revenue for the government. The reconstruction of infrastructure and the raising of incomes in this ravaged economy will largely depend on generous financial and technical assistance from donor countries and foreign investment in key sectors, such as infrastructure and power generation.

Foreign Investment Assessment

Openness to Foreign Investment

The 1975 economic "Liberianization" law prohibits foreign ownership of certain businesses, such as travel agencies, retail gasoline stations, and beer and soft drink distributors. If there are qualified Liberians, the Liberianization law also mandates that Liberian nationals should be employed at all levels, including upper management. Using the Liberianization law, the ministry of labor has sometimes held up work permits for expatriates and intervened in negotiations between investors/management and their Liberian employees.

Transparency of Regulatory System

Although the Taylor administration is publicly committed to developing clear, consistent and transparent policies to encourage investment, it has not yet done so. Very little progress has been made in addressing the criteria laid out by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) for creating an improved economic environment, which would attract international investment. Investors still must cope with myriad ministries and agencies, conflicting rules and regulations, and much bureaucratic red tape.

While labor laws and policies themselves do not distort or impede investment, labor disputes are most often settled in the favor of Liberian employees, regardless of the merits of their complaints.

Labor Force

Total: N/A

By occupation: agriculture 70%, industry 8%, services 22%

Agriculture and Industry

Agriculture products: rubber, coffee, cocoa, rice, cassava (tapioca), palm oil, sugarcane, bananas; sheep, goats; timber

Industries: rubber processing, palm oil processing, timber, diamonds

Import Commodities and Partners

Commodities: fuels, chemicals, machinery, transportation equipment, manufactured goods; foodstuffs

Partners: South Korea 39.2%, Japan 16.3%, Singapore 12.4%, Germany 9.9%, Spain 4.1%

Export Commodities and Partners

Commodities: rubber, timber, iron, diamonds, cocoa, coffee

Partners: Germany 43.7%, Poland 11%, Greece 9.1%, US 6.1%, France 5.2%, Thailand 4.9%, China 4.1%

Telephone System

Telephones- main lines in use: 7,000

Telephones- mobile cellular: 2,000

General Assessment: the limited services available are found almost exclusively in the capital Monrovia

Domestic: fully automatic system with very low density of .21 fixed mainlines per 100 persons; limited wireless service available

International: country code - 231; satellite earth station - 1 Intelsat

Internet

Internet Hosts: 14

Internet users: 1,000

Roads, Airports, Ports and Harbors

Railways: 490 km

Highways: 10,600 km

Ports and harbors: Buchanan, Greenville, Harper, Monrovia, Robertsport

Airports: 53; w/paved runways: 2

Legal System and Considerations

Liberia has a dual system of statutory law based on Anglo-American common law for the modern sector and customary law based on unwritten tribal practices for indigenous sector.

Dispute Settlement

The judiciary has always been subject to political, social, familial, and financial pressures, and the equal application of justice is not always observed. Corruption and lack of professionalism remain a recurrent problem. There have been significant instances of executive branch interference in the decisions of the judiciary, including decisions by the Liberian Supreme Court, the highest court in the country. At this time, there are no consistent and effective means for enforcing property and contractual rights.

Corruption Perception Ranking

N/A; see Corruption Perception index reported by Transparency International elsewhere in this report, from least to most corrupt countries.

Cultural Considerations

In Liberia, like all other Muslim countries, the left hand is considered taboo. It is important that one never give or receive anything with it, especially food.

It is also not appropriate to give gifts to one's hosts or hostesses. A thank you note sent a few days after a visit is fine for expressing appreciation.

For more information see:

United States' State Department Commercial Guide

Foreign Investment Index

Foreign Investment Index

The Foreign Investment Index is a proprietary index measuring attractiveness to international investment flows. The Foreign Investment Index is calculated using an established methodology by CountryWatch's Editor-in-Chief and is based on a given country's economic stability (sustained economic growth, monetary stability, current account deficits, budget surplus), economic risk (risk of non-servicing of payments for goods or services, loans and trade-related finance, risk of sovereign default), business and investment climate (property rights, labor force and laws, regulatory transparency, openness to foreign investment, market conditions, and stability of government). Scores are assigned from 0-10 using the aforementioned criteria. A score of 0 marks the lowest level of foreign investment viability, while a score of 10 marks the highest level of foreign investment viability, according to this proprietary index.

Country	Assessment
Afghanistan	2
Albania	4.5
Algeria	6
Andorra	9
Angola	4.5-5
Antigua	8.5
Argentina	5

Armenia	5
Australia	9.5
Austria	9-9.5
Azerbaijan	5
Bahamas	9
Bahrain	7.5
Bangladesh	4.5
Barbados	9
Belarus	4
Belgium	9
Belize	7.5
Benin	5.5
Bhutan	4.5
Bolivia	4.5
Bosnia-Herzegovina	5
Botswana	7.5-8
Brazil	8
Brunei	7

Bulgaria	5.5
Burkina Faso	4
Burma (Myanmar)	4.5
Burundi	4
Cambodia	4.5
Cameroon	5
Canada	9.5
Cape Verde	6
Central African Republic	3
Chad	4
Chile	9
China	7.5
China: Hong Kong	8.5
China: Taiwan	8.5
Colombia	7
Comoros	4
Congo DRC	4
Congo RC	5

Costa Rica	8
Cote d'Ivoire	4.5
Croatia	7
Cuba	4.5
Cyprus	7
Czech Republic	8.5
Denmark	9.5
Djibouti	4.5
Dominica	6
Dominican Republic	6.5
East Timor	4.5
Ecuador	5.5
Egypt	4.5-5
El Salvador	6
Equatorial Guinea	4.5
Eritrea	3.5
Estonia	8
Ethiopia	4.5

Fiji	5
Finland	9
Former Yugoslav Rep. of Macedonia	5
France	9-9.5
Gabon	5.5
Gambia	5
Georgia	5
Germany	9-9.5
Ghana	5.5
Greece	5
Grenada	7.5
Guatemala	5.5
Guinea	3.5
Guinea-Bissau	3.5
Guyana	4.5
Haiti	4
Holy See (Vatican)	n/a
Hong Kong (China)	8.5

Honduras	5.5
Hungary	8
Iceland	8-8.5
India	8
Indonesia	5.5
Iran	4
Iraq	3
Ireland	8
Israel	8.5
Italy	8
Jamaica	5.5
Japan	9.5
Jordan	6
Kazakhstan	6
Kenya	5
Kiribati	5.5
Korea, North	1
Korea, South	9

Kosovo	4.5
Kuwait	8.5
Kyrgyzstan	4.5
Laos	4
Latvia	7
Lebanon	5
Lesotho	5.5
Liberia	3.5
Libya	3
Liechtenstein	9
Lithuania	7.5
Luxembourg	9-9.5
Madagascar	4.5
Malawi	4.5
Malaysia	8.5
Maldives	6.5
Mali	5
Malta	9

Marshall Islands	5
Mauritania	4.5
Mauritius	7.5-8
Mexico	6.5-7
Micronesia	5
Moldova	4.5-5
Monaco	9
Mongolia	5
Montenegro	5.5
Morocco	7.5
Mozambique	5
Namibia	7.5
Nauru	4.5
Nepal	4
Netherlands	9-9.5
New Zealand	9.5
Nicaragua	5
Niger	4.5

Nigeria	4.5
Norway	9-9.5
Oman	8
Pakistan	4
Palau	4.5-5
Panama	7
Papua New Guinea	5
Paraguay	6
Peru	6
Philippines	6
Poland	8
Portugal	7.5-8
Qatar	9
Romania	6-6.5
Russia	6
Rwanda	4
Saint Kitts and Nevis	8
Saint Lucia	8

Saint Vincent and Grenadines	7
Samoa	7
San Marino	8.5
Sao Tome and Principe	4.5-5
Saudi Arabia	7
Senegal	6
Serbia	6
Seychelles	5
Sierra Leone	4
Singapore	9.5
Slovak Republic (Slovakia)	8.5
Slovenia	8.5-9
Solomon Islands	5
Somalia	2
South Africa	8
Spain	7.5-8
Sri Lanka	5.5
Sudan	4

Suriname	5
Swaziland	4.5
Sweden	9.5
Switzerland	9.5
Syria	2.5
Tajikistan	4
Taiwan (China)	8.5
Tanzania	5
Thailand	7.5-8
Togo	4.5-5
Tonga	5.5-6
Trinidad and Tobago	8-8.5
Tunisia	6
Turkey	6.5-7
Turkmenistan	4
Tuvalu	7
Uganda	5
Ukraine	4.5-5

United Arab Emirates	8.5
United Kingdom	9
United States	9
Uruguay	6.5-7
Uzbekistan	4
Vanuatu	6
Venezuela	5
Vietnam	5.5
Yemen	3
Zambia	4.5-5
Zimbabwe	3.5

Editor's Note:

As of 2015, the global economic crisis (emerging in 2008) had affected many countries across the world, resulting in changes to their rankings. Among those countries affected were top tier economies, such as the [United Kingdom](#), [Iceland](#), [Switzerland](#) and [Austria](#). However, in all these cases, their rankings have moved back upward in the last couple of years as anxieties have eased. Other top tier countries, such as [Spain](#), [Portugal](#), [Ireland](#), and [Italy](#), suffered some effects due to debt woes and the concomitant effect on the euro zone. Greece, another euro zone nation, was also downgraded due to its sovereign debt crisis; however, Greece's position on the precipice of default incurred a sharper downgrade than the other four euro zone countries mentioned above. Cyprus' exposure to Greek bank yielded a downgrade in its case. Slovenia and [Latvia](#) have been slightly downgraded due to a mix of economic and political concerns but could easily be upgraded in a future assessment, should these concerns abate. Meanwhile, the crisis in eastern [Ukraine](#) fueled downgrades in that country and neighboring [Russia](#).

Despite the "trifecta of tragedy" in [Japan](#) in 2011 -- the earthquake, the ensuing tsunami, and the resulting nuclear crisis -- and the appreciable destabilization of the economic and political terrain therein, this country has only slightly been downgraded. Japan's challenges have been assessed to be transient, the government remains accountable, and there is little risk of default. Both [India](#) and [China](#) retain their rankings; [India](#) holds a slightly higher ranking than [China](#) due to its record of democratic representation and accountability.

There were shifts in opposite directions for [Mali](#) and [Nigeria](#) versus the [Central African Republic](#), [Burkina Faso](#), and [Burundi](#). [Mali](#) was slightly upgraded due to its efforts to return to constitutional order following the 2012 coup and to neutralize the threat of separatists and Islamists. Likewise, a new government in [Nigeria](#) generated a slight upgrade as the country attempts to confront corruption, crime, and terrorism. But the [Central African Republic](#) was downgraded due to the takeover of the government by Seleka rebels and the continued decline into lawlessness in that country. Likewise, the attempts by the leaders of [Burundi](#) and [Burkina Faso](#) to hold onto power by by-passing the constitution raised eyebrows and resulted in downgrades.

Political unrest in [Libya](#) and [Algeria](#) have contributed to a decision to marginally downgrade these countries as well. [Syria](#) incurred a sharper downgrade due to the devolution into de facto civil war and the dire security threat posed by Islamist terrorists. [Iraq](#) saw a similar downgrade as a result of the takeover of wide swaths of territory and the threat of genocide at the hands of Islamist terrorists. [Yemen](#), likewise, has been downgraded due to political instability at the hands of secessionists, terrorists, Houthi rebels, and the intervention of external parties. Conversely, [Egypt](#) and [Tunisia](#) saw slight upgrades as their political environments stabilize.

At the low end of the spectrum, devolving security conditions and/or economic crisis have resulted in countries like [Pakistan](#), [Afghanistan](#), [Somalia](#), and [Zimbabwe](#) maintaining their low ratings.

The [United States](#) continues to retain its previous slight downgrade due to the enduring threat of default surrounding the debt ceiling in that country, matched by a conflict-ridden political climate. In the case of [Mexico](#), there is limited concern about default, but increasing alarm over the security situation in that country and the government's ability to contain it. In [Argentina](#), a default to bond holders resulted in a downgrade to that country. Finally, a small but significant upgrade was attributed to [Cuba](#) due to its recent pro-business reforms and its normalization of ties with the United States.

Source:

CountryWatch Inc. www.countrywatch.com

Updated:

2015

Corruption Perceptions Index

Corruption Perceptions Index

Transparency International: [Corruption Perceptions Index](#)

Editor's Note:

Transparency International's [Corruption Perceptions Index](#) is a composite index which ranks countries in terms of the degree to which corruption is perceived to exist among public officials. This index indicates the views of national and international business people and analysts about the levels of corruption in each country. The highest (and best) level of transparency is indicated by the number, 10. The lower (and worse) levels of transparency are indicated by lower numbers.

Rank	Country/Territory	CPI 2009 Score	Surveys Used	Confidence Range
1	New Zealand	9.4	6	9.1 - 9.5
2	Denmark	9.3	6	9.1 - 9.5
3	Singapore	9.2	9	9.0 - 9.4
3	Sweden	9.2	6	9.0 - 9.3
5	Switzerland	9.0	6	8.9 - 9.1
6	Finland	8.9	6	8.4 - 9.4
6	Netherlands	8.9	6	8.7 - 9.0
8	Australia	8.7	8	8.3 - 9.0

8	Canada	8.7	6	8.5 - 9.0
8	Iceland	8.7	4	7.5 - 9.4
11	Norway	8.6	6	8.2 - 9.1
12	Hong Kong	8.2	8	7.9 - 8.5
12	Luxembourg	8.2	6	7.6 - 8.8
14	Germany	8.0	6	7.7 - 8.3
14	Ireland	8.0	6	7.8 - 8.4
16	Austria	7.9	6	7.4 - 8.3
17	Japan	7.7	8	7.4 - 8.0
17	United Kingdom	7.7	6	7.3 - 8.2
19	United States	7.5	8	6.9 - 8.0
20	Barbados	7.4	4	6.6 - 8.2
21	Belgium	7.1	6	6.9 - 7.3
22	Qatar	7.0	6	5.8 - 8.1
22	Saint Lucia	7.0	3	6.7 - 7.5
24	France	6.9	6	6.5 - 7.3
25	Chile	6.7	7	6.5 - 6.9
25	Uruguay	6.7	5	6.4 - 7.1

27	Cyprus	6.6	4	6.1 - 7.1
27	Estonia	6.6	8	6.1 - 6.9
27	Slovenia	6.6	8	6.3 - 6.9
30	United Arab Emirates	6.5	5	5.5 - 7.5
31	Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	6.4	3	4.9 - 7.5
32	Israel	6.1	6	5.4 - 6.7
32	Spain	6.1	6	5.5 - 6.6
34	Dominica	5.9	3	4.9 - 6.7
35	Portugal	5.8	6	5.5 - 6.2
35	Puerto Rico	5.8	4	5.2 - 6.3
37	Botswana	5.6	6	5.1 - 6.3
37	Taiwan	5.6	9	5.4 - 5.9
39	Brunei Darussalam	5.5	4	4.7 - 6.4
39	Oman	5.5	5	4.4 - 6.5
39	Korea (South)	5.5	9	5.3 - 5.7
42	Mauritius	5.4	6	5.0 - 5.9
43	Costa Rica	5.3	5	4.7 - 5.9

43	Macau	5.3	3	3.3 - 6.9
45	Malta	5.2	4	4.0 - 6.2
46	Bahrain	5.1	5	4.2 - 5.8
46	Cape Verde	5.1	3	3.3 - 7.0
46	Hungary	5.1	8	4.6 - 5.7
49	Bhutan	5.0	4	4.3 - 5.6
49	Jordan	5.0	7	3.9 - 6.1
49	Poland	5.0	8	4.5 - 5.5
52	Czech Republic	4.9	8	4.3 - 5.6
52	Lithuania	4.9	8	4.4 - 5.4
54	Seychelles	4.8	3	3.0 - 6.7
55	South Africa	4.7	8	4.3 - 4.9
56	Latvia	4.5	6	4.1 - 4.9
56	Malaysia	4.5	9	4.0 - 5.1
56	Namibia	4.5	6	3.9 - 5.1
56	Samoa	4.5	3	3.3 - 5.3
56	Slovakia	4.5	8	4.1 - 4.9
61	Cuba	4.4	3	3.5 - 5.1

61	Turkey	4.4	7	3.9 - 4.9
63	Italy	4.3	6	3.8 - 4.9
63	Saudi Arabia	4.3	5	3.1 - 5.3
65	Tunisia	4.2	6	3.0 - 5.5
66	Croatia	4.1	8	3.7 - 4.5
66	Georgia	4.1	7	3.4 - 4.7
66	Kuwait	4.1	5	3.2 - 5.1
69	Ghana	3.9	7	3.2 - 4.6
69	Montenegro	3.9	5	3.5 - 4.4
71	Bulgaria	3.8	8	3.2 - 4.5
71	FYR Macedonia	3.8	6	3.4 - 4.2
71	Greece	3.8	6	3.2 - 4.3
71	Romania	3.8	8	3.2 - 4.3
75	Brazil	3.7	7	3.3 - 4.3
75	Colombia	3.7	7	3.1 - 4.3
75	Peru	3.7	7	3.4 - 4.1
75	Suriname	3.7	3	3.0 - 4.7
79	Burkina Faso	3.6	7	2.8 - 4.4

79	China	3.6	9	3.0 - 4.2
79	Swaziland	3.6	3	3.0 - 4.7
79	Trinidad and Tobago	3.6	4	3.0 - 4.3
83	Serbia	3.5	6	3.3 - 3.9
84	El Salvador	3.4	5	3.0 - 3.8
84	Guatemala	3.4	5	3.0 - 3.9
84	India	3.4	10	3.2 - 3.6
84	Panama	3.4	5	3.1 - 3.7
84	Thailand	3.4	9	3.0 - 3.8
89	Lesotho	3.3	6	2.8 - 3.8
89	Malawi	3.3	7	2.7 - 3.9
89	Mexico	3.3	7	3.2 - 3.5
89	Moldova	3.3	6	2.7 - 4.0
89	Morocco	3.3	6	2.8 - 3.9
89	Rwanda	3.3	4	2.9 - 3.7
95	Albania	3.2	6	3.0 - 3.3
95	Vanuatu	3.2	3	2.3 - 4.7
97	Liberia	3.1	3	1.9 - 3.8

97	Sri Lanka	3.1	7	2.8 - 3.4
99	Bosnia and Herzegovina	3.0	7	2.6 - 3.4
99	Dominican Republic	3.0	5	2.9 - 3.2
99	Jamaica	3.0	5	2.8 - 3.3
99	Madagascar	3.0	7	2.8 - 3.2
99	Senegal	3.0	7	2.5 - 3.6
99	Tonga	3.0	3	2.6 - 3.3
99	Zambia	3.0	7	2.8 - 3.2
106	Argentina	2.9	7	2.6 - 3.1
106	Benin	2.9	6	2.3 - 3.4
106	Gabon	2.9	3	2.6 - 3.1
106	Gambia	2.9	5	1.6 - 4.0
106	Niger	2.9	5	2.7 - 3.0
111	Algeria	2.8	6	2.5 - 3.1
111	Djibouti	2.8	4	2.3 - 3.2
111	Egypt	2.8	6	2.6 - 3.1
111	Indonesia	2.8	9	2.4 - 3.2
111	Kiribati	2.8	3	2.3 - 3.3

111	Mali	2.8	6	2.4 - 3.2
111	Sao Tome and Principe	2.8	3	2.4 - 3.3
111	Solomon Islands	2.8	3	2.3 - 3.3
111	Togo	2.8	5	1.9 - 3.9
120	Armenia	2.7	7	2.6 - 2.8
120	Bolivia	2.7	6	2.4 - 3.1
120	Ethiopia	2.7	7	2.4 - 2.9
120	Kazakhstan	2.7	7	2.1 - 3.3
120	Mongolia	2.7	7	2.4 - 3.0
120	Vietnam	2.7	9	2.4 - 3.1
126	Eritrea	2.6	4	1.6 - 3.8
126	Guyana	2.6	4	2.5 - 2.7
126	Syria	2.6	5	2.2 - 2.9
126	Tanzania	2.6	7	2.4 - 2.9
130	Honduras	2.5	6	2.2 - 2.8
130	Lebanon	2.5	3	1.9 - 3.1
130	Libya	2.5	6	2.2 - 2.8
130	Maldives	2.5	4	1.8 - 3.2

130	Mauritania	2.5	7	2.0 - 3.3
130	Mozambique	2.5	7	2.3 - 2.8
130	Nicaragua	2.5	6	2.3 - 2.7
130	Nigeria	2.5	7	2.2 - 2.7
130	Uganda	2.5	7	2.1 - 2.8
139	Bangladesh	2.4	7	2.0 - 2.8
139	Belarus	2.4	4	2.0 - 2.8
139	Pakistan	2.4	7	2.1 - 2.7
139	Philippines	2.4	9	2.1 - 2.7
143	Azerbaijan	2.3	7	2.0 - 2.6
143	Comoros	2.3	3	1.6 - 3.3
143	Nepal	2.3	6	2.0 - 2.6
146	Cameroon	2.2	7	1.9 - 2.6
146	Ecuador	2.2	5	2.0 - 2.5
146	Kenya	2.2	7	1.9 - 2.5
146	Russia	2.2	8	1.9 - 2.4
146	Sierra Leone	2.2	5	1.9 - 2.4
146	Timor-Leste	2.2	5	1.8 - 2.6

146	Ukraine	2.2	8	2.0 - 2.6
146	Zimbabwe	2.2	7	1.7 - 2.8
154	Côte d'Ivoire	2.1	7	1.8 - 2.4
154	Papua New Guinea	2.1	5	1.7 - 2.5
154	Paraguay	2.1	5	1.7 - 2.5
154	Yemen	2.1	4	1.6 - 2.5
158	Cambodia	2.0	8	1.8 - 2.2
158	Central African Republic	2.0	4	1.9 - 2.2
158	Laos	2.0	4	1.6 - 2.6
158	Tajikistan	2.0	8	1.6 - 2.5
162	Angola	1.9	5	1.8 - 1.9
162	Congo Brazzaville	1.9	5	1.6 - 2.1
162	Democratic Republic of Congo	1.9	5	1.7 - 2.1
162	Guinea-Bissau	1.9	3	1.8 - 2.0
162	Kyrgyzstan	1.9	7	1.8 - 2.1
162	Venezuela	1.9	7	1.8 - 2.0
168	Burundi	1.8	6	1.6 - 2.0
168	Equatorial Guinea	1.8	3	1.6 - 1.9

168	Guinea	1.8	5	1.7 - 1.8
168	Haiti	1.8	3	1.4 - 2.3
168	Iran	1.8	3	1.7 - 1.9
168	Turkmenistan	1.8	4	1.7 - 1.9
174	Uzbekistan	1.7	6	1.5 - 1.8
175	Chad	1.6	6	1.5 - 1.7
176	Iraq	1.5	3	1.2 - 1.8
176	Sudan	1.5	5	1.4 - 1.7
178	Myanmar	1.4	3	0.9 - 1.8
179	Afghanistan	1.3	4	1.0 - 1.5
180	Somalia	1.1	3	0.9 - 1.4

Methodology:

As noted above, the highest (and best) level of transparency with the least perceived corruption is indicated by the number, 10. The lower (and worse) levels of transparency are indicated by lower numbers.

According to Transparency International, the [Corruption Perceptions Index](#) (CPI) table shows a country's ranking and score, the number of surveys used to determine the score, and the confidence range of the scoring.

The rank shows how one country compares to others included in the index. The CPI score indicates the perceived level of public-sector corruption in a country/territory.

The CPI is based on 13 independent surveys. However, not all surveys include all countries. The

surveys used column indicates how many surveys were relied upon to determine the score for that country.

The confidence range indicates the reliability of the CPI scores and tells us that allowing for a margin of error, we can be 90% confident that the true score for this country lies within this range.

Note:

Kosovo, which separated from the Yugoslav successor state of [Serbia](#), is not listed above. No calculation is available for [Kosovo](#) at this time, however, a future corruption index by Transparency International may include the world's newest country in its tally. Taiwan has been listed above despite its contested status; while Taiwan claims sovereign status, [China](#) claims ultimate jurisdiction over Taiwan. Hong Kong, which is also under the rubric of Chinese sovereignty, is listed above. Note as well that Puerto Rico, which is a [United States](#) domain, is also included in the list above. These inclusions likely have to do with the size and fairly autonomous status of their economies.

Source:

Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index; available at URL: <http://www.transparency.org>

Updated:

Uploaded in 2011 using most recent ranking available; reviewed in 2015.

Competitiveness Ranking

Competitiveness Ranking

Editor's Note:

The Global Competitiveness Report's competitiveness ranking is based on the Global Competitiveness Index (GCI), which was developed for the World Economic Forum. The GCI is based on a number of competitiveness considerations, and provides a comprehensive picture of the competitiveness landscape in countries around the world. The competitiveness considerations are: institutions, infrastructure, macroeconomic environment, health and primary education, higher

education and training, goods market efficiency, labour market efficiency, financial market development, technological readiness, market size, business sophistication, and innovation. The rankings are calculated from both publicly available data and the Executive Opinion Survey.

Country/Economy	GCI 2010 Rank	GCI 2010 Score	GCI 2009 Rank	Change 2009-2010
Switzerland	1	5.63	1	0
Sweden	2	5.56	4	2
Singapore	3	5.48	3	0
United States	4	5.43	2	-2
Germany	5	5.39	7	2
Japan	6	5.37	8	2
Finland	7	5.37	6	-1
Netherlands	8	5.33	10	2
Denmark	9	5.32	5	-4
Canada	10	5.30	9	-1
Hong Kong SAR	11	5.30	11	0
United Kingdom	12	5.25	13	1
Taiwan, China	13	5.21	12	-1
Norway	14	5.14	14	0

France	15	5.13	16	1
Australia	16	5.11	15	-1
Qatar	17	5.10	22	5
Austria	18	5.09	17	-1
Belgium	19	5.07	18	-1
Luxembourg	20	5.05	21	1
Saudi Arabia	21	4.95	28	7
Korea, Rep.	22	4.93	19	-3
New Zealand	23	4.92	20	-3
Israel	24	4.91	27	3
United Arab Emirates	25	4.89	23	-2
Malaysia	26	4.88	24	-2
China	27	4.84	29	2
Brunei Darussalam	28	4.75	32	4
Ireland	29	4.74	25	-4
Chile	30	4.69	30	0
Iceland	31	4.68	26	-5
Tunisia	32	4.65	40	8

Estonia	33	4.61	35	2
Oman	34	4.61	41	7
Kuwait	35	4.59	39	4
Czech Republic	36	4.57	31	-5
Bahrain	37	4.54	38	1
Thailand	38	4.51	36	-2
Poland	39	4.51	46	7
Cyprus	40	4.50	34	-6
Puerto Rico	41	4.49	42	1
Spain	42	4.49	33	-9
Barbados	43	4.45	44	1
Indonesia	44	4.43	54	10
Slovenia	45	4.42	37	-8
Portugal	46	4.38	43	-3
Lithuania	47	4.38	53	6
Italy	48	4.37	48	0
Montenegro	49	4.36	62	13
Malta	50	4.34	52	2

India	51	4.33	49	-2
Hungary	52	4.33	58	6
Panama	53	4.33	59	6
South Africa	54	4.32	45	-9
Mauritius	55	4.32	57	2
Costa Rica	56	4.31	55	-1
Azerbaijan	57	4.29	51	-6
Brazil	58	4.28	56	-2
Vietnam	59	4.27	75	16
Slovak Republic	60	4.25	47	-13
Turkey	61	4.25	61	0
Sri Lanka	62	4.25	79	17
Russian Federation	63	4.24	63	0
Uruguay	64	4.23	65	1
Jordan	65	4.21	50	-15
Mexico	66	4.19	60	-6
Romania	67	4.16	64	-3
Colombia	68	4.14	69	1

Iran	69	4.14	n/a	n/a
Latvia	70	4.14	68	-2
Bulgaria	71	4.13	76	5
Kazakhstan	72	4.12	67	-5
Peru	73	4.11	78	5
Namibia	74	4.09	74	0
Morocco	75	4.08	73	-2
Botswana	76	4.05	66	-10
Croatia	77	4.04	72	-5
Guatemala	78	4.04	80	2
Macedonia, FYR	79	4.02	84	5
Rwanda	80	4.00	n/a	n/a
Egypt	81	4.00	70	-11
El Salvador	82	3.99	77	-5
Greece	83	3.99	71	-12
Trinidad and Tobago	84	3.97	86	2
Philippines	85	3.96	87	2
Algeria	86	3.96	83	-3

Argentina	87	3.95	85	-2
Albania	88	3.94	96	8
Ukraine	89	3.90	82	-7
Gambia, The	90	3.90	81	-9
Honduras	91	3.89	89	-2
Lebanon	92	3.89	n/a	n/a
Georgia	93	3.86	90	-3
Moldova	94	3.86	n/a	n/a
Jamaica	95	3.85	91	-4
Serbia	96	3.84	93	-3
Syria	97	3.79	94	-3
Armenia	98	3.76	97	-1
Mongolia	99	3.75	117	18
Libya	100	3.74	88	-12
Dominican Republic	101	3.72	95	-6
Bosnia and Herzegovina	102	3.70	109	7
Benin	103	3.69	103	0
Senegal	104	3.67	92	-12

Ecuador	105	3.65	105	0
Kenya	106	3.65	98	-8
Bangladesh	107	3.64	106	-1
Bolivia	108	3.64	120	12
Cambodia	109	3.63	110	1
Guyana	110	3.62	104	-6
Cameroon	111	3.58	111	0
Nicaragua	112	3.57	115	3
Tanzania	113	3.56	100	-13
Ghana	114	3.56	114	0
Zambia	115	3.55	112	-3
Tajikistan	116	3.53	122	6
Cape Verde	117	3.51	n/a	n/a
Uganda	118	3.51	108	-10
Ethiopia	119	3.51	118	-1
Paraguay	120	3.49	124	4
Kyrgyz Republic	121	3.49	123	2
Venezuela	122	3.48	113	-9

Pakistan	123	3.48	101	-22
Madagascar	124	3.46	121	-3
Malawi	125	3.45	119	-6
Swaziland	126	3.40	n/a	n/a
Nigeria	127	3.38	99	-28
Lesotho	128	3.36	107	-21
Côte d'Ivoire	129	3.35	116	-13
Nepal	130	3.34	125	-5
Mozambique	131	3.32	129	-2
Mali	132	3.28	130	-2
Timor-Leste	133	3.23	126	-7
Burkina Faso	134	3.20	128	-6
Mauritania	135	3.14	127	-8
Zimbabwe	136	3.03	132	-4
Burundi	137	2.96	133	-4
Angola	138	2.93	n/a	n/a
Chad	139	2.73	131	-8

Methodology:

The competitiveness rankings are calculated from both publicly available data and the Executive Opinion Survey, a comprehensive annual survey conducted by the World Economic Forum together with its network of Partner Institutes (leading research institutes and business organizations) in the countries covered by the Report.

Highlights according to WEF --

- The [United States](#) falls two places to fourth position, overtaken by [Sweden](#) and [Singapore](#) in the rankings of the World Economic Forum's Global Competitiveness Report 2010-2011
- The People's Republic of [China](#) continues to move up the rankings, with marked improvements in several other Asian countries
- [Germany](#) moves up two places to fifth place, leading the Eurozone countries
- [Switzerland](#) tops the rankings

Source:

World Economic Forum; available at URL: <http://www.weforum.org>

Updated:

2011 using most recent ranking available; reviewed in 2015.

Taxation

Non-resident companies that derive their income from business outside Liberia are exempt from corporate income tax.

Stock Market

There is currently no stock market data for Liberia.

Partner Links

Partner Links

Chapter 5

Social Overview

People

Background

Civil war between 1989 and 1996 drove hundreds of thousands of Liberians into neighboring countries as refugees, dwindling the population from 2.7 million in 1989 to 1.5 million in 1997. Today repatriation, refugees from Sierra Leone and a high birthrate have returned the population to over 3.5 million; an estimated 46 percent now live in cities and towns for reasons of work and security. This is in contrast to before the war when more than 80 percent of the population was engaged in agriculture.

Ethnicity

There are approximately 16 ethnic groups in Liberia. The largest of these groups are the Kpelle, Bassa, Gio, Kru, Grebo, Mano, Krahn, Gola, Gbandi, Loma, Kissi, Vai, Dei, Bella, Mandingo, and Mende peoples. The population also includes a number of descendants of freed slaves from the United States and the Caribbean. Referred to as Americo-Liberians, they make up about five percent of the population and live mostly in coastal cities and towns. The American settlers of African descent brought with them the way of life they had known in the southeastern United States.

Language

English is Liberia's official language but is spoken by only about one-fifth of the people. The remaining population speaks local indigenous languages, most commonly belonging to 20 different Niger-Congo and West Atlantic linguistic groups.

Religion

Religions include animist faiths, Christianity and Islam. About 10 percent of Liberia's people are Christian, principally Protestant. Islam has made progress among the people of the interior, though

the majority has retained animist religions. Altogether, about 70 percent of the people follow local religions and 20 percent follow Islam.

Education and Literacy

As a result of low income, poor infrastructure, and the long civil war, literacy is low in Liberia even when compared to other sub-Saharan African countries. According to recent estimates, about 57 percent of the people of Liberia are literate. That literacy rate, however, belies gender differences whereby the literacy rate for males is 73 percent and the rate for females is 42 percent. School attendance is still immeasurable as reconstruction of the buildings and hiring and training of new teachers is still in process following the war. Note that 2.7 percent of GDP in this country is spent on educational expenditures.

Health and Welfare

By virtually all other human indicators, Liberia also fairs poorly in comparison to the sub-continent as a whole. Whereas in sub-Saharan Africa the percentage of the population living in absolute poverty is estimated at 32 percent, in Liberia it is 46 percent. In sub-Saharan Africa infant mortality is 90 for every 1,000 births; in Liberia it is 143.89 deaths per 1,000 live births. Meanwhile, the overall life expectancy is 41 years, according to recent estimates.

In sub-Saharan Africa an alarming 56 percent of the population does not have access to safe drinking water; in Liberia an even more alarming 70 percent do not have access to safe drinking water. Meanwhile, the HIV/AIDs prevalence rate is around six percent, according to the most recently available statistics.

Note that 3.9 percent of GDP is spent on health expenditures.

Written by Dr. Denise Youngblood Coleman, Editor in Chief at CountryWatch.com; see Bibliography for research sources.

Human Development Index

Human Development Index

Human Development Index (Ranked Numerically)

The [Human Development Index](#) (HDI) is used to measure quality of life in countries across the world. The HDI has been compiled since 1990 by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) on a regular basis. The HDI is a composite of several indicators, which measure a country's achievements in three main arenas of human development: longevity, education, and economic standard of living. Although the concept of human development is complicated and cannot be properly captured by values and indices, the HDI offers a wide-ranging assessment of human development in certain countries, not based solely upon traditional economic and financial indicators. For more information about the methodology used to calculate the HDI, please see the "Source Materials" in the appendices of this review.

Very High Human Development	High Human Development	Medium Human Development	Low Human Development
1. Norway	43. Bahamas	86. Fiji	128. Kenya
2. Australia	44. Lithuania	87. Turkmenistan	129. Bangladesh
3. New Zealand	45. Chile	88. Dominican Republic	130. Ghana
4. United States	46. Argentina	89. China	131. Cameroon
5. Ireland	47. Kuwait	90. El Salvador	132. Myanmar (Burma)
6. Liechtenstein	48. Latvia	91. Sri Lanka	133. Yemen
7. Netherlands	49. Montenegro	92. Thailand	134. Benin
8. Canada	50. Romania	93. Gabon	135. Madagascar
9. Sweden	51. Croatia	94. Suriname	136. Mauritania
10. Germany	52. Uruguay	95. Bolivia	137. Papua New Guinea

11. Japan	53. Libya	96. Paraguay	138. Nepal
12. South Korea	54. Panama	97. Philippines	139. Togo
13. Switzerland	55. Saudi Arabia	98. Botswana	140. Comoros
14. France	56. Mexico	99. Moldova	141. Lesotho
15. Israel	57. Malaysia	100. Mongolia	142. Nigeria
16. Finland	58. Bulgaria	101. Egypt	143. Uganda
17. Iceland	59. Trinidad and Tobago	102. Uzbekistan	144. Senegal
18. Belgium	60. Serbia	103. Micronesia	145. Haiti
19. Denmark	61. Belarus	104. Guyana	146. Angola
20. Spain	62. Costa Rica	105. Namibia	147. Djibouti
21. Hong King	63. Peru	106. Honduras	148. Tanzania
22. Greece	64. Albania	107. Maldives	149. Cote d'Ivoire
23. Italy	65. Russian Federation	108. Indonesia	150. Zambia
24. Luxembourg	66. Kazakhstan	109. Kyrgyzstan	151. Gambia
25. Austria	67. Azerbaijan	110. South Africa	152. Rwanda
26. United Kingdom	68. Bosnia and Herzegovina	111. Syria	153. Malawi
27. Singapore	69. Ukraine	112. Tajikistan	154. Sudan

28. Czech Republic	70. Iran	113. Vietnam	155. Afghanistan
29. Slovenia	71. The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia	114. Morocco	156. Guinea
30. Andorra	72. Mauritius	115. Nicaragua	157. Ethiopia
31. Slovakia	73. Brazil	116. Guatemala	158. Sierra Leone
32. United Arab Emirates	74. Georgia	117. Equatorial Guinea	159. Central African Republic
33. Malta	75. Venezuela	118. Cape Verde	160. Mali
34. Estonia	76. Armenia	119. India	161. Burkina Faso
35. Cyprus	77. Ecuador	120. East Timor	162. Liberia
36. Hungary	78. Belize	121. Swaziland	163. Chad
37. Brunei	79. Colombia	122. Laos	164. Guinea-Bissau
38. Qatar	80. Jamaica	123. Solomon Islands	165. Mozambique
39. Bahrain	81. Tunisia	124. Cambodia	166. Burundi
40. Portugal	82. Jordan	125. Pakistan	167. Niger
41. Poland	83. Turkey	126. Congo RC	168. Congo DRC
		127. Sao Tome	

42. Barbados	84. Algeria	and Principe	169. Zimbabwe
	85. Tonga		

Methodology:

For more information about the methodology used to calculate the HDI, please see the "Source Materials" in the appendices of this Country Review.

Reference:

As published in United Nations Development Programme's Human Development Report 2010.

Source:

United Nations Development Programme's [Human Development Index](http://hdr.undp.org/en/statistics/) available at URL: <http://hdr.undp.org/en/statistics/>

Updated:

Uploaded in 2011 using ranking available; reviewed in 2015

Life Satisfaction Index

Life Satisfaction Index

Life Satisfaction Index

Created by Adrian G. White, an Analytic Social Psychologist at the University of Leicester, the "Satisfaction with Life Index" measures subjective life satisfaction across various countries. The data was taken from a metastudy (see below for source) and associates the notion of subjective happiness or life satisfaction with qualitative parameters such as health, wealth, and access to basic education. This assessment serves as an alternative to other measures of happiness that tend to rely on traditional and quantitative measures of policy on quality of life, such as GNP and GDP. The methodology involved the responses of 80,000 people across the globe.

Rank	Country	Score
1	Denmark	273.4
2	Switzerland	273.33
3	Austria	260
4	Iceland	260
5	The Bahamas	256.67
6	Finland	256.67
7	Sweden	256.67
8	Iran	253.33
9	Brunei	253.33
10	Canada	253.33
11	Ireland	253.33
12	Luxembourg	253.33
13	Costa Rica	250
14	Malta	250
15	Netherlands	250
16	Antiguaand Barbuda	246.67

17	Malaysia	246.67
18	New Zealand	246.67
19	Norway	246.67
20	Seychelles	246.67
21	Saint Kitts and Nevis	246.67
22	United Arab Emirates	246.67
23	United States	246.67
24	Vanuatu	246.67
25	Venezuela	246.67
26	Australia	243.33
27	Barbados	243.33
28	Belgium	243.33
29	Dominica	243.33
30	Oman	243.33
31	Saudi Arabia	243.33
32	Suriname	243.33
33	Bahrain	240
34	Colombia	240

35	Germany	240
36	Guyana	240
37	Honduras	240
38	Kuwait	240
39	Panama	240
40	Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	240
41	United Kingdom	236.67
42	Dominican Republic	233.33
43	Guatemala	233.33
44	Jamaica	233.33
45	Qatar	233.33
46	Spain	233.33
47	Saint Lucia	233.33
48	Belize	230
49	Cyprus	230
50	Italy	230
51	Mexico	230
52	Samoa	230

53	Singapore	230
54	Solomon Islands	230
55	Trinidad and Tobago	230
56	Argentina	226.67
57	Fiji	223.33
58	Israel	223.33
59	Mongolia	223.33
60	São Tomé and Príncipe	223.33
61	El Salvador	220
62	France	220
63	Hong Kong	220
64	Indonesia	220
65	Kyrgyzstan	220
66	Maldives	220
67	Slovenia	220
68	Taiwan	220
69	East Timor	220
70	Tonga	220

71	Chile	216.67
72	Grenada	216.67
73	Mauritius	216.67
74	Namibia	216.67
75	Paraguay	216.67
76	Thailand	216.67
77	Czech Republic	213.33
78	Philippines	213.33
79	Tunisia	213.33
80	Uzbekistan	213.33
81	Brazil	210
82	China	210
83	Cuba	210
84	Greece	210
85	Nicaragua	210
86	Papua New Guinea	210
87	Uruguay	210
88	Gabon	206.67

89	Ghana	206.67
90	Japan	206.67
91	Yemen	206.67
92	Portugal	203.33
93	Sri Lanka	203.33
94	Tajikistan	203.33
95	Vietnam	203.33
96	Bhutan	200
97	Comoros	196.67
98	Croatia	196.67
99	Poland	196.67
100	Cape Verde	193.33
101	Kazakhstan	193.33
102	South Korea	193.33
103	Madagascar	193.33
104	Bangladesh	190
105	Republic of the Congo	190
106	The Gambia	190

107	Hungary	190
108	Libya	190
109	South Africa	190
110	Cambodia	186.67
111	Ecuador	186.67
112	Kenya	186.67
113	Lebanon	186.67
114	Morocco	186.67
115	Peru	186.67
116	Senegal	186.67
117	Bolivia	183.33
118	Haiti	183.33
119	Nepal	183.33
120	Nigeria	183.33
121	Tanzania	183.33
122	Benin	180
123	Botswana	180
124	Guinea-Bissau	180

125	India	180
126	Laos	180
127	Mozambique	180
128	Palestinian Authority	180
129	Slovakia	180
130	Myanmar	176.67
131	Mali	176.67
132	Mauritania	176.67
133	Turkey	176.67
134	Algeria	173.33
135	Equatorial Guinea	173.33
136	Romania	173.33
137	Bosnia and Herzegovina	170
138	Cameroon	170
139	Estonia	170
140	Guinea	170
141	Jordan	170
142	Syria	170

143	Sierra Leone	166.67
144	Azerbaijan	163.33
145	Central African Republic	163.33
146	Republic of Macedonia	163.33
147	Togo	163.33
148	Zambia	163.33
149	Angola	160
150	Djibouti	160
151	Egypt	160
152	Burkina Faso	156.67
153	Ethiopia	156.67
154	Latvia	156.67
155	Lithuania	156.67
156	Uganda	156.67
157	Albania	153.33
158	Malawi	153.33
159	Chad	150
160	Côte d'Ivoire	150

161	Niger	150
162	Eritrea	146.67
163	Rwanda	146.67
164	Bulgaria	143.33
165	Lesotho	143.33
166	Pakistan	143.33
167	Russia	143.33
168	Swaziland	140
169	Georgia	136.67
170	Belarus	133.33
171	Turkmenistan	133.33
172	Armenia	123.33
173	Sudan	120
174	Ukraine	120
175	Moldova	116.67
176	Democratic Republic of the Congo	110
177	Zimbabwe	110
178	Burundi	100

Commentary:

European countries, such as [Denmark](#), [Iceland](#), [Finland](#), [Sweden](#), [Switzerland](#), [Austria](#) resided at the top of the ranking with highest levels of self-reported life satisfaction. Conversely, European countries such as [Latvia](#), [Lithuania](#), [Moldova](#), [Belarus](#) and [Ukraine](#) ranked low on the index. African countries such as Democratic Republic of Congo, [Zimbabwe](#) and [Burundi](#) found themselves at the very bottom of the ranking, and indeed, very few African countries could be found in the top 100. [Japan](#) was at the mid-way point in the ranking, however, other Asian countries such as [Brunei](#) and [Malaysia](#) were in the top tier, while [Pakistan](#) was close to the bottom with a low level of self-identified life satisfaction. As a region, the Middle East presented a mixed bag with Saudi Arabians reporting healthy levels of life satisfaction and Egyptians near the bottom of the ranking. As a region, Caribbean countries were ranked highly, consistently demonstrating high levels of life satisfaction. The findings showed that health was the most crucial determining factor in life satisfaction, followed by prosperity and education.

Source:

White, A. (2007). A Global Projection of Subjective Well-being: A Challenge To Positive Psychology? *Psychiatry* 56, 17-20. The data was extracted from a meta-analysis by Marks, Abdallah, Simms & Thompson (2006).

Uploaded:

Based on study noted above in "Source" ; reviewed in 2015

Happy Planet Index

Happy Planet Index

The Happy Planet Index (HPI) is used to measure human well-being in conjunction with environmental impact. The HPI has been compiled since 2006 by the New Economics Foundation. The index is a composite of several indicators including subjective life satisfaction, life expectancy at birth, and ecological footprint per capita.

As noted by NEFA, the HPI "reveals the ecological efficiency with which human well-being is delivered." Indeed, the index combines environmental impact with human well-being to measure the environmental efficiency with which, country by country, people live long and happy lives. The countries ranked highest by the HPI are not necessarily the ones with the happiest people overall, but the ones that allow their citizens to live long and fulfilling lives, without negatively impacting this opportunity for either future generations or citizens of other countries. Accordingly, a country like the [United States](#) will rank low on this list due to its large per capital ecological footprint, which uses more than its fair share of resources, and will likely cause planetary damage.

It should be noted that the HPI was designed to be a counterpoint to other well-established indices of countries' development, such as Gross Domestic Product (GDP), which measures overall national wealth and economic development, but often obfuscates the realities of countries with stark variances between the rich and the poor. Moreover, the objective of most of the world's people is not to be wealthy but to be happy. The HPI also differs from the [Human Development Index](#) (HDI), which measures quality of life but not ecology, since it [HPI] also includes sustainability as a key indicator.

Rank	Country	HPI
1	Costa Rica	76.1
2	Dominican Republic	71.8
3	Jamaica	70.1
4	Guatemala	68.4
5	Vietnam	66.5
6	Colombia	66.1
7	Cuba	65.7
8	El Salvador	61.5

9	Brazil	61.0
10	Honduras	61.0
11	Nicaragua	60.5
12	Egypt	60.3
13	Saudi Arabia	59.7
14	Philippines	59.0
15	Argentina	59.0
16	Indonesia	58.9
17	Bhutan	58.5
18	Panama	57.4
19	Laos	57.3
20	China	57.1
21	Morocco	56.8
22	Sri Lanka	56.5
23	Mexico	55.6
24	Pakistan	55.6
25	Ecuador	55.5
26	Jordan	54.6

27	Belize	54.5
28	Peru	54.4
29	Tunisia	54.3
30	Trinidad and Tobago	54.2
31	Bangladesh	54.1
32	Moldova	54.1
33	Malaysia	54.0
34	Tajikistan	53.5
35	India	53.0
36	Venezuela	52.5
37	Nepal	51.9
38	Syria	51.3
39	Burma	51.2
40	Algeria	51.2
41	Thailand	50.9
42	Haiti	50.8
43	Netherlands	50.6
44	Malta	50.4

45	Uzbekistan	50.1
46	Chile	49.7
47	Bolivia	49.3
48	Armenia	48.3
49	Singapore	48.2
50	Yemen	48.1
51	Germany	48.1
52	Switzerland	48.1
53	Sweden	48.0
54	Albania	47.9
55	Paraguay	47.8
56	Palestinian Authority	47.7
57	Austria	47.7
58	Serbia	47.6
59	Finland	47.2
60	Croatia	47.2
61	Kyrgyzstan	47.1
62	Cyprus	46.2

63	Guyana	45.6
64	Belgium	45.4
65	Bosnia and Herzegovina	45.0
66	Slovenia	44.5
67	Israel	44.5
68	South Korea	44.4
69	Italy	44.0
70	Romania	43.9
71	France	43.9
72	Georgia	43.6
73	Slovakia	43.5
74	United Kingdom	43.3
75	Japan	43.3
76	Spain	43.2
77	Poland	42.8
78	Ireland	42.6
79	Iraq	42.6
80	Cambodia	42.3

81	Iran	42.1
82	Bulgaria	42.0
83	Turkey	41.7
84	Hong Kong	41.6
85	Azerbaijan	41.2
86	Lithuania	40.9
87	Djibouti	40.4
88	Norway	40.4
89	Canada	39.4
90	Hungary	38.9
91	Kazakhstan	38.5
92	Czech Republic	38.3
93	Mauritania	38.2
94	Iceland	38.1
95	Ukraine	38.1
96	Senegal	38.0
97	Greece	37.6
98	Portugal	37.5

99	Uruguay	37.2
100	Ghana	37.1
101	Latvia	36.7
102	Australia	36.6
103	New Zealand	36.2
104	Belarus	35.7
105	Denmark	35.5
106	Mongolia	35.0
107	Malawi	34.5
108	Russia	34.5
109	Chad	34.3
110	Lebanon	33.6
111	Macedonia	32.7
112	Republic of the Congo	32.4
113	Madagascar	31.5
114	United States	30.7
115	Nigeria	30.3
116	Guinea	30.3

117	Uganda	30.2
118	South Africa	29.7
119	Rwanda	29.6
120	Democratic Republic of the Congo	29.0
121	Sudan	28.5
122	Luxembourg	28.5
123	United Arab Emirates	28.2
124	Ethiopia	28.1
125	Kenya	27.8
126	Cameroon	27.2
127	Zambia	27.2
128	Kuwait	27.0
129	Niger	26.9
130	Angola	26.8
131	Estonia	26.4
132	Mali	25.8
133	Mozambique	24.6
134	Benin	24.6

135	Togo	23.3
136	Sierra Leone	23.1
137	Central African Republic	22.9
138	Burkina Faso	22.4
139	Burundi	21.8
140	Namibia	21.1
141	Botswana	20.9
142	Tanzania	17.8
143	Zimbabwe	16.6

Source: This material is derived from the Happy Planet Index issued by the New Economics Foundation (NEF).

Methodology: The methodology for the calculations can be found at URL: <http://www.happyplanetindex.org/>

Status of Women

Gender Related Development Index (GDI) Rank:

Not Ranked

Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM) Rank:

Not Ranked

Female Population:

1.8 million

Female Life Expectancy at birth:

42 years

Total Fertility Rate:

6.8

Maternal Mortality Ratio (2000):

760

Total Number of Women Living with HIV/AIDS:

N/A

Ever Married Women, Ages 15-19 (%):

36%

Mean Age at Time of Marriage:

20

Contraceptive Use Among Married Women, Any Method (%):

N/A

Female Adult Literacy Rate:

42%

Combined Female Gross enrollment ratio for Primary, Secondary and Tertiary schools:

N/A

Female-Headed Households (%):

N/A

Economically Active Females (%):

N/A

Female Contributing Family Workers (%):

N/A

Female Estimated Earned Income:

N/A

Seats in Parliament held by women (%):*Lower or Single House:* N/A*Upper House or Senate:* N/A**Year Women Received the Right to Vote:**

1946

Year Women Received the Right to Stand for Election:

N/A

*The Gender Development Index (GDI) is a composite index which measures the average achievement in a country. While very similar to the Human Development Index in its use of the same variables, the GDI adjusts the average achievement of each country in terms of life expectancy, enrollment in schools, income, and literacy in accordance to the disparities between males and females.

*The Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM) is a composite index measuring gender inequality in three of the basic dimensions of empowerment; economic participation and decision-making, political participation and decision-making, and power over economic resources.

*Total Fertility Rate (TFR) is defined as the average number of babies born to women during their reproductive years. A TFR of 2.1 is considered the replacement rate; once a TFR of a population

reaches 2.1 the population will remain stable assuming no immigration or emigration takes place. When the TFR is greater than 2.1 a population will increase and when it is less than 2.1 a population will eventually decrease, although due to the age structure of a population it will take years before a low TFR is translated into lower population.

*Maternal Mortality Rate is the number of deaths to women per 100,000 live births that resulted from conditions related to pregnancy and or delivery related complications.

*Economically Active Females are the share of the female population, ages 15 and above, whom supply, or are able to supply, labor for the production of goods and services.

*Female Contributing Family Workers are those females who work without pay in an economic enterprise operated by a relative living in the same household.

*Estimated Earned Income is measured according to Purchasing Power Parity (PPP) in US dollars.

Global Gender Gap Index

Global Gender Gap Index

Editor's Note:

The Global Gender Gap Index by the World Economic Forum ranks most of the world's countries in terms of the division of resources and opportunities among males and females. Specifically, the ranking assesses the gender inequality gap in these four arenas:

1. Economic participation and opportunity (salaries and high skilled employment participation levels)
2. Educational attainment (access to basic and higher level education)
3. Political empowerment (representation in decision-making structures)
4. Health and survival (life expectancy and sex ratio)

			2010					
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	2010 rank	2010 score	rank among 2009 countries	2009 rank	2009 score	2008 rank	2008 score	2007 rank
Country								
Iceland	1	0.8496	1	1	0.8276	4	0.7999	4
Norway	2	0.8404	2	3	0.8227	1	0.8239	2
Finland	3	0.8260	3	2	0.8252	2	0.8195	3
Sweden	4	0.8024	4	4	0.8139	3	0.8139	1
New Zealand	5	0.7808	5	5	0.7880	5	0.7859	5
Ireland	6	0.7773	6	8	0.7597	8	0.7518	9
Denmark	7	0.7719	7	7	0.7628	7	0.7538	8
Lesotho	8	0.7678	8	10	0.7495	16	0.7320	26
Philippines	9	0.7654	9	9	0.7579	6	0.7568	6
Switzerland	10	0.7562	10	13	0.7426	14	0.7360	40
Spain	11	0.7554	11	17	0.7345	17	0.7281	10
South Africa	12	0.7535	12	6	0.7709	22	0.7232	20
Germany	13	0.7530	13	12	0.7449	11	0.7394	7
Belgium	14	0.7509	14	33	0.7165	28	0.7163	19

United Kingdom	15	0.7460	15	15	0.7402	13	0.7366	11
Sri Lanka	16	0.7458	16	16	0.7402	12	0.7371	15
Netherlands	17	0.7444	17	11	0.7490	9	0.7399	12
Latvia	18	0.7429	18	14	0.7416	10	0.7397	13
United States	19	0.7411	19	31	0.7173	27	0.7179	31
Canada	20	0.7372	20	25	0.7196	31	0.7136	18
Trinidad and Tobago	21	0.7353	21	19	0.7298	19	0.7245	46
Mozambique	22	0.7329	22	26	0.7195	18	0.7266	43
Australia	23	0.7271	23	20	0.7282	21	0.7241	17
Cuba	24	0.7253	24	29	0.7176	25	0.7195	22
Namibia	25	0.7238	25	32	0.7167	30	0.7141	29
Luxembourg	26	0.7231	26	63	0.6889	66	0.6802	58
Mongolia	27	0.7194	27	22	0.7221	40	0.7049	62
Costa Rica	28	0.7194	28	27	0.7180	32	0.7111	28
Argentina	29	0.7187	29	24	0.7211	24	0.7209	33
Nicaragua	30	0.7176	30	49	0.7002	71	0.6747	90
Barbados	31	0.7176	31	21	0.7236	26	0.7188	n/a

Portugal	32	0.7171	32	46	0.7013	39	0.7051	37
Uganda	33	0.7169	33	40	0.7067	43	0.6981	50
Moldova	34	0.7160	34	36	0.7104	20	0.7244	21
Lithuania	35	0.7132	35	30	0.7175	23	0.7222	14
Bahamas	36	0.7128	36	28	0.7179	n/a	n/a	n/a
Austria	37	0.7091	37	42	0.7031	29	0.7153	27
Guyana	38	0.7090	38	35	0.7108	n/a	n/a	n/a
Panama	39	0.7072	39	43	0.7024	34	0.7095	38
Ecuador	40	0.7072	40	23	0.7220	35	0.7091	44
Kazakhstan	41	0.7055	41	47	0.7013	45	0.6976	32
Slovenia	42	0.7047	42	52	0.6982	51	0.6937	49
Poland	43	0.7037	43	50	0.6998	49	0.6951	60
Jamaica	44	0.7037	44	48	0.7013	44	0.6980	39
Russian Federation	45	0.7036	45	51	0.6987	42	0.6994	45
France	46	0.7025	46	18	0.7331	15	0.7341	51
Estonia	47	0.7018	47	37	0.7094	37	0.7076	30
Chile	48	0.7013	48	64	0.6884	65	0.6818	86

Macedonia, FYR	49	0.6996	49	53	0.6950	53	0.6914	35
Bulgaria	50	0.6983	50	38	0.7072	36	0.7077	25
Kyrgyz Republic	51	0.6973	51	41	0.7058	41	0.7045	70
Israel	52	0.6957	52	45	0.7019	56	0.6900	36
Croatia	53	0.6939	53	54	0.6944	46	0.6967	16
Honduras	54	0.6927	54	62	0.6893	47	0.6960	68
Colombia	55	0.6927	55	56	0.6939	50	0.6944	24
Singapore	56	0.6914	56	84	0.6664	84	0.6625	77
Thailand	57	0.6910	57	59	0.6907	52	0.6917	52
Greece	58	0.6908	58	85	0.6662	75	0.6727	72
Uruguay	59	0.6897	59	57	0.6936	54	0.6907	78
Peru	60	0.6895	60	44	0.7024	48	0.6959	75
China	61	0.6881	61	60	0.6907	57	0.6878	73
Botswana	62	0.6876	62	39	0.7071	63	0.6839	53
Ukraine	63	0.6869	63	61	0.6896	62	0.6856	57
Venezuela	64	0.6863	64	69	0.6839	59	0.6875	55
Czech Republic	65	0.6850	65	74	0.6789	69	0.6770	64

Tanzania	66	0.6829	66	73	0.6797	38	0.7068	34
Romania	67	0.6826	67	70	0.6805	70	0.6763	47
Malawi	68	0.6824	68	76	0.6738	81	0.6664	87
Paraguay	69	0.6804	69	66	0.6868	100	0.6379	69
Ghana	70	0.6782	70	80	0.6704	77	0.6679	63
Slovak Republic	71	0.6778	71	68	0.6845	64	0.6824	54
Vietnam	72	0.6776	72	71	0.6802	68	0.6778	42
Dominican Republic	73	0.6774	73	67	0.6859	72	0.6744	65
Italy	74	0.6765	74	72	0.6798	67	0.6788	84
Gambia, The	75	0.6762	75	75	0.6752	85	0.6622	95
Bolivia	76	0.6751	76	82	0.6693	80	0.6667	80
Brunei Darussalem	77	0.6748	77	94	0.6524	99	0.6392	n/a
Albania	78	0.6726	78	91	0.6601	87	0.6591	66
Hungary	79	0.6720	79	65	0.6879	60	0.6867	61
Madagascar	80	0.6713	80	77	0.6732	74	0.6736	89
Angola	81	0.6712	81	106	0.6353	114	0.6032	110
Bangladesh	82	0.6702	82	93	0.6526	90	0.6531	100

Malta	83	0.6695	83	88	0.6635	83	0.6634	76
Armenia	84	0.6669	84	90	0.6619	78	0.6677	71
Brazil	85	0.6655	85	81	0.6695	73	0.6737	74
Cyprus	86	0.6642	86	79	0.6706	76	0.6694	82
Indonesia	87	0.6615	87	92	0.6580	93	0.6473	81
Georgia	88	0.6598	88	83	0.6680	82	0.6654	67
Tajikistan	89	0.6598	89	86	0.6661	89	0.6541	79
El Salvador	90	0.6596	90	55	0.6939	58	0.6875	48
Mexico	91	0.6577	91	98	0.6503	97	0.6441	93
Zimbabwe	92	0.6574	92	95	0.6518	92	0.6485	88
Belize	93	0.6536	93	87	0.6636	86	0.6610	94
Japan	94	0.6524	94	101	0.6447	98	0.6434	91
Mauritius	95	0.6520	95	96	0.6513	95	0.6466	85
Kenya	96	0.6499	96	97	0.6512	88	0.6547	83
Cambodia	97	0.6482	97	104	0.6410	94	0.6469	98
Malaysia	98	0.6479	98	100	0.6467	96	0.6442	92
Maldives	99	0.6452	99	99	0.6482	91	0.6501	99
Azerbaijan	100	0.6446	100	89	0.6626	61	0.6856	59

Senegal	101	0.6414	101	102	0.6427	n/a	n/a	n/a
Suriname	102	0.6407	102	78	0.6726	79	0.6674	56
United Arab Emirates	103	0.6397	103	112	0.6198	105	0.6220	105
Korea, Rep.	104	0.6342	104	115	0.6146	108	0.6154	97
Kuwait	105	0.6318	105	105	0.6356	101	0.6358	96
Zambia	106	0.6293	106	107	0.6310	106	0.6205	101
Tunisia	107	0.6266	107	109	0.6233	103	0.6295	102
Fiji	108	0.6256	108	103	0.6414	n/a	n/a	n/a
Guatemala	109	0.6238	109	111	0.6209	112	0.6072	106
Bahrain	110	0.6217	110	116	0.6136	121	0.5927	115
Burkina Faso	111	0.6162	111	120	0.6081	115	0.6029	117
India	112	0.6155	112	114	0.6151	113	0.6060	114
Mauritania	113	0.6152	113	119	0.6103	110	0.6117	111
Cameroon	114	0.6110	114	118	0.6108	117	0.6017	116
Nepal	115	0.6084	115	110	0.6213	120	0.5942	125
Lebanon*	116	0.6084	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Qatar	117	0.6059	116	125	0.5907	119	0.5948	109

Nigeria	118	0.6055	117	108	0.6280	102	0.6339	107
Algeria	119	0.6052	118	117	0.6119	111	0.6111	108
Jordan	120	0.6048	119	113	0.6182	104	0.6275	104
Ethiopia	121	0.6019	120	122	0.5948	122	0.5867	113
Oman	122	0.5950	121	123	0.5938	118	0.5960	119
Iran	123	0.5933	122	128	0.5839	116	0.6021	118
Syria	124	0.5926	123	121	0.6072	107	0.6181	103
Egypt	125	0.5899	124	126	0.5862	124	0.5832	120
Turkey	126	0.5876	125	129	0.5828	123	0.5853	121
Morocco	127	0.5767	126	124	0.5926	125	0.5757	122
Benin	128	0.5719	127	131	0.5643	126	0.5582	123
Saudi Arabia	129	0.5713	128	130	0.5651	128	0.5537	124
Côte d'Ivoire*	130	0.5691	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Mali	131	0.5680	129	127	0.5860	109	0.6117	112
Pakistan	132	0.5465	130	132	0.5458	127	0.5549	126
Chad	133	0.5330	131	133	0.5417	129	0.5290	127
Yemen	134	0.4603	132	134	0.4609	130	0.4664	128
Belarus	n/a	n/a	n/a	34	0.7141	33	0.7099	23

Uzbekistan	n/a	n/a	n/a	58	0.6913	55	0.6906	41

*new country 2010

Commentary:

According to the report's index, Nordic countries, such as [Iceland](#), [Norway](#), [Finland](#), and [Sweden](#) have continued to dominate at the top of the ranking for gender equality. Meanwhile, [France](#) has seen a notable decline in the ranking, largely as a result of decreased number of women holding ministerial portfolios in that country. In the Americas, the [United States](#) has risen in the ranking to top the region, predominantly as a result of a decreasing wage gap, as well as higher number of women holding key positions in the current Obama administration. [Canada](#) has continued to remain as one of the top ranking countries of the Americas, followed by the small Caribbean island nation of Trinidad and Tobago, which has the distinction of being among the top three countries of the Americans in the realm of gender equality. [Lesotho](#) and South African ranked highly in the index, leading not only among African countries but also in global context. Despite [Lesotho](#) still lagging in the area of life expectancy, its high ranking was attributed to high levels of female participation in the labor force and female literacy. The [Philippines](#) and [Sri Lanka](#) were the top ranking countries for gender equality for Asia, ranking highly also in global context. The [Philippines](#) has continued to show strong performance in all strong performance on all four dimensions (detailed above) of the index. Finally, in the Arab world, the [United Arab Emirates](#) held the highest-rank within that region of the world; however, its placement near the bottom of the global list highlights the fact that Arab countries are generally poor performers when it comes to the matter of gender equality in global scope.

Source:

This data is derived from the latest edition of The Global Gender Gap Report by the World Economic Forum.

Available at URL:

<http://www.weforum.org/en/Communities/Women%20Leaders%20and%20Gender%20Parity/Gende>

Updated:

Based on latest available data as set forth in chart; reviewed in 2014

Culture and Arts

Content to come!

Etiquette

Cultural Dos and Taboos

1. Persons of the opposite sex may refrain from shaking hands with each other.
2. Men and women should avoid wearing shorts. Women should not wear short shirts or dresses.
3. The left hand is taboo. Never give or receive anything with it, especially food.
4. Remove shoes before entering a house or mosque.
5. Never expose the bottom of your foot to a Muslim.
6. Public displays of affection are frowned upon.
7. At traditional dinners one may be expected to eat with one's fingers. Never let the fingers touch the mouth.
8. It is not appropriate to give gifts to hosts or hostesses. A thank you note sent a few days after a visit is fine for expressing appreciation.

Travel Information

Please Note

This is a generalized travel guide and it is intended to coalesce several resources, which a traveler might find useful, regardless of a particular destination. As such, it does not include travel warnings for specific "hot spot" destinations.

For travel alerts and warnings, please see the United States Department of State's listings available at URL:

<http://travel.state.gov/content/passports/english/alertswarnings.html>

Please note that travel to the following countries, based on these warnings, is ill-advised, or should be undertaken with the utmost precaution:

Afghanistan, Algeria, Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Colombia, Democratic Republic of Congo, Djibouti, El Salvador, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Guinea, Honduras, Iraq, Iran, Lebanon, Liberia, Libya, Mali, Mauritania, Mexico, Nepal, Niger, Nigeria, North Korea, Pakistan, Palestinian Territories of West Bank and Gaza, Philippines areas of Sulu Archipelago, Mindanao, and southern Sulu Sea, Saudi Arabia, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Syria, Ukraine, Venezuela, and Yemen.

International Travel Guide

Checklist for Travelers

1. Take out travel insurance to cover hospital treatment or medical evacuation. Overseas medical costs are expensive to most international travelers, where one's domestic, nationalized or even

private health insurance plans will not provide coverage outside one's home country. Learn about "reciprocal insurance plans" that some international health care companies might offer.

2. Make sure that one's travel insurance is appropriate. If one intends to indulge in adventurous activities, such as parasailing, one should be sure that one is fully insured in such cases. Many traditional insurance policies do not provide coverage in cases of extreme circumstances.

3. Take time to learn about one's destination country and culture. Read and learn about the place one is traveling. Also check political, economic and socio-cultural developments at the destination by reading country-specific travel reports and fact sheets noted below.

4. Get the necessary visas for the country (or countries) one intends to visit - but be aware that a visa does not guarantee entry. A number of useful sites regarding visa and other entry requirements are noted below.

5. Keep in regular contact with friends and relatives back at home by phone or email, and be sure to leave a travel itinerary.

6. Protect one's personal information by making copies of one's passport details, insurance policy, travelers checks and credit card numbers. Taking copies of such documents with you, while leaving another collection copies with someone at home is also good practice for travelers. Taking copies of one's passport photograph is also recommended.

7. Stay healthy by taking all possible precautions against illness. Also, be sure to take extra supplies of prescription drugs along for the trip, while also taking time to pack general pharmaceutical supplies, such as aspirin and other such painkillers, bandages, stomach ailment medication, anti-inflammatory medication and anti-bacterial medication.

8. Do not carry illicit drugs. Understand that the punishment for possession or use of illegal drugs in some countries may be capital punishment. Make sure your prescription drugs are legal in the countries you plan to visit.

9. Know the laws of one's destination country and culture; be sure to understand the repercussions of breaking those laws and regulations. Often the transparency and freedoms of the juridical system at home is not consistent with that of one's destination country. Become aware of these complexities and subtleties before you travel.

10. For longer stays in a country, or where the security situation is volatile, one should register one's self and traveling companions at the local embassy or consulate of one's country of citizenship.

11. Women should take care to be prepared both culturally and practically for traveling in a different country and culture. One should be sure to take sufficient supplies of personal feminine products and prescription drugs. One should also learn about local cultural standards for women, including norms of dressing. Be aware that it is simply inappropriate and unsafe for women to travel alone in some countries, and take the necessary precautions to avoid risk-filled situations.

12. If one is traveling with small children, one should pack extra supplies, make arrangements with the travel carrier for proper seating that would adequately accommodate children, infants or toddlers. Note also that whether one is male or female, traveling with children means that one's hands are thus not free to carry luggage and bags. Be especially aware that this makes one vulnerable to pickpockets, thieves and other sorts of crime.

13. Make proper arrangements for accommodations, well in advance of one's arrival at a destination. Some countries have limited accommodation, while others may have culturally distinctive facilities. Learning about these practicalities before one travels will greatly aid the enjoyment of one's trip.

14. Travel with different forms of currency and money (cash, traveler's checks and credit cards) in anticipation that venues may not accept one or another form of money. Also, ensuring that one's financial resources are not contained in one location, or by one person (if one is traveling with others) can be a useful measure, in the event that one loses a wallet or purse.

15. Find out about transportation in the destination country. In some places, it might be advisable to hire a local driver or taxi guide for safety reasons, while in other countries, enjoying one's travel experience may well be enhanced by renting a vehicle and seeing the local sights and culture independently. Costs may also be prohibitive for either of these choices, so again, prior planning is suggested.

Tips for Travelers

Liberia is a developing west African country which is recovering from seven years of devastating civil war (1989-97). See the "Travel Warning" below for information regarding the continuing effects of the civil war on the security situation in this country.

Although a democratically elected government was installed in August 1997, limited progress has been made toward the following goals: resettlement of refugees and displaced persons, reintegration of former combatants, reconstruction of the country's infrastructure, respect for human rights and the rule of law, a stable environment for economic development, and the elimination of corruption. Tourism facilities are poor or, in many cases, nonexistent.

A passport and visa are required, as is evidence of a yellow fever vaccination. For persons who are traveling from countries that do not have a Liberian Embassy or Consulate, an airport entry visa may be obtained, but the Bureau of Immigration and Naturalization must authorize the visa in advance of arrival.

In an effort to prevent international child abduction, many governments have initiated procedures at entry/exit points. These often include requiring documentary evidence of relationship and permission for the child's travel from the parent(s) or legal guardian not present. Having such documentation on hand, even if not required, may facilitate entry/departure.

The ability of Liberia's security forces to maintain law and order in the countryside is open to question, and travelers should check with their embassy consular section or security office before undertaking travel outside Monrovia. Travelers are advised to avoid northwest Liberia as continued instability and strife in southeastern Sierra Leone heightens government sensitivity about security in

the border area.

Due to the potential for violence, you should avoid crowds, political rallies, and street demonstrations and maintain security awareness at all times. In addition, due to recent animosities among security forces, you should avoid any gathering of such forces.

Monrovia's crime rate is high. Theft and assault are major problems and occur more frequently after dark. Foreigners have been targets of street crime and robbery.

Residential armed break-ins are common. The police are ill-equipped and largely incapable of providing effective protection.

The loss or theft abroad of a passport should be reported immediately to the local police and the nearest appropriate embassy or consulate.

Hospitals and medical facilities are poorly equipped and incapable of providing basic services. Medicines are scarce or often unavailable in most areas.

When making a decision regarding health insurance, Americans should consider that many foreign doctors and hospitals require payment in cash prior to providing service and that a medical evacuation back to your country may be very expensive. Uninsured travelers who require medical care overseas often face extreme difficulties. When consulting with your insurer prior to your trip, ascertain whether payment will be made to the overseas healthcare provider or whether you will be reimbursed later for expenses you incur. Some insurance policies also include coverage for psychiatric treatment and for disposition of remains in the event of death.

While in a foreign country, you may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in your country. The information below concerning Liberia is provided for general reference only, and may not be totally accurate in a particular location or circumstance.

Safety of public transportation: Poor

Urban road conditions/maintenance: Poor

Rural road conditions/maintenance: Poor to nonexistent

Availability of roadside assistance: Poor to nonexistent

Road travel can be hazardous. Cars, trucks, and taxis are frequently overloaded with people and goods and make frequent stops without signaling. Many vehicles operate with threadbare tires and blowouts are common. There are no operating traffic lights in the country; therefore, intersections should be approached with caution. There are also no public streetlights; pedestrians in Monrovia's streets and those walking on country roads are difficult to see at night. Pedestrians often walk in the streets and cross busy roadways with little or no warning. Drivers and pedestrians are

cautioned that high-speed car convoys carrying government officials force vehicles to pull off the road until they have passed.

Although it is possible to travel overland to and from Cote d'Ivoire and Guinea, travelers should expect frequent delays at government security checkpoints, as well as time-consuming detours around the many bridges and roads damaged during the civil war or by the heavy annual rains which occur from May to November. Travelers can expect strict enforcement of border controls by Liberian, Ivoirian, and Guinean authorities.

While in a foreign country, you are subject to that country's laws and regulations. Persons violating Liberian law, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested or imprisoned. Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking in illegal drugs in Liberia are strict and convicted offenders can expect jail sentences and heavy fines.

Foreign citizens are encouraged to carry a copy of their passports with them at all times, so that, if questioned by local officials, proof of identity and citizenship are readily available. If arrested, foreign citizens should always ask to be allowed to contact their appropriate embassy.

Lodging, fuel, transportation, and telephone services are unevenly available in Liberia. They are nonexistent or severely limited in rural areas. Neither water nor electricity is commercially available in Monrovia. Most hotels have utilities available, but not on a 24-hour basis. Few facilities and homes have telephones, and disruption of telephone service is common. Public mail delivery is very unreliable, but commercial air courier service is available through DHL and Federal Express.

The U.S. dollar is readily accepted in Liberia. While the official rate of exchange is one U.S. dollar to one Liberian dollar, the street rate is substantially different and varies. In the past few months, the street rate has been 40-50 Liberian dollars to one U.S. dollar. The Central Bank of Liberia has recently issued new currency and all older Liberian currency such as the "Liberty" and the "JJ" is no longer legal tender. The use of traveler's checks is subject to substantial fees and few commercial establishments accept them. ATMs are unavailable and credit/debit cards are not accepted anywhere in Liberia. Wire transfers through Western Union and some banks are available but subject to substantial fees.

Taking photographs of military installations, air and seaports, and important government buildings is restricted. Visitors should refrain from taking pictures of any sites or activities, including official motorcades or security personnel that might be considered sensitive.

Note: This information is directly quoted from the United States Department of State Consular Information Sheet.

Sources: *United States Department of State Consular Information Sheet*

Business Culture: Information for Business Travelers

For information regarding general etiquette in Liberia see our Cultural Etiquette page.

Online Resources Regarding Entry Requirements and Visas

Foreign Entry Requirements for Americans from the United States Department of State
http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_1765.html

Visa Services for Non-Americans from the United States Department of State
http://travel.state.gov/visa/visa_1750.html

Visa Bulletins from the United States Department of State
http://travel.state.gov/visa/frvi/bulletin/bulletin_1360.html

Visa Waivers from the United States Department of State
http://travel.state.gov/visa/temp/without/without_1990.html - new

Passport and Visa Information from the Government of the United Kingdom
<http://www.bia.homeoffice.gov.uk/>

Visa Information from the Government of Australia
<http://www.dfat.gov.au/visas/index.html>

Passport Information from the Government of Australia
<https://www.passports.gov.au/Web/index.aspx>

Passport Information from the Government of Canada
http://www.voyage.gc.ca/preparation_information/passport_passeport-eng.asp

Visa Information from the Government of Canada
http://www.voyage.gc.ca/preparation_information/visas-eng.asp

Online Visa Processing by Immigration Experts by VisaPro
<http://www.visapro.com>

Sources: United States Department of State, United Kingdom Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Government of Australia: Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Government of Canada Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade

Useful Online Resources for Travelers

Country-Specific Travel Information from United States

http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_1765.html

Travel Advice by Country from Government of United Kingdom

<http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/travelling-and-living-overseas/travel-advice-by-country/>

General Travel Advice from Government of Australia

<http://www.smartraveller.gov.au/zw-cgi/view/Advice/General>

Travel Bulletins from the Government of Australia

<http://www.smartraveller.gov.au/zw-cgi/view/TravelBulletins/>

Travel Tips from Government of Australia

<http://www.smartraveller.gov.au/tips/index.html>

Travel Checklist by Government of Canada

http://www.voyage.gc.ca/preparation_information/checklist_sommaire-eng.asp

Travel Checklist from Government of United Kingdom

<http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/travelling-and-living-overseas/staying-safe/checklist>

Your trip abroad from United States Department of State

http://travel.state.gov/travel/tips/brochures/brochures_1225.html

A safe trip abroad from United States Department of State

http://travel.state.gov/travel/tips/safety/safety_1747.html

Tips for expatriates abroad from United States Department of State

http://travel.state.gov/travel/living/residing/residing_1235.html

Tips for students from United States Department of State

http://travel.state.gov/travel/living/studying/studying_1238.html <http://travel.state.gov/travel/tips/broc>

Medical information for travelers from United States Department of State

http://travel.state.gov/travel/tips/health/health_1185.html

US Customs Travel information

<http://www.customs.gov/xp/cgov/travel/>

Sources: United States Department of State; United States Customs Department, United Kingdom Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Government of Australia; Government of Canada: Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade

Other Practical Online Resources for Travelers

Foreign Language Phrases for Travelers

<http://www.travlang.com/languages/>

<http://www.omniglot.com/language/phrases/index.htm>

World Weather Forecasts

<http://www.intellicast.com/>

<http://www.wunderground.com/>

<http://www.worldweather.org/>

Worldwide Time Zones, Map, World Clock

<http://www.timeanddate.com/>

<http://www.worldtimezone.com/>

International Airport Codes

<http://www.world-airport-codes.com/>

International Dialing Codes

<http://www.kropla.com/dialcode.htm>

<http://www.countrycallingcodes.com/>

International Phone Guide

<http://www.kropla.com/phones.htm>

International Mobile Phone Guide

<http://www.kropla.com/mobilephones.htm>

International Internet Café Search Engine

<http://cybercaptive.com/>

Global Internet Roaming

<http://www.kropla.com/roaming.htm>

World Electric Power Guide

<http://www.kropla.com/electric.htm>

<http://www.kropla.com/electric2.htm>

World Television Standards and Codes

<http://www.kropla.com/tv.htm>

International Currency Exchange Rates

<http://www.xe.com/ucc/>

Banking and Financial Institutions Across the World

<http://www.123world.com/banks/index.html>

International Credit Card or Automated Teller Machine (ATM) Locator

<http://visa.via.infonow.net/locator/global/>

<http://www.mastercard.com/us/personal/en/cardholderservices/atmlocations/index.html>

International Chambers of Commerce

<http://www.123world.com/chambers/index.html>

World Tourism Websites

<http://123world.com/tourism/>

Diplomatic and Consular Information

United States Diplomatic Posts Around the World

<http://www.usembassy.gov/>

United Kingdom Diplomatic Posts Around the World

<http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/about-the-fco/embassies-and-posts/find-an-embassy-overseas/>

Australia's Diplomatic Posts Around the World

<http://www.dfat.gov.au/missions/>

<http://www.dfat.gov.au/embassies.html>

Canada's Embassies and High Commissions

<http://www.international.gc.ca/ciw-cdm/embassies-ambassades.aspx>

Resources for Finding Embassies and other Diplomatic Posts Across the World

<http://www.escapeartist.com/embassy1/embassy1.htm>

Safety and Security

Travel Warnings by Country from Government of Australia

<http://www.smarttraveller.gov.au/zw-cgi/view/Advice/>

Travel Warnings and Alerts from United States Department of State

http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/tw/tw_1764.html

http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/pa/pa_1766.html

Travel Reports and Warnings by Government of Canada

http://www.voyage.gc.ca/countries_pays/menu-eng.asp

http://www.voyage.gc.ca/countries_pays/updates_mise-a-jour-eng.asp

Travel Warnings from Government of United Kingdom

<http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/travelling-and-living-overseas/travel-advice-by-country/>

<http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/travelling-and-living-overseas/travel-advice-by-country/?action=noTravelAll#noTravelAll>

Sources: United Kingdom Foreign and Commonwealth Office, the United States Department of State, the Government of Canada: Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, Government of Australia: Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

Other Safety and Security Online Resources for Travelers

United States Department of State Information on Terrorism

<http://www.state.gov/s/ct/>

Government of the United Kingdom Resource on the Risk of Terrorism

<http://www.fco.gov.uk/servlet/Front?>

[pagename=OpenMarket/Xcelerate/ShowPage&c=Page&cid=1044011304926](http://www.fco.gov.uk/servlet/Front?pagename=OpenMarket/Xcelerate/ShowPage&c=Page&cid=1044011304926)

Government of Canada Terrorism Guide

<http://www.international.gc.ca/crime/terrorism-terrorisme.aspx?lang=eng>

Information on Terrorism by Government of Australia

<http://www.dfat.gov.au/icat/index.html>

FAA Resource on Aviation Safety

<http://www.faasafety.gov/>

In-Flight Safety Information for Air Travel (by British Airways crew trainer, Anna Warman)

<http://www.warman.demon.co.uk/anna/inflight.html>

Hot Spots: Travel Safety and Risk Information

<http://www.airsecurity.com/hotspots/HotSpots.asp>

Information on Human Rights

<http://www.state.gov/g/drl/hr/>

Sources: The United States Department of State, the United States Customs Department, the Government of Canada, the Government of United Kingdom, the Government of Australia, the Federal Aviation Authority, Anna Warman's In-flight Website, Hot Spots Travel and Risk Information

Diseases/Health Data

Please Note: Most of the entry below constitutes a generalized health advisory, which a traveler might find useful, regardless of a particular destination.

As a supplement, however, reader will also find below a list of countries flagged with current health notices and alerts issued by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

Please note that travel to the following countries, based on these 3 levels of warnings, is ill-advised, or should be undertaken with the utmost precaution:

Level 3 (highest level of concern; avoid non-essential travel) --

Guinea - Ebola
Liberia - Ebola
Nepal - Earthquake zone
Sierra Leone - Ebola

Level 2 (intermediate level of concern; use utmost caution during travel) --

Cameroon - Polio
Somalia - Polio
Vanuatu - Tropical Cyclone zone
Throughout Middle East and Arabia Peninsula - MERS ((Middle East Respiratory Syndrome)

Level 1 (standard level of concern; use practical caution during travel) -

Australia - Ross River disease
Bosnia-Herzegovina - Measles
Brazil - Dengue Fever
Brazil - Malaria
Brazil - Zika
China - H7N9 Avian flu
Cuba - Cholera
Egypt - H5N1 Bird flu
Ethiopia - Measles
Germany - Measles
Japan - Hand, foot, and mouth disease (HFMD)
Kyrgyzstan - Measles
Malaysia -Dengue Fever
Mexico - Chikungunya
Mexico - Hepatitis A
Nigeria - Meningitis
Philippines - Measles
Scotland - Mumps
Singapore - Hand, foot, and mouth disease (HFMD)
South Korea - MERS ((Middle East Respiratory Syndrome)
Throughout Caribbean - Chikungunya
Throughout Central America - Chikungunya
Throughout South America - Chikungunya
Throughout Pacific Islands - Chikungunya

For specific information related to these health notices and alerts please see the CDC's listing

available at URL:

<http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/notices>

Health Information for Travelers to Liberia

Special Notes

Ebola in "hot zone" of West Africa --

The year 2014 was marked by a horrific outbreak of the highly dangerous hemorrhagic disease Ebola in west Africa. By October 2014, the World Health Organization (WHO) reported that the death toll from the Ebola epidemic had climbed to approximately 5,000 out of the more than 10,000 known cases in eight countries. The majority of deaths to this point were in Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea. Senegal and Nigeria had been able to successfully contain outbreaks and were declared free of the disease. Outside of Africa, Spain and the United States had reported isolated cases. WHO reports, however, that the number of actual cases is likely much higher than what has been recorded globally.

In a new development, the virus had reached Mali, where a two-year-old girl died on Oct. 24, 2014. There was concern that many people in the country – which had become the sixth nation in West Africa to confirm the virus - had been exposed because the girl had been taken across the country while ill. As such, WHO was treating the situation in Mali as an emergency and officials in neighboring Mauritania had closed its borders with Mali in response. Meanwhile, the virus was also now threatening Cote d'Ivoire, since it had infected people virtually all along its borders with Guinea and Liberia.

As concerns over Ebola increased, there was a positive development in Liberia -- the country hardest hit by Ebola -- where the pace of infection was slowing. This mode, if sustained, would be a welcome surprise, given the WHO's warnings of an increased pace of infection in the offing. Still, the WHO warned that the crisis was not yet over.

At the same time, health experts were looking at the Nigerian model to stymie the spread of Ebola in that country, pointing to the excellent polio prevention infrastructure that had been implemented by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (founders of Microsoft), as well as the concerted effort by health professionals to trace and follow up with individuals believed to have had contact with Ebola patients across that country.

Meanwhile, in an attempt to quell the epidemic, WHO said that Ebola vaccines could begin in West Africa in December 2014 and that hundreds of thousands of doses should be ready for use by the middle of 2015.

Meningitis in Africa--

An outbreak of meningitis has recently occurred in several central, east, and west African countries, including Ethiopia, Chad, Cameroon, Burkino Faso, and Benin. For more information on this outbreak and recommendations, see the following sites:

Travelers' Health Information on Meningococcal Disease
(<http://www.cdc.gov/travel/diseases/menin.htm>)

World Health Organization Disease Outbreak News
(<http://www.who.int/disease-outbreak-news/>)

General Guidance

Food and waterborne diseases are the number one cause of illness in travelers. Travelers' diarrhea can be caused by viruses, bacteria, or parasites, which are found throughout the region and can contaminate food or water. Infections may cause diarrhea and vomiting (*E. coli*, *Salmonella*, cholera, and parasites), fever (typhoid fever and toxoplasmosis), or liver damage (hepatitis). Make sure your food and drinking water are safe. (See below.)

Malaria is a preventable infection that can be fatal if left untreated. Prevent infection by taking prescription antimalarial drugs and protecting yourself against mosquito bites (see below). Most travelers to malaria risk areas in this region should take mefloquine to prevent malaria. Your risk of malaria is high in all parts of these countries, including cities, except for most of the Cape Verde Islands. For more detailed information about the risk in specific locations, see Malaria in West Africa (<http://www.cdc.gov/travel/regionalmalaria/wafrica.htm>).

Yellow fever vaccination is recommended and may be required for entry into certain of these countries. If you travel to West Africa, the easiest and safest thing to do is get a yellow fever vaccination and a signed certificate. For detailed information, see Comprehensive Yellow Fever Vaccination Requirements (<http://www.cdc.gov/travel/yelfever.htm>).

Dengue, filariasis, leishmaniasis, onchocerciasis, and trypanosomiasis (sleeping sickness) are diseases carried by insects that also occur in this region. Protecting yourself against insect bites (see below) will help to prevent these diseases.

Schistosomiasis, a parasitic infection, is found in fresh water in the region. Do not swim in fresh water (except in well-chlorinated swimming pools) in these countries. (For more information, please see the Swimming Precautions on the Making Travel Safe page at URL <http://www.cdc.gov/travel/safety.htm>.)

Because motor vehicle crashes are a leading cause of injury among travelers, walk and drive defensively. Avoid nighttime travel if possible and always use seat belts.

CDC Recommends the Following Vaccines (as Appropriate for Age):

See your doctor at least 4-6 weeks before your trip to allow time for shots to take effect.

- Hepatitis A or immune globulin (IG).
- Hepatitis B, if you might be exposed to blood (for example, health-care workers), have sexual contact with the local population, stay longer than 6 months, or be exposed through medical treatment.
- Meningococcal meningitis, for travel to most of these countries (see meningitis map at URL <http://www.cdc.gov/travel/meninmap.htm>) from December through June.
- Yellow fever.
- Rabies, if you might be exposed to wild or domestic animals through your work or recreation.
- Typhoid, particularly if you are visiting developing countries in this region.
- As needed, booster doses for tetanus-diphtheria, measles, and a one-time dose of polio vaccine for adults. Hepatitis B vaccine is now recommended for all infants and for children ages 11-12 years who did not complete the series as infants.

To Stay Healthy, Do:

- Wash hands often with soap and water.
- Drink only bottled or boiled water, or carbonated (bubbly) drinks in cans or bottles. Avoid tap water, fountain drinks, and ice cubes. If this is not possible, make water safer by BOTH filtering through an "absolute 1-micron or less" filter AND adding iodine tablets to the filtered water. "Absolute 1-micron filters" are found in camping/outdoor supply stores.
- Eat only thoroughly cooked food or fruits and vegetables you have peeled yourself. Remember: boil it, cook it, peel it, or forget it.
- Take your malaria prevention medication before, during, and after travel, as directed. (See your doctor for a prescription.)
- Protect yourself from insects by remaining in well-screened areas, using repellents (applied sparingly at 4-hour intervals) and permethrin-impregnated mosquito nets, and wearing long-sleeved shirts and long pants from dusk through dawn.

- To prevent fungal and parasitic infections, keep feet clean and dry, and do not go barefoot.
- Always use latex condoms to reduce the risk of HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases.

To Avoid Getting Sick:

- Don't eat food purchased from street vendors.
- Don't drink beverages with ice.
- Don't eat dairy products unless you know they have been pasteurized.
- Don't share needles with anyone.
- Don't handle animals (especially monkeys, dogs, and cats), to avoid bites and serious diseases (including rabies and plague). (For more information, please see the Animal-Associated Hazards on the Making Travel Safe page.)
- Don't swim in fresh water. Salt water is usually safer. (For more information, please see the Swimming Precautions on the Making Travel Safe page.)

What You Need To Bring with You:

- Long-sleeved shirt and long pants to wear while outside whenever possible, to prevent illnesses carried by insects (e.g., malaria, dengue, filariasis, leishmaniasis, and onchocerciasis).
- Insect repellent containing DEET (diethylmethyltoluamide), in 30%-35% strength for adults and 6%-10% for children. Unless you are staying in air-conditioned or well-screened housing, purchase a bed net impregnated with the insecticide permethrin. (Bed nets can be purchased in camping or military supply stores.)
- Over-the-counter antidiarrheal medicine to take if you have diarrhea.
- Iodine tablets and water filters to purify water if bottled water is not available. See Do's above for more details about water filters.
- Sunblock, sunglasses, hat.
- Prescription medications: make sure you have enough to last during your trip, as well as a copy of the prescription(s).

After You Return Home:

If you have visited an area where there is risk for malaria, continue taking your malaria medication weekly for 4 weeks after you leave the area.

If you become ill after your trip-even as long as a year after you return-tell your doctor where you have traveled.

For More Information:

Ask your doctor or check the CDC web sites for more information about how to protect yourself

against diseases that occur in West Africa, such as:

For information about diseases-

Carried by Insects

Dengue, Malaria, Yellow Fever

Carried in Food or Water

Cholera, *Escherichia coli*, diarrhea, Hepatitis A, Schistosomiasis, Typhoid Fever

Person-to-Person Contact

Hepatitis B, HIV/AIDS

For more information about these and other diseases, please check the Diseases (<http://www.cdc.gov/travel/diseases.htm>) section and the Health Topics A - Z (<http://www.cdc.gov/health/diseases.htm>).

Note:

This country is located in the West Africa health region.

Sources:

The Center for Disease Control Destinations Website:

<http://www.cdc.gov/travel/indianrg.htm>

Chapter 6

Environmental Overview

Environmental Issues

General Overview:

Although Liberia possesses equatorial rain forest, the civil war severely stymied any efforts at conservation. As Liberia recovers from its political instability, it will have to seriously examine its environmental challenges, and consider expanding its system of protected areas and conservation measures. No further substantive data is available as a consequence of the decade-long conflict.

Current Issues:

- deforestation of the tropical rain forest
- soil erosion
- loss of bio-diversity, especially wildlife depletion, as a result of over-hunting
- pollution of rivers as a result of iron ore tailings
- pollution of coastal waters, as a result of oil residue and raw sewage

Total Greenhouse Gas Emissions (Mtc):

0.6

Country Rank (GHG output):

156th

Natural Hazards:

- dust-laden harmattan winds that blow from the Sahara

Environmental Policy

Regulation and Jurisdiction:

The regulation and protection of the environment in Liberia is under the jurisdiction of the following:

- Ministry of Agriculture

Major Non-Governmental Organizations:

N/A

International Environmental Accords:

Party to:

- Biodiversity
- Climate Change
- Climate Change-Kyoto Protocol
- Desertification
- Endangered Species
- Nuclear Test Ban
- Ozone Layer Protection
- Ship Pollution
- Tropical Timber 83
- Tropical Timber 94

Signed but not ratified:

- Environmental Modification
- Law of the Sea
- Marine Life Conservation

Kyoto Protocol Status (year ratified):

2002

Greenhouse Gas Ranking

Greenhouse Gas Ranking

GHG Emissions Rankings

Country Rank	Country
1	United States
2	China
4	Russia
5	Japan
6	India
7	Germany

8	United Kingdom
9	Canada
10	Korea, South
11	Italy
12	Mexico
13	France
14	South Africa
15	Iran
16	Indonesia
17	Australia
18	Spain
19	Brazil
20	Saudi Arabia
21	Ukraine
22	Poland
23	Taiwan
24	Turkey
25	Thailand

26	Netherlands
27	Kazakhstan
28	Malaysia
29	Egypt
30	Venezuela
31	Argentina
32	Uzbekistan
33	Czech Republic
34	Belgium
35	Pakistan
36	Romania
37	Greece
38	United Arab Emirates
39	Algeria
40	Nigeria
41	Austria
42	Iraq
43	Finland

44	Philippines
45	Vietnam
46	Korea, North
47	Israel
48	Portugal
49	Colombia
50	Belarus
51	Kuwait
52	Hungary
53	Chile
54	Denmark
55	Serbia & Montenegro
56	Sweden
57	Syria
58	Libya
59	Bulgaria
60	Singapore
61	Switzerland

62	Ireland
63	Turkmenistan
64	Slovakia
65	Bangladesh
66	Morocco
67	New Zealand
68	Oman
69	Qatar
70	Azerbaijan
71	Norway
72	Peru
73	Cuba
74	Ecuador
75	Trinidad & Tobago
76	Croatia
77	Tunisia
78	Dominican Republic
79	Lebanon

80	Estonia
81	Yemen
82	Jordan
83	Slovenia
84	Bahrain
85	Angola
86	Bosnia & Herzegovina
87	Lithuania
88	Sri Lanka
89	Zimbabwe
90	Bolivia
91	Jamaica
92	Guatemala
93	Luxembourg
94	Myanmar
95	Sudan
96	Kenya
97	Macedonia

98	Mongolia
99	Ghana
100	Cyprus
101	Moldova
102	Latvia
103	El Salvador
104	Brunei
105	Honduras
106	Cameroon
107	Panama
108	Costa Rica
109	Cote d'Ivoire
110	Kyrgyzstan
111	Tajikistan
112	Ethiopia
113	Senegal
114	Uruguay
115	Gabon

116	Albania
117	Nicaragua
118	Botswana
119	Paraguay
120	Tanzania
121	Georgia
122	Armenia
123	Congo, RC
124	Mauritius
125	Nepal
126	Mauritius
127	Nepal
128	Mauritania
129	Malta
130	Papua New Guinea
131	Zambia
132	Suriname
133	Iceland

134	Togo
135	Benin
136	Uganda
137	Bahamas
138	Haiti
139	Congo, DRC
140	Guyana
141	Mozambique
142	Guinea
143	Equatorial Guinea
144	Laos
145	Barbados
146	Niger
147	Fiji
148	Burkina Faso
149	Malawi
150	Swaziland
151	Belize

152	Afghanistan
153	Sierra Leone
154	Eritrea
155	Rwanda
156	Mali
157	Seychelles
158	Cambodia
159	Liberia
160	Bhutan
161	Maldives
162	Antigua & Barbuda
163	Djibouti
164	Saint Lucia
165	Gambia
166	Guinea-Bissau
167	Central African Republic
168	Palau
169	Burundi

170	Grenada
171	Lesotho
172	Saint Vincent & the Grenadines
173	Solomon Islands
174	Samoa
175	Cape Verde
176	Nauru
177	Dominica
178	Saint Kitts & Nevis
179	Chad
180	Tonga
181	Sao Tome & Principe
182	Comoros
183	Vanuatu
185	Kiribati
Not Ranked	Andorra
Not Ranked	East Timor
Not Ranked	Holy See

Not Ranked	Hong Kong
Not Ranked	Liechtenstein
Not Ranked	Marshall Islands
Not Ranked	Micronesia
Not Ranked	Monaco
Not Ranked	San Marino
Not Ranked	Somalia
Not Ranked	Tuvalu

* European Union is ranked 3rd

Cook Islands are ranked 184th

Niue is ranked 186th

Global Environmental Snapshot

Introduction

The countries of the world face many environmental challenges in common. Nevertheless, the nature and intensity of problem vary from region to region, as do various countries' respective capacities, in terms of affluence and infrastructure, to remediate threats to environmental quality.

Consciousness of perils affecting the global environment came to the fore in the last third or so of the 20th century has continued to intensify well into the new millennium. According to the United Nations Environment Programme, considerable environmental progress has been made at the level of institutional developments, international cooperation accords, and public participation. Approximately two-dozen international environmental protection accords with global implications have been promulgated since the late 1970s under auspices of the United Nations and other

international organizations, together with many additional regional agreements. Attempts to address and rectify environmental problems take the form of legal frameworks, economic instruments, environmentally sound technologies and cleaner production processes as well as conservation efforts. Environmental impact assessments have increasingly been applied across the globe.

Environmental degradation affects the quality, or aesthetics, of human life, but it also displays potential to undermine conditions necessary for the sustainability of human life. Attitudes toward the importance of environmental protection measures reflect ambivalence derived from this bifurcation. On one hand, steps such as cleaning up pollution, dedicating parkland, and suchlike, are seen as embellishments undertaken by wealthy societies already assured they can successfully perform those functions deemed, ostensibly, more essential-for instance, public health and education, employment and economic development. On the other hand, in poorer countries, activities causing environmental damage-for instance the land degradation effects of unregulated logging, slash-and-burn agriculture, overgrazing, and mining-can seem justified insofar as such activities provide incomes and livelihoods.

Rapid rates of resource depletion are associated with poverty and high population growth, themselves correlated, whereas consumption per capita is much higher in the most developed countries, despite these nations' recent progress in energy efficiency and conservation. It is impossible to sequester the global environmental challenge from related economic, social and political challenges.

First-tier industrialized countries have recently achieved measurable decreases in environmental pollution and the rate of resource depletion, a success not matched in middle income and developing countries. It is believed that the discrepancy is due to the fact that industrialized countries have more developed infrastructures to accommodate changes in environmental policy, to apply environmental technologies, and to invest in public education. The advanced industrialized countries incur relatively lower costs in alleviating environmental problems, in comparison to developing countries, since in the former even extensive environmental programs represent a rather minuscule percentage of total expenditures. Conversely, budget constraints, lagged provision of basic services to the population, and other factors such as debt service and militarization may preclude institution of minimal environmental protection measures in the poorest countries.

A synopsis for the current situation facing each region of the world follows:

Regional Synopsis: Africa

The African continent, the world's second-largest landmass, encompasses many of the world's least developed countries. By global standards, urbanization is comparatively low but rising at a rapid rate. More heavily industrialized areas at the northern and southern ends of the continent

experience the major share of industrial pollution. In other regions the most serious environmental problems typically stem from inefficient subsistence farming methods and other forms of land degradation, which have affected an increasingly extensive area under pressure of a widely impoverished, fast-growing population. Africa's distribution of natural resources is very uneven. It is the continent at greatest risk of desertification, especially in the Sahel region at the edge of the Sahara but also in other dry-range areas. Yet at the same time, Africa also harbors some of the earth's richest and most diverse biological zones.

Key Points:

Up to half a billion hectares of African land are moderately to severely degraded, an occurrence reflecting short-fallow shifting cultivation and overgrazing as well as a climatic pattern of recurrent droughts.

Soil degradation is severe along the expanse directly south of the Sahara, from the west to the east coasts. Parts of southern Africa, central-eastern Africa, and the neighboring island of Madagascar suffer from serious soil degradation as well.

Africa contains about 17 percent of the world's forest cover, concentrated in the tropical belt of the continent. Many of the forests, however, are severely depleted, with an estimated 70 percent showing some degree of degradation.

Population growth has resulted in continuing loss of arable land, as inefficient subsistence farming techniques affect increasingly extensive areas. Efforts to implement settled, sustainable agriculture have met with some recent success, but much further progress in this direction is needed. Especially in previously uninhabited forestlands, concern over deforestation is intensifying.

By contrast, the African savanna remains the richest grassland in the world, supporting a substantial concentration of animal and plant life. Wildlife parks are sub-Saharan Africa's greatest tourist attraction, and with proper management-giving local people a stake in conservation and controlling the pace of development-could greatly enhance African economies.

Significant numbers of mammal species in parts of northern, southern and eastern Africa are currently threatened, while the biological diversity in Mauritania and Madagascar is even further compromised with over 20 percent of the mammal species in these two countries currently under threat.

With marine catch trends increasing from 500,000 metric tons in the 1950s to over 3,000,000 metric tons by 2000, there was increasing concern about the reduction in fisheries and marine life, should this trend continue unabated.

Water resource vulnerability is a major concern in northeastern Africa, and a moderate concern across the rest of the continent. An exception is central Africa, which has plentiful water supplies.

Many Africans lack adequate access to resources, not just (if at all) because the resources are unevenly distributed geographically, but also through institutional failures such as faulty land tenure systems or political upheaval. The quality of Africa's natural resources, despite their spotty distribution, is in fact extraordinarily rich. The infrastructure needed to protect and benefit from this natural legacy, however, is largely lacking.

Regional Synopsis: Asia and the Pacific

Asia-earth's largest landmass-and the many large and nearly innumerable small islands lying off its Pacific shore display extraordinarily contrasting landscapes, levels of development, and degrees of environmental stress. In the classification used here, the world's smallest continent, Australia, is also included in the Asia-Pacific region.

The Asia-Pacific region is home to 9 of the world's 14 largest urban areas, and as energy use for utilities, industry and transport increases in developing economies, urban centers are subject to worsening air quality. Intense population density in places such as Bangladesh or Hong Kong is the quintessential image many people have of Asia, yet vast desert areas such as the Gobi and the world's highest mountain range, the Himalayas, span the continent as well. Forested areas in Southeast Asia and the islands of Indonesia and the Philippines were historically prized for their tropical hardwood, but in many places this resource is now severely depleted. Low-lying small island states are extremely vulnerable to the effects of global warming, both rising sea levels and an anticipated increase in cyclones.

Key Points:

Asian timber reserves are forecast to be depleted in the next 40 years. Loss of natural forest is irreversible in some areas, but plantation programs to restore tree cover may ameliorate a portion of the resulting land degradation.

Increased usage of fossil fuels in China and other parts of southern Asia is projected to result in a marked increase in emissions, especially in regard to carbon dioxide. The increased usage of energy has led to a marked upsurge in air pollution across the region.

Acidification is an emerging problem regionally, with sulfur dioxide emissions expected to triple by 2010 if the current growth rate is sustained. China, Thailand, India, and Korea seem to be suffering from particularly high rates of acid deposition. By contrast, Asia's most highly developed economy, Japan, has effected substantial improvements in its environmental indicators.

Water pollution in the Pacific is an urgent concern since up to 70 percent of the water discharged into the region's waters receives no treatment. Additionally, the disposal of solid wastes, in like manner, poses a major threat in a region with many areas of high population density.

The Asia-Pacific region is the largest expanse of the world's land that is adversely affected by soil degradation.

The region around Australia reportedly suffers the largest degree of ozone depletion.

The microstates of the Pacific suffer land loss due to global warming, and the consequent rise in the levels of ocean waters. A high-emissions scenario and anthropogenic climate impact at the upper end of the currently predicted range would probably force complete evacuation of the lowest-elevation islands sometime in this century.

The species-rich reefs surrounding Southeast Asia are highly vulnerable to the deleterious effects of coastal development, land-based pollution, over-fishing and exploitative fishing methods, as well as marine pollution from oil spills and other activities.

With marine catch trends increasing from 5,000,000 metric tons in the 1950s to over 20,000,000 metric tons by 2000, there was increasing concern about the reduction in fisheries and marine life, should this trend continue unabated.

Significant numbers of mammal species in parts of China and south-east Asia are currently threatened, while the biological diversity in India, Japan, Australia, the Philippines, Indonesia and parts of Malaysia is even further compromised with over 20 percent of the mammal species in these countries currently under threat.

Water resource vulnerability is a serious concern in areas surrounding the Indian subcontinent.

Regional Synopsis: Central Asia

The Central Asian republics, formerly in the Soviet Union, experience a range of environmental problems as the result of poorly executed agricultural, industrial, and nuclear programs during the Soviet era. Relatively low population densities are the norm, especially since upon the breakup of the U.S.S.R. many ethnic Russians migrated back to European Russia. In this largely semi-arid region, drought, water shortages, and soil salinization pose major challenges.

Key Points:

The use of agricultural pesticides, such as DDT and other chemicals, has contributed to the contamination of soil and groundwater throughout the region.

Land and soil degradation, and in particular, increased salinization, is mostly attributable to faulty irrigation practices.

Significant desertification is also a problem in the region.

Air pollution is prevalent, mostly due to use of low octane automobile fuel.

Industrial pollution of the Caspian Sea and the Aral Sea, as a result of industrial effluents as well as mining and metal production, presents a challenge to the countries bordering these bodies of water.

One of the most severe environmental problems in the region is attributable to the several billion tons of hazardous materials stored in landfills across Central Asia.

Uzbekistan's particular problem involves the contraction of the Aral Sea, which has decreased in size by a third, as a consequence of river diversions and poor irrigation practices. The effect has been the near-total biological destruction of that body of water.

Kazakhstan, as a consequence of being the heartland of the former Soviet Union's nuclear program, has incurred a high of cancerous malignancies, biogenetic abnormalities and radioactive contamination.

While part of the Soviet Union, the republics in the region experienced very high levels of greenhouse gas emissions, as a consequence of rapid industrialization using cheap but dirty energy sources, especially coal.

By contrast, however, there have recently been substantial reductions in the level of greenhouse gas emissions, especially those attributable to coal burning, with further decreases anticipated over the next decade. These changes are partially due to the use of cleaner energy technologies, such as natural gas, augmented by governmental commitment to improving environmental standards.

Regional Synopsis: Europe

Western Europe underwent dramatic transformation of its landscape, virtually eliminating large-scale natural areas, during an era of rapid industrialization, which intensified upon its recovery from World War II. In Eastern Europe and European Russia, intensive land development has been less prevalent, so that some native forests and other natural areas remain. Air and water pollution from use of dirty fuels and industrial effluents, however, are more serious environmental problems in

Eastern than in Western Europe, though recent trends show improvement in many indicators. Acid rain has inflicted heavy environmental damage across much of Europe, particularly on forests. Europe and North America are the only regions in which water usage for industry exceeds that for agriculture, although in Mediterranean nations agriculture is the largest water consumer.

Key Points:

Europe contributes 36 percent of the world's chlorofluorocarbon emissions, 30 percent of carbon dioxide emissions, and 25 percent of sulfur dioxide emissions.

Sulfur and nitrogen oxide emissions are the cause of 30 to 50 percent of Central and Eastern Europe's deforestation.

Acid rain has been an environmental concern for decades and continues to be a challenge in parts of Western Europe.

Overexploitation of up to 60 percent of Europe's groundwater presents a problem in industrial and urban areas.

With marine catch trends increasing from 5,000,000 metric tons in the 1950s to over 20,000,000 metric tons by 2000, there was increasing concern about the reduction in fisheries and marine life, should this trend continue unabated.

Significant numbers of mammal species in parts of western Europe, Eastern Europe and Russia are currently threatened, while the biological diversity on the Iberian Peninsula is even further compromised with over 40 percent of the mammal species in this region currently under threat. As a result, there has been a 10 percent increase in protected areas of Europe.

A major environmental issue for Europe involves the depletion of various already endangered or threatened species, and most significantly, the decline of fish stocks. Some estimates suggest that up to 50 percent of the continent's fish species may be considered endangered species. Coastal fisheries have been over-harvested, resulting in catch limits or moratoriums on many commercially important fish species.

Fortunately, in the last few years, these policies have started to yield measurable results with decreasing trends in marine fish catch.

Recently, most European countries have adopted cleaner production technologies, and alternative methods of waste disposal, including recycling.

The countries of Eastern Europe have made air quality a major environmental priority. This is

exemplified by the Russian Federation's addition to the 1995 "Berlin Mandate" (transnational legislation based on resolutions of the Rio Earth Summit) compelling nations to promote "carbon sinks" to absorb greenhouse gases.

On a relative basis, when compared with the degree of industrial emissions emitted by many Eastern European countries until the late 1980s, there has been some marked increase in air quality in the region, as obsolete plants are closed and a transition to cleaner fuels and more efficient energy use takes place.

Regional Synopsis: The Middle and Near East

Quite possibly, the Middle East will exemplify the adage that, as the 20th century was a century fixated on oil, the 21st century will be devoted to critical decisions about water. Many (though far from all) nations in the Middle East rank among those countries with the largest oil and gas reserves, but water resources are relatively scarce throughout this predominantly dry region. Effects of global warming may cause moderately high elevation areas that now typically receive winter "snowpack" to experience mainly rain instead, which would further constrain dry-season water availability. The antiquities and religious shrines of the region render it a great magnet for tourism, which entails considerable economic growth potential but also intensifies stresses on the environment.

Key Points:

Water resource vulnerability is a serious concern across the entire region. The increased usage of, and further demand for water, has exacerbated long-standing water scarcity in the region. For instance, river diversions and industrial salt works have caused the Dead Sea to shrink by one-third from its original surface area, with further declines expected.

The oil industry in the region contributes to water pollution in the Persian Gulf, as a result of oil spills, which have averaged 1.2 million barrels of oil spilt per year (some sources suggest that this figure is understated). The consequences are severe because even after oil spills have been cleaned up, environmental damage to the food webs and ecosystems of marine life will persist for a prolonged period.

The region's coastal zone is considered one of the most fragile and endangered ecosystems of the world. Land reclamation, shoreline construction, discharge of industrial effluents, and tourism (such as diving in the Red Sea) contribute to widespread coastal damage.

Significant numbers of mammal species in parts of the Middle East are currently threatened.

Since the 1980s, 11 percent of the region's natural forest has been depleted.

Regional Synopsis: Latin America and the Caribbean

The Latin American and Caribbean region is characterized by exceedingly diverse landforms that have generally seen high rates of population growth and economic development in recent decades. The percentage of inhabitants residing in urban areas is quite high at 73.4 percent; the region includes the megacities of Mexico City, Sao Paulo, and Rio de Janeiro. The region also includes the world's second-highest mountain range, the Andes; significant expanses of desert and grassland; the coral reefs of the Caribbean Sea; and the world's largest contiguous tropical forest in the Amazon basin. Threats to the latter from subsistence and commercial farming, mineral exploitation and timbering are well publicized. Nevertheless, of eight countries worldwide that still retain at least 70 percent of their original forest cover, six are in Latin America. The region accounts for nearly half (48.3 percent) of the world's greenhouse gas emissions derived from land clearing, but as yet a comparatively minuscule share (4.3 percent) of such gases from industrial sources.

Key Points:

Although Latin America is one of the most biologically diverse regions of the world, this biodiversity is highly threatened, as exemplified by the projected extinction of up to 100,000 species in the next few decades. Much of this loss will be concentrated in the Amazon area, although the western coastline of South America will also suffer significant depletion of biological diversity. The inventory of rainforest species with potentially useful commercial or medical applications is incomplete, but presumed to include significant numbers of such species that may become extinct before they are discovered and identified.

Up to 50 percent of the region's grazing land has lost its soil fertility as a result of soil erosion, salinization, alkalinization and overgrazing.

The Caribbean Sea, the Atlantic Ocean, and the Pacific Ocean have all been contaminated by agricultural wastes, which are discharged into streams that flow into these major waters. Water pollution derived from phosphorous, nitrates and pesticides adversely affects fish stocks, contributes to oxygen depletion and fosters overgrowth of aquatic vegetation. Marine life will continue to be severely compromised as a result of these conditions.

Due to industrial development in the region, many beaches of eastern Latin America and the Caribbean suffer from tar deposits.

Most cities in the region lack adequate sewage treatment facilities, and rapid migration of the rural

poor into the cities is widening the gap between current infrastructure capacity and the much greater level needed to provide satisfactory basic services.

The rainforest region of the Amazon Basin suffers from dangerously high levels of deforestation, which may be a significant contributory factor to global warming or "the greenhouse effect." In the late 1990s and into the new millennium, the rate of deforestation was around 20 million acres of rainforest being destroyed annually.

Deforestation on the steep rainforest slopes of Caribbean islands contributes to soil erosion and landslides, both of which then result in heavy sedimentation of nearby river systems. When these sedimented rivers drain into the sea and coral reefs, they poison the coral tissues, which are vital to the maintenance of the reef ecosystem. The result is marine degradation and nutrient depletion. Jamaica's coral reefs have never quite recovered from the effects of marine degradation.

The Southern Cone of Latin America (Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Paraguay, and Uruguay) suffers the effects of greatly increased ultraviolet-B radiation, as a consequence of more intense ozone depletion in the southern hemisphere.

Water resource vulnerability is an increasingly major concern in the northwestern portion of South America.

Regional Synopsis: North America

North American nations, in particular the United States and Canada, rank among the world's most highly developed industrial economies—a fact which has generated significant pollution problems, but also financial resources and skills that have enabled many problems to be corrected. Although efforts to promote energy efficiency, recycling, and suchlike have helped ease strains on the environment in a part of the world where per capita consumption levels are high, sprawling land development patterns and recent preferences many households have demonstrated for larger vehicles have offset these advances.

Meanwhile, a large portion of North America's original forest cover has been lost, though in many cases replaced by productive second-growth woodland. In recent years, attitudes toward best use of the region's remaining natural or scenic areas seem to be shifting toward recreation and preservation and away from resource extraction. With increasing attention on the energy scarcity in the United States, however, there is speculation that this shift may be short-lived. Indeed, the energy shortage on the west coast of the United States and associated calls for energy exploration, indicate a possible retrenchment toward resource extraction. At the same time, however, it has also served to highlight the need for energy conservation as well as alternative energy sources.

Despite generally successful anti-pollution efforts, various parts of the region continue to suffer significant air, water and land degradation from industrial, vehicular, and agricultural emissions and runoff. Mexico, as a middle-income country, displays environmental problems characteristic of a developing economy, including forest depletion, pollution from inefficient industrial processes and dirty fuels, and lack of sufficient waste-treatment infrastructure.

Key Points:

Because of significantly greater motor vehicle usage in the United States (U.S.) than in the rest of the world, the U.S. contribution of urban air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions, especially carbon dioxide, is disproportionately high in relation to its population.

Acid rain is an enduring issue of contention in the northeastern part of the United States, on the border with Canada.

Mexico's urban areas suffer extreme air pollution from carbon monoxide, nitrogen oxides, sulfur dioxide, and other toxic air pollutants. Emissions controls on vehicles are in their infancy, compared to analogous regulations in the U.S.

The cities of Mexico, including those on the U.S. border, also discharge large quantities of untreated or poorly treated sewage, though officials are currently planning infrastructure upgrades.

Deforestation is noteworthy in various regions of the U.S., especially along the northwest coastline. Old growth forests have been largely removed, but in the northeastern and upper midwestern sections of the United States, evidence suggests that the current extent of tree cover probably surpasses the figure for the beginning of the 20th century.

Extreme weather conditions in the last few years have resulted in a high level of soil erosion along the north coast of California; in addition, the coastline itself has shifted substantially due to soil erosion and concomitant landslides.

Agricultural pollution-including nitrate contamination of well water, nutrient runoff to waterways, and pesticide exposure-is significant in various areas. Noteworthy among affected places are California's Central Valley, extensive stretches of the Midwest, and land in the Chesapeake Bay watershed.

Inland waterways, especially around the Great Lakes, have substantially improved their water quality, due to concentrated efforts at reducing water pollution by governmental, commercial and community representatives. Strict curbs on industrial effluents and near-universal implementation of sewage treatment are the chief factors responsible for this improvement.

A major environmental issue for Canada and the United States involves the depletion of various already endangered or threatened species, and most significantly, the decline of fish stocks. Coastal fisheries have been over-harvested, resulting in catch limits or moratoriums on many commercially important fish species. In the last few years, these policies have started to yield measurable results with decreasing trends in marine fish catch.

Due to the decay of neighboring ecosystems in Central America and the Caribbean, the sea surrounding Florida has become increasingly sedimented, contributing to marine degradation, nutrient depletion of the ecosystem, depletion of fish stocks, and diseases to coral species in particular.

Polar Regions

Key Points:

The significant rise in sea level, amounting 10 to 25 centimeters in the last 100 years, is due to the melting of the Arctic ice sheets, and is attributed to global warming.

The Antarctic suffers from a significant ozone hole, first detected in 1976. By 1985, a British scientific team reported a 40 percent decrease in usual regeneration rates of the ozone. Because a sustained increase in the amount of ultraviolet-B radiation would have adverse consequences upon all planetary life, recent environmental measures have been put into effect, aimed at reversing ozone depletion. These measures are projected to garner significant results by 2050.

Due to air and ocean currents, the Arctic is a sink for toxic releases originally discharged thousands of miles away. Arctic wildlife and Canada's Inuit population have higher bodily levels of contaminants such as PCB and dioxin than those found in people and animals in much of the rest of the world.

Global Environmental Concepts

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1. Global Warming and Greenhouse Gases

The Greenhouse Effect:

In the early 19th century, the French physicist, Jean Fourier, contended that the earth's atmosphere functions in much the same way as the glass of a greenhouse, thus describing what is now understood as the "greenhouse effect." Put simply, the "greenhouse effect" confines some of the sun's energy to the earth, preserving some of the planet's warmth, rather than allowing it to flow back into space. In so doing, all kinds of life forms can flourish on earth. Thus, the "greenhouse effect" is necessary to sustain and preserve life forms and ecosystems on earth.

In the late 19th century, a Swedish chemist, Svante Arrhenius, noticed that human activities, such as the burning of coal and other fossil fuels for heat, and the removal of forested lands for urban development, led to higher concentrations of greenhouse gases, like carbon dioxide and methane, in the atmosphere. This increase in the levels of greenhouse gases was believed to advance the "greenhouse effect" exponentially, and might be related to the trend in global warming.

In the wake of the Industrial Revolution, after industrial development took place on a large scale and the total human population burgeoned simultaneously with industrialization, the resulting increase in greenhouse gas emissions could, many scientists believe, be significant enough to have some bearing on climate. Indeed, many studies in recent years support the idea that there is a linkage between human activities and global warming, although there is less consensus on the extent to which this linkage may be relevant to environmental concerns.

That said, some scientists have argued that temperature fluctuations have existed throughout the evolution of the planet. Indeed, Dr. S. Fred Singer, the president of the Science and Environment Policy Project has noted that 3,000-year-old geological records of ocean sediment reveal changes in the surface temperature of the ocean. Hence, it is possible that climate variability is merely a normal fact of the planet's evolution. Yet even skeptics as to anthropogenic factors concur that any substantial changes in global temperatures would likely have an effect upon the earth's ecosystems, as well as the life forms that inhabit them.

The Relationship Between Global Warming and Greenhouse Gases:

A large number of climatologists believe that the increase in atmospheric concentrations of "greenhouse gas emissions," mostly a consequence of human activities such as the burning of fossil fuels, are contributing to global warming. The cause notwithstanding, the planet has reportedly warmed 0.3°C to 0.6°C over the last century. Indeed, each year during the 1990s was one of the very warmest in the 20th century, with the mean surface temperature for 1999 being the fifth warmest on record since 1880.

In early 2000, a panel of atmospheric scientists for the National Research Council concluded in a report that global warming was, indeed, a reality. While the panel, headed by Chairman John Wallace, a professor of atmospheric sciences at the University of Washington, stated that it

remained unclear whether human activities have contributed to the earth's increasing temperatures, it was apparent that global warming exists.

In 2001, following a request for further study by the incoming Bush administration in the [United States](#), the National Academy of Sciences again confirmed that global warming had been in existence for the last 20 years. The study also projected an increase in temperature between 2.5 degrees and 10.4 degrees Fahrenheit by the year 2100. Furthermore, the study found the leading cause of global warming to be emissions of carbon dioxide from the burning of fossil fuels, and it noted that greenhouse gas accumulations in the earth's atmosphere was a result of human activities.

Within the scientific community, the controversy regarding has centered on the difference between surface air and upper air temperatures. Information collected since 1979 suggests that while the earth's surface temperature has increased by about a degree in the past century, the atmospheric temperature five miles above the earth's surface has indicated very little increase. Nevertheless, the panel stated that this discrepancy in temperature between surface and upper air does not invalidate the conclusion that global warming is taking place. Further, the panel noted that natural events, such as volcanic eruptions, can decrease the temperature in the upper atmosphere.

The major consequences of global warming potentially include the melting of the polar ice caps, which, in turn, contribute to the rise in sea levels. Many islands across the globe have already experienced a measurable loss of land as a result. Because global warming may increase the rate of evaporation, increased precipitation, in the form of stronger and more frequent storm systems, is another potential outcome. Other consequences of global warming may include the introduction and proliferation of new infectious diseases, loss of arable land (referred to as "desertification"), destructive changes to existing ecosystems, loss of biodiversity and the isolation of species, and concomitant adverse changes in the quality of human life.

International Policy Development in Regard to Global Warming:

Regardless of what the precise nature of the relationship between greenhouse gas emissions and global warming may be, it seems that there is some degree of a connection between the phenomena. Any substantial reductions in greenhouse gas emissions and global warming trends will likely involve systematic changes in industrial operations, the use of advanced energy sources and technologies, as well as global cooperation in implementing and regulating these transformations.

In this regard, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) stipulated the following objectives:

1. To stabilize "greenhouse gas" concentrations within the atmosphere, in such a manner that would preclude hazardous anthropogenic intervention into the existing biosphere and ecosystems of the world. This stabilization process would facilitate the natural adaptation of ecosystems to

changes in climate.

2. To ensure and enable sustainable development and food production on a global scale.

*** See section on "International Environmental Agreements and Associations" for information related to international policies related to limiting greenhouse gases and controlling climate change emanating from historic summits at Kyoto, Copenhagen, Doha, and Paris. ***

2. Air Pollution

Long before global warming reared its head as a significant issue, those concerned about the environment and public health noted the deleterious effects of human-initiated combustion upon the atmosphere. Killer smogs from coal burning triggered acute health emergencies in London and other places. At a lower level of intensity motor vehicle, power plant, and industrial emissions impaired long-range visibility and probably had some chronic adverse consequences on the respiratory systems of persons breathing such air.

In time, scientists began associating the sulfur dioxide and nitrogen oxides released from coal burning with significant acid deposition in the atmosphere, eventually falling as "acid rain." This phenomenon has severely degraded forestlands, especially in Europe and a few parts of the [United States](#). It has also impaired some aquatic ecosystems and eaten away the surface of some human artifacts, such as marble monuments. Scrubber technology and conversion to cleaner fuels have enabled the level of industrial production to remain at least constant while significantly reducing acid deposition. Technologies aimed at cleaning the air and curtailing acid rain, soot, and smog may, nonetheless, boomerang as the perils of global warming become increasingly serious. In brief, these particulates act as sort of a sun shade -- comparable to the effect of volcanic eruptions on the upper atmosphere whereby periods of active volcanism correlate with temporarily cooler weather conditions. Thus, while the carbon dioxide releases that are an inevitable byproduct of combustion continue, by scrubbing the atmosphere of pollutants, an industrial society opens itself to greater insolation (penetration of the sun's rays and consequent heating), and consequently, it is likely to experience a correspondingly greater rise in ambient temperatures.

The health benefits of removing the sources of acid rain and smog are indisputable, and no one would recommend a return to previous conditions. Nevertheless, the problematic climatic effects of continually increasing emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases pose a major global environmental challenge, not as yet addressed adequately.

3. Ozone Depletion

The stratospheric ozone layer functions to prevent ultraviolet radiation from reaching the earth. Normally, stratospheric ozone is systematically disintegrated and regenerated through natural photochemical processes. The stratospheric ozone layer, however, has been depleted unnaturally as a result of anthropogenic (man-made) chemicals, most especially chlorine and bromide compounds such as chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs), halons, and various industrial chemicals in the form of solvents, refrigerants, foaming agents, aerosol propellants, fire retardants, and fumigants. Ozone depletion is of concern because it permits a greater degree of ultraviolet-B radiation to reach the earth, which then increases the incidences of cancerous malignancies, cataracts, and human immune deficiencies. In addition, even in small doses, ozone depletion affects the ecosystem by disturbing food chains, agriculture, fisheries and other forms of biological diversity.

Transnational policies enacted to respond to the dangers of ozone depletion include the 1985 Vienna Convention on the Protection of the Ozone Layer and the 1987 Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer. The Montreal Protocol was subsequently amended in London in 1990, Copenhagen in 1992 and Vienna in 1995. By 1996, 155 countries had ratified the Montreal Protocol, which sets out a time schedule for the reduction (and eventual elimination) of ozone depleting substances (OPS), and bans exports and imports of ODS from and to non-participant countries.

In general, the Protocol stipulates that developed countries must eliminate halon consumption by 1994 and CFC consumption by 1996, while developing countries must eliminate these substances by 2010. Consumption of methyl bromide, which is used as a fumigant, was to be frozen at the 1995 in developed countries, and fully eliminated in 2010, while developing countries are to freeze consumption by 2002, based on average 1995-1998 consumption levels. Methyl chloroform is to be phased out by 2005. Under the Montreal Protocol, most ODS will be completely eliminated from use by 2010.

4. Land Degradation

In recent decades, land degradation in more arid regions of the world has become a serious concern. The problem, manifest as both "desertification" and "devegetation," is caused primarily by climate variability and human activities, such as "deforestation," excessive cultivation, overgrazing, and other forms of land resource exploitation. It is also exacerbated by inadequate irrigation practices. Although the effects of droughts on drylands have been temporary in the past, today, the productivity and sustainability of these lands have been severely compromised for the long term. Indeed, in every region of the world, land degradation has become an acute issue.

Desertification and Devegetation:

"Desertification" is a process of land degradation causing the soil to deteriorate, thus losing its nutrients and fertility, and eventually resulting in the loss of vegetation, known as "devegetation." As aforementioned, "desertification" and "devegetation" are caused by human activities, yet human beings are also the greatest casualties. Because these forms of land degradation affect the ability of the soil to produce crops, they concomitantly contribute to poverty. As population increases and demographic concentrations shift, the extent of land subject to stresses by those seeking to wrest subsistence from it has inexorably risen.

In response, the United Nations has formed the Convention to Combat Desertification-aimed at implementing programs to address the underlying causes of desertification, as well as measures to prevent and minimize its effects. Of particular significance is the formulation of policies on transboundary resources, such as areas around lakes and rivers. At a broader level, the Convention has established a Conference of Parties (COP), which includes all ratifying governments, for directing and advancing international action.

To ensure more efficacious use of funding, the Convention intends to reconfigure international aid to utilize a consultative and coordinated approach in the disbursement and expenditure of donor funds. In this way, local communities that are affected by desertification will be active participants in the solution-generation process. In-depth community education projects are envisioned as part of this new international aid program, and private donor financing is encouraged. Meanwhile, as new technologies are developed to deal with the problem of desertification, they need to be distributed for application across the world. Hence, the Convention calls for international cooperation in scientific research in this regard.

Desertification is a problem of sustainable development. It is directly connected to human challenges such as poverty, social and economic well-being and environmental protection as well. Broader environmental issues, such as climate change, biological diversity, and freshwater supplies, are indirectly related, so any effort to resolve this environmental challenge must entail coordinated research efforts and joint action.

Deforestation:

Deforestation is not a recent phenomenon. For centuries, human beings have cut down trees to clear space for land cultivation, or in order to use the wood for fuel. Over the last 200 years, and most especially after World War II, deforestation increased because the logging industry became a globally profitable endeavor, and so the clearing of forested areas was accelerated for the purposes of industrial development. In the long term, this intensified level of deforestation is considered problematic because the forest is unable to regenerate itself quickly. The deforestation that has

occurred in tropical rainforests is seen as an especially serious concern, due to the perceived adverse effects of this process upon the entire global ecosystem.

The most immediate consequence of deforestation is soil degradation. Soil, which is necessary for the growth of vegetation, can be a fragile and vital property. Organically, an extensive evolution process must take place before soil can produce vegetation, yet at the same time, the effects of natural elements, such as wind and rain, can easily and quickly degrade this resource. This phenomenon is known as soil erosion. In addition, natural elements like wind and rain reduce the amount of fertile soil on the ground, making soil scarcity a genuine problem. When fertile topsoil that already exists is removed from the landscape in the process of deforestation, soil scarcity is further exacerbated. Equally significant is the fact that once land has been cleared so that the topsoil can be cultivated for crop production, not only are the nutrient reserves in the soil depleted, thus producing crops of inferior quality, but the soil structure itself becomes stressed and deteriorates further.

Another direct result of deforestation is flooding. When forests are cleared, removing the cover of vegetation, and rainfall occurs, the flow of water increases across the surface of land. When extensive water runoff takes place, the frequency and intensity of flooding increases. Other adverse effects of deforestation include the loss of wildlife and biodiversity within the ecosystem that supports such life forms.

At a broader level, tropical rainforests play a vital role in maintaining the global environmental system. Specifically, destruction of tropical rainforests affects the carbon dioxide cycle. When forests are destroyed by burning (or rotting), carbon dioxide is released into the air, thus contributing to an intensified "greenhouse effect." The increase in greenhouse gas emissions like carbon dioxide is a major contributor to global warming, according to many environmental scientists. Indeed, trees themselves absorb carbon dioxide in the process of photosynthesis, so their loss also reduces the absorption of greenhouse gases.

Tropical rainforest destruction also adversely affects the nitrogen cycle. Nitrogen is a key nutrient for both plants and animals. Plants derive nitrogen from soil, while animals obtain it via nitrogen-enriched vegetation. This element is essential for the formation of amino acids, and thereby for proteins and biochemicals that all living things need for metabolism and growth. In the nitrogen cycle, vegetation acquires these essential proteins and biochemicals, and then cyclically returns them to the atmosphere and global ecosystem. Accordingly, when tropical rainforest ecosystems are compromised, not only is vegetation removed; the atmosphere is also affected and climates are altered. At a more immediate level, the biodiversity within tropical rainforests, including wildlife and insect species and a wealth of plant varieties, is depleted. Loss of rare plants is of particular concern because certain species as yet unknown and unused could likely yield many practical benefits, for instance as medicines.

As a result of the many challenges associated with deforestation, many environmental groups and agencies have argued for government policies on the sustainable development of forests by governments across the globe. While many countries have instituted national policies and programs aimed at reducing deforestation, and substantial research has been advanced in regard to sustainable and regenerative forestry development, there has been very little progress on an international level. Generally speaking, most tropical rainforests are located in developing and less developed countries, where economic growth is often dependent upon the exploitation of tropical rainforests. Timber resources as well as wildlife hunting tend to be particularly lucrative arenas.

In places such as the Amazon, where deforestation takes place for the construction of energy plants aimed at industrialization and economic development, there is an exacerbated effect on the environment. After forests are cleared in order to construct such projects, massive flooding usually ensues. The remaining trees then rot and decay in the wake of the flooding. As the trees deteriorate, their biochemical makeup becomes more acidic, producing poisonous substances such as hydrogen sulphide and methane gases. Acidified water subsequently corrodes the mechanical equipment and operations of the plants, which are already clogged by rotting wood after the floodwaters rise.

Deforestation generally arises from an economically plausible short-term motivation, but nonetheless poses a serious global concern because the effects go beyond national boundaries. The United Nations has established the World Commission on Forest and Sustainable Development. This body's task is to determine the optimal means of dealing with the issue of deforestation, without unduly affecting normal economic development, while emphasizing the global significance of protecting tropical forest ecosystems.

5. Water Resources

For all terrestrial fauna, including humans, water is the most immediate necessity to sustain life. As the population has increased and altered an ever-greater portion of the landscape from its natural condition, demand on water resources has intensified, especially with the development of industrialization and large-scale irrigation. The supply of freshwater is inherently limited, and moreover distributed unevenly across the earth's landmasses. Moreover, not just demand for freshwater but activities certain to degrade it are becoming more pervasive. By contrast, the oceans form a sort of "last wilderness," still little explored and in large part not seriously affected by human activity. However, coastal environments - the biologically richest part of the marine ecosystem-are experiencing major depletion due to human encroachment and over-exploitation.

Freshwater:

In various regions, for instance the Colorado River in the western [United States](#), current withdrawals of river water for irrigation, domestic, and industrial use consume the entire streamflow so that almost no water flows into the sea at the river's mouth. Yet development is ongoing in many such places, implying continually rising demand for water. In some areas reliant on groundwater, aquifers are being depleted at a markedly faster rate than they are being replenished. An example is the San Joaquin Valley in California, where decades of high water withdrawals for agriculture have caused land subsidence of ten meters or more in some spots. Naturally, the uncertainty of future water supplies is particularly acute in arid and semi-arid regions. Speculation that the phenomenon of global warming will alter geographic and seasonal rainfall patterns adds further uncertainty.

Water conservation measures have great potential to alleviate supply shortages. Some city water systems are so old and beset with leaking pipes that they lose as much water as they meter. Broad-scale irrigation could be replaced by drip-type irrigation, actually enhancing the sustainability of agriculture. In many areas where heavy irrigation has been used for decades, the result is deposition of salts and other chemicals in the soil such that the land becomes unproductive for farming and must be abandoned.

Farming is a major source of water pollution. Whereas restrictions on industrial effluents and other "point sources" are relatively easy to implement, comparable measures to reform hydraulic practices at farms and other "nonpoint sources" pose a significantly knottier challenge. Farm-caused water pollution takes the following main forms:

- Nitrate pollution found in wells in intensive farming areas as a consequence of heavy fertilizer use is a threat to human health. The most serious danger is to infants, who by ingesting high-nitrate water can contract methemoglobinemia, sometimes called "blue baby syndrome," a potentially fatal condition.
- Fertilizer runoff into rivers and lakes imparts unwanted nutrients that cause algae growth and eventual loss of oxygen in the body of water, degrading its ability to support fish and other desirable aquatic life.
- Toxic agricultural chemicals - insecticides, herbicides, and fungicides - are detectable in some aquifers and waterways.

In general, it is much easier to get a pollutant into water than to retrieve it out. Gasoline additives, dry cleaning chemicals, other industrial toxins, and in a few areas radionuclides have all been found in water sources intended for human use. The complexity and long time scale of subterranean hydrological movements essentially assures that pollutants already deposited in aquifers will continue to turn up for decades to come. Sophisticated water treatment processes are available, albeit expensive, to reclaim degraded water and render it fit for human consumption. Yet

source protection is unquestionably a more desirable alternative.

In much of the developing world, and even some low-income rural enclaves of the developed world, the population lacks ready access to safe water. Surface water and shallow groundwater supplies are susceptible to contamination from untreated wastewater and failing septic tanks, as well as chemical hazards. The occurrence of waterborne disease is almost certainly greatly underreported.

Marine Resources:

Coastal areas have always been desirable places for human habitation, and population pressure on them continues to increase. Many types of water degradation that affect lakes and rivers also affect coastal zones: industrial effluents, untreated or partially treated sewage, nutrient load from agriculture figure prominently in both cases. Prospects for more extreme storms as a result of global warming, as well as the pervasiveness of poorly planned development in many coastal areas, forebode that catastrophic hurricanes and landslides may increase in frequency in the future. Ongoing rise in sea levels will force remedial measures and in some cases abandonment of currently valuable coastal property.

Fisheries over much of the globe have been overharvested, and immediate conservation measures are required to preserve stocks of many species. Many governments subsidized factory-scale fishing fleets in the 1970s and 1980s, and the resultant catch increase evidently surpassed a sustainable level. It is uncertain how much of the current decline in fish stocks stems from overharvesting and how much from environmental pollution. The deep ocean remains relatively unaffected by human activity, but continental shelves near coastlines are frequently seriously polluted, and these close-to-shore areas are the major biological nurseries for food fish and the smaller organisms they feed on.

6. Environmental Toxins

Toxic chemical pollution exploded on the public consciousness with disclosure of spectacularly polluted industrial areas such as Love Canal near Buffalo, New York. There is no question that pollutants such as organophosphates or radionuclides can be highly deleterious to health, but evidence to date suggests that seriously affected areas are a localized rather than universal problem.

While some explore the possibilities for a lifestyle that fully eschews use of modern industrial chemicals, the most prevalent remedial approach is to focus on more judicious use. The most efficient chemical plants are now able to contain nearly all toxic byproducts of their production processes within the premises, minimizing the release of such substances into the environment.

Techniques such as Integrated Pest Management (IPM) dictate limited rather than broadcast use of pesticides: application only when needed using the safest available chemical, supplemented as much as possible with nontoxic controls.

While heightened public awareness and growing technical sophistication suggest a hopeful outlook on limiting the damage from manmade environmental toxins, one must grant that previous incidents of their misuse and mishandling have already caused environmental damage that will have to be dealt with for many years to come. In the case of the most hazardous radioactive substances, the time scale for successful remediation actually extends beyond that of the recorded history of civilization. Moreover, in this era of high population density and rapid economic growth, quotidian activities such as the transport of chemicals will occasionally, seemingly inevitably result in accidents with adverse environmental consequences.

7. "Islandization" and Biodiversity

With increased awareness regarding the adverse effects of unregulated hunting and habitat depletion upon wildlife species and other aspects of biodiversity, large-scale efforts across the globe have been initiated to reduce and even reverse this trend.

In every region of the world, many species of wildlife and areas of biodiversity have been saved from extinction. Nationally, many countries have adopted policies aimed at preservation and conservation of species, and one of the most tangible measures has been the proliferation of protected habitats. Such habitats exist in the form of wildlife reserves, marine life reserves, and other such areas where biodiversity can be protected from external encroachment and exploitation.

Despite these advances in wildlife and biodiversity protection, further and perhaps more intractable challenges linger. Designated reserves, while intended to prevent further species decline, exist as closed territories, fragmented from other such enclaves and disconnected from the larger ecosystem. This environmental scenario is referred to as "islandization." Habitat reserves often serve as oversized zoos or game farms, with landscapes and wildlife that have effectively been "tamed" to suit. Meanwhile, the larger surrounding ecosystem continues to be seriously degraded and transformed, while within the islandized habitat, species that are the focus of conservation efforts may not have sufficient range and may not be able to maintain healthy genetic variability.

As a consequence, many conservationists and preservationists have demanded that substantially larger portions of land be withheld as habitat reserves, and a network of biological corridors to connect continental reserves be established. While such efforts to combat islandization have considerable support in the [United States](#), how precisely such a program would be instituted, especially across national boundaries, remains a matter of debate. International conservationists and preservationists say without a network of reserves a massive loss of biodiversity will result.

The concept of islandization illustrates why conservation and preservation of wildlife and biodiversity must consider and adopt new, broader strategies. In the past, conservation and preservation efforts have been aimed at specific species, such as the spotted owl and grizzly bear in North America, the Bengal tiger in Southeast Asia, the panda in [China](#), elephants in Africa. Instead, the new approach is to simultaneously protect many and varied species that inhabit the same ecosystem. This method, referred to as "bio-regional conservation," may more efficaciously generate longer-term and more far-reaching results precisely because it is aimed at preserving entire ecosystems, and all the living things within.

More About Biodiversity Issues:

This section is directly taken from the United Nations Environmental Program: "[Biodiversity Assessment](#)"

The Global Biodiversity Assessment, completed by 1500 scientists under the auspices of United Nations Environmental Program in 1995, updated what is known (or unknown) about global biological diversity at the ecosystem, species and genetic levels. The assessment was uncertain of the total number of species on Earth within an order of magnitude. Of its working figure of 13 million species, only 13 percent are scientifically described. Ecological community diversity is also poorly known, as is its relationship to biological diversity, and genetic diversity has been studied for only a small number of species. The effects of human activities on biodiversity have increased so greatly that the rate of species extinctions is rising to hundreds or thousands of times the background level. These losses are driven by increasing demands on species and their habitats, and by the failure of current market systems to value biodiversity adequately. The Assessment calls for urgent action to reverse these trends.

There has been a new recognition of the importance of protecting marine and aquatic biodiversity. The first quantitative estimates of species losses due to growing coral reef destruction predict that almost 200,000 species, or one in five presently contributing to coral reef biodiversity, could die out in the next 40 years if human pressures on reefs continue to increase.

Since Rio, many countries have improved their understanding of the status and importance of their biodiversity, particularly through biodiversity country studies such as those prepared under the auspices of UNEP/GEF. The [United Kingdom](#) identified 1250 species needing monitoring, of which 400 require action plans to ensure their survival. Protective measures for biodiversity, such as legislation to protect species, can prove effective. In the USA, almost 40 percent of the plants and animals protected under the Endangered Species Act are now stable or improving as a direct result of recovery efforts. Some African countries have joined efforts to protect threatened species through the 1994 Lusaka Agreement, and more highly migratory species are being protected by

specialized cooperative agreements among range states under the Bonn Agreement.

There is an emerging realization that a major part of conservation of biological diversity must take place outside of protected areas and involve local communities. The extensive agricultural areas occupied by small farmers contain much biodiversity that is important for sustainable food production. Indigenous agricultural practices have been and continue to be important elements in the maintenance of biodiversity, but these are being displaced and lost. There is a new focus on the interrelationship between agrodiversity conservation and sustainable use and development practices in smallholder agriculture, with emphasis on use of farmers' knowledge and skills as a source of information for sustainable farming.

Perhaps even more important than the loss of biodiversity is the transformation of global biogeochemical cycles, the reduction in the total world biomass, and the decrease in the biological productivity of the planet. While quantitative measurements are not available, the eventual economic and social consequences may be so significant that the issue requires further attention.

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Online resources used generally in the Environmental Overview:

Environmental Protection Agency Global Warming Site. URL: <http://www.epa.gov/globalwarming>

Food and Agriculture Organization of United Nations: Forestry. URL: <http://www.fao.org/forestry/site/sofo/en/>

Global Warming Information Page. URL: <http://globalwarming.org>

U n i t e d N a t i o n s E n v i r o n m e n t a l P r o g r a m . U R L : http://www.unep.org/GEO/GEO_Products/Assessment_Reports/

United Nations Global Environmental Outlook. URL: <http://www.unep.org/geo/geo4/media/>

Note on Edition Dates:

The edition dates for textual resources are noted above because they were used to formulate the original content. We also have used online resources (cited above) to update coverage as needed.

Information Resources

For more information about environmental concepts, CountryWatch recommends the following resources:

The United Nations Environmental Program Network (with country profiles)

[<http://www.unep.net/>](http://www.unep.net/)

The United Nations Environment Program on Climate Change

[<http://climatechange.unep.net/>](http://climatechange.unep.net/)

The United Nations Environmental Program on Waters and Oceans

[<http://www.unep.ch/earthw/Pdepwat.htm>](http://www.unep.ch/earthw/Pdepwat.htm)

The United Nations Environmental Program on Forestry: "Forests in Flux"

[<http://www.unep-wcmc.org/forest/flux/homepage.htm>](http://www.unep-wcmc.org/forest/flux/homepage.htm)

FAO "State of the World's Forests"

[<http://www.fao.org/forestry/FO/SOFO/SOFO99/sofo99-e.stm>](http://www.fao.org/forestry/FO/SOFO/SOFO99/sofo99-e.stm)

World Resources Institute.

[<http://www.wri.org/>](http://www.wri.org/)

Harvard University Center for Health and the Global Environment

[<http://www.med.harvard.edu/chge/the-review.html>](http://www.med.harvard.edu/chge/the-review.html)

The University of Wisconsin Center for Sustainability and the Global Environment

<http://sage.aos.wisc.edu/>

International Environmental Agreements and Associations

International Policy Development in Regard to Global Warming:

Introduction

Regardless of what the precise nature of the relationship between greenhouse gas emissions and global warming may be, it seems that there is some degree of a connection between the phenomena. Any substantial reductions in greenhouse gas emissions and global warming trends will likely involve systematic changes in industrial operations, the use of advanced energy sources and technologies, as well as global cooperation in implementing and regulating these transformations.

In this regard, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) stipulated the following objectives:

1. To stabilize "greenhouse gas" concentrations within the atmosphere, in such a manner that would preclude hazardous anthropogenic intervention into the existing biosphere and ecosystems of the world. This stabilization process would facilitate the natural adaptation of ecosystems to changes in climate.
2. To ensure and enable sustainable development and food production on a global scale.

Following are two discussions regarding international policies on the environment, followed by listings of international accords.

Special Entry: The Kyoto Protocol

The UNFCCC was adopted at the Rio Earth Summit in 1992, and entered into force in 1994. Over 175 parties were official participants.

Meanwhile, however, many of the larger, more industrialized nations failed to reach the emissions' reduction targets, and many UNFCCC members agreed that the voluntary approach to reducing emissions had not been successful. As such, UNFCCC members reached a consensus that legally binding limits were necessitated, and agreed to discuss such a legal paradigm at a meeting in Kyoto, [Japan](#) in 1997. At that meeting, the UNFCCC forged the Kyoto Protocol. This concord is the first legally binding international agreement that places limits on emissions from industrialized countries. The major greenhouse gas emissions addressed in the Kyoto Protocol include carbon dioxide, nitrous oxide, hydrofluorocarbons, perfluorocarbons, sulfur hexafluoride, and methane.

The provisions of the Kyoto Protocol stipulate that economically advanced nations must reduce their combined emissions of greenhouse gases, by approximately five percent from their 1990

levels, before the 2008-2010 deadline. Countries with the highest carbon dioxide emissions, such as the [United States](#) (U.S.), many of the European Union (EU) countries, and [Japan](#), are to reduce emissions by a scale of 6 to 8 percent. All economically advanced nations must show "demonstrable progress" by 2005. In contrast, no binding limits or timetable have been set on developing countries. Presumably, this distinction is due to the fact that most developing countries - - with the obvious exceptions of [India](#) and [China](#) -- simply do not emit as many greenhouse gases as do more industrially advanced countries. Meanwhile, these countries are entrenched in the process of economic development.

Regardless of the aforementioned reasoning, there has been strong opposition against the asymmetrical treatment assigned to emissions limits among developed and developing countries. Although this distinction might be regarded as unfair in principle, associations such as the Alliance of Small Island States have been vocal in expressing how global warming -- a result of greenhouse gas emissions - has contributed to the rise in sea level, and thus deleteriously affected their very existence as island nation states. For this reason, some parties have suggested that economically advanced nations, upon returning to their 1990 levels, should be required to further reduce their greenhouse gas emissions by a deadline of 2005. In response, interested parties have observed that even if such reductions were undertaken by economically advanced nations, they would not be enough to completely control global warming. Indeed, a reduction in the rate of fossil fuel usage by developing nations would also be necessary to have substantial ameliorative effect on global warming. Indeed, a reduction in the rate of fossil fuel usage by developing nations would also be necessary to have substantial ameliorative effect on global warming.

As such, the Protocol established a "Clean Development Mechanism" which permits developed countries to invest in projects aimed at reducing emissions within developing countries in return for credit for the reductions. Ostensibly, the objective of this mechanism is to curtail emissions in developing countries without unduly penalizing them for their economic development. Under this model, the countries with more potential emissions credits could sell them to other signatories of the Kyoto Protocol, whose emissions are forecast to significantly rise in the next few years. Should this trading of emissions credits take place, it is estimated that the Kyoto Protocol's emissions targets could still be met.

In 1999, the International Energy Outlook projected that Eastern Europe, the former Soviet Union and Newly Independent States, as well as parts of Asia, are all expected to show a marked decrease in their level of energy-related carbon emissions in 2010. Nations with the highest emissions, specifically, the U.S., the EU and [Japan](#), are anticipated to reduce their emissions by up to 8 percent by 2012. By 2000, however, the emissions targets were not on schedule for achievement. Indeed, the U.S. Department of Energy estimates forecast that by 2010, there will be a 34 percent increase in carbon emissions from the 1990 levels, in the absence of major shifts in policy, economic growth, energy prices, and consumer trends. Despite this assessment in the U.S., international support for the Kyoto Protocol remained strong, especially among European countries

and island states, who view the pact as one step in the direction away from reliance on fossil fuels and other sources of greenhouse gases.

In 2001, U.S. President, George W. Bush, rejected his country's participation in the Kyoto Protocol, saying that the costs imposed on the global economic system, and especially, on the US, overshadowed the benefits of the Protocol. He also cited the unfair burden on developed nations to reduce emissions, as another primary reasons for withdrawal from the international pact, as well as insufficient evidence regarding the science of global warming. Faced with impassioned international disapproval for his position, the U.S. president stated that his administration remained interested in dealing with the matter of global warming, but would endorse alternative measures to combat the problem, such as voluntary initiatives limiting emissions. Critics of Bush's position, however, have noted that it was the failure of voluntary initiatives to reduce emissions following the Rio Summit that led to the establishment of the Kyoto Protocol in the first place.

In the wake of the Bush administration's decision, many participant countries resigned themselves to the reality that the goals of the Kyoto Protocol might not be achieved without U.S. involvement. Nevertheless, in Bonn, [Germany](#), in July 2001, the remaining participant countries struck a political compromise on some of the key issues and sticking points, and planned to move forward with the Protocol, irrespective of the absence of the U.S. The key compromise points included the provision for countries to offset their targets with carbon sinks (these are areas of forest and farmland which can absorb carbon through the process of photosynthesis). Another compromise point within the broader Bonn Agreement was the reduction of emissions cuts of six gases from over 5 percent to a more achievable 2 percent. A third key change was the provision of funding for less wealthy countries to adopt more progressive technologies.

In late October and early November 2001, the UNFCCC's 7th Conference of the Parties met in Marrakesh, [Morocco](#), to finalize the measures needed to make the Kyoto Protocol operational. Although the UNFCCC projected that ratification of the Protocol would make it legally binding within a year, many critics noted that the process had fallen short of implementing significant changes in policy that would be necessary to actually stop or even slow climate change. They also maintained that the absence of U.S. participation effectively rendered the Protocol into being a political exercise without any substance, either in terms of transnational policy or in terms of environmental concerns.

The adoption of the compromises ensconced within the Bonn Agreement had been intended to make the provisions of the Kyoto Protocol more palatable to the U.S. In this regard, it failed to achieve its objective as the Bush administration continued to eschew participation in the international accord. Still, however, the Bonn Agreement did manage to render a number of other positive outcomes. Specifically, in 2002, key countries, such as [Russia](#), [Japan](#) and [Canada](#) agreed to ratify the protocol, bringing the number of signatories to 178. The decision by key countries to

ratify the protocol was regarded as "the kiss of life" by observers.

By 2005, on the eve of a climate change conference in London, British Prime Minister Tony Blair was hoping to deal with the problems of climate change beyond the provisions set forth in the Kyoto Protocol. Acknowledging that the Kyoto Protocol could not work in its current form, Blair wanted to open the discussion for a new climate change plan.

Blair said that although most of the world had signed on to Kyoto, the protocol could not meet any of its practical goals of cutting greenhouse gas emissions without the participation of the United States, the world's largest polluter. He also noted that any new agreement would have to include India and China -- significant producers of greenhouse gas emissions, but exempt from Kyoto because they have been classified as developing countries. Still, he said that progress on dealing with climate change had been stymied by "a reluctance to face up to reality and the practical action needed to tackle problem."

Blair also touted the "huge opportunities" in technology and pointed toward the possibilities offered by wind, solar and nuclear power, along with fuel cell technology, eco-friendly biofuels, and carbon capture and storage which could generate low carbon power. Blair also asserted that his government was committed to achieving its domestic goal of reducing carbon dioxide emissions by 20 percent by 2010.

In the United States, President George W. Bush has said that global warming remained a debatable issue and despite conclusions reached by his own Environmental Protection Agency, he has not agreed with the conclusion that global warming and climate change are linked with human activities. Bush has also refused to ratify Kyoto on the basis of its economic costs.

Australia, an ally of the United States, has taken a similarly dim view of the Kyoto Protocol. Ahead of the November 2005 climate change meeting in Canada in which new goals for the protocol were to be discussed, Australia's Environment Minister, Ian Campbell, said that negotiating new greenhouse gas emission levels for the Kyoto Protocol would be a waste of time. Campbell said, "There is a consensus that the caps, targets and timetables approach is flawed. If we spend the next five years arguing about that, we'll be fiddling and negotiating while Rome burns." Campbell, like the Bush administration, has also advocated a system of voluntary action in which industry takes up new technologies rather than as a result of compelling the reduction of emissions. But the Australian Conservation Foundation (ACF) has called on its government to ratify the Kyoto Protocol, to establish a system of emissions trading, and to set binding limits on emissions. Interestingly, although it did not sign on to Kyoto, Australia was expected to meet its emissions target by 2012 (an 8 percent increase in 1990 levels in keeping with the country's reliance on coal). But this success has nothing to do with new technologies and is due to state-based regulations on land clearing.

Note: The Kyoto Protocol calls for developed nations to cut greenhouse emissions by 5.2 percent

of 1990 levels by 2012.

Special Entry: Climate Change Summit in Copenhagen (2009) --

In December 2009, the United Nations Climate Change Summit opened in the Danish capital of Copenhagen. The summit was scheduled to last from Dec. 7-18, 2009. Delegates from more than 190 countries were in attendance, and approximately 100 world leaders, including British Prime Minister Gordon Brown and [United States](#) President Barack Obama, were expected to participate. At issue was the matter of new reductions targets on greenhouse gas emissions by 2020.

Despite earlier fears that little concurrence would come from the conference, effectively pushing significant actions forward to a 2010 conference in [Mexico](#) City, negotiators were now reporting that the talks were productive and several key countries, such as [South Africa](#), had pledged to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The two main issues that could still lead to cleavages were questions of agreement between the industrialized countries and the developing countries of the world, as well as the overall effectiveness of proposals in seriously addressing the perils of climate change.

On Dec. 9, 2009, four countries -- the [United Kingdom](#), [Australia](#), [Mexico](#) and [Norway](#) -- presented a document outlining ideas for raising and managing billions of dollars, which would be intended to help vulnerable countries dealing with the perils of climate change. Described as a "green fund," the concept could potentially help small island states at risk because of the rise in sea level. [Bangladesh](#) identified itself as a potential recipient of an assistance fund, noting that as a country plagued by devastating floods, it was particularly hard-hit by climate change. The "green fund" would fall under the rubric of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, for which developed countries have been committed to quantifying their emission reduction targets, and also to providing financial and technical support to developing countries.

The [United Kingdom](#), [Australia](#), [Mexico](#) and [Norway](#) also called for the creation of a new legal treaty that would replace the Kyoto Protocol. This new treaty, which could go into force in 2012, would focus largely on the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions by 2020. But [Australia](#) went even further in saying that the successor treaty to the Kyoto Protocol, should be one with provisions covering all countries. Such a move would be a departure from the structure of the Kyoto Protocol, which contained emissions targets for industrialized countries due to the prevailing view that developed countries had a particular historic responsibility to be accountable for climate change. More recently, it has become apparent that substantial reductions in greenhouse gas emissions demanded by scientists would only come to pass with the participation also of significant developing nation states, such as [China](#) and [India](#). Indeed, one of the most pressing critiques of the Kyoto Protocol was that it was a "paper tiger" that failed to address the impact of the actions of emerging economies like [China](#) and [India](#), with its focus on the developed economies.

Now, in 2009, [China](#) -- as the world's biggest greenhouse gas emitter -- was responding this dubious distinction by vocalizing its criticism of the current scenario and foregrounding its new commitments. Ahead of the Copenhagen summit, [China](#) had announced it would reduce the intensity of its carbon emissions per unit of its GDP in 2020 by 40 to 45 percent against 2005 levels. With that new commitment at hand, [China](#) was now accusing the [United States](#) and the European Union of shirking their own responsibilities by setting weak targets for greenhouse gas emissions cuts. Senior Chinese negotiator, Su Wei, characterized the goals of the world's second largest greenhouse gas emitter -- the [United States](#) -- as "not notable," and the European Union's target as "not enough." Su Wei also took issue with [Japan](#) for setting implausible preconditions.

On Dec. 11, 2009, [China](#) demanded that developed and wealthy countries in Copenhagen should help deliver a real agreement on climate change by delivering on their promises to reduce carbon emissions and provide financial support for developing countries to adapt to global warming. In so doing, China's Vice Foreign Minister He Yafei said his country was hoping that a "balanced outcome" would emerge from the discussions at the summit. Echoing the position of the Australian government, He Yafei spoke of a draft agreement as follows: "The final document we're going to adopt needs to be taking into account the needs and aspirations of all countries, particularly the most vulnerable ones."

China's Vice Foreign Minister emphasized the fact that climate change was "a matter of survival" for developing countries, and accordingly, such countries need wealthier and more developed countries to accentuate not only their pledges of emissions reduction targets, but also their financial commitments under the aforementioned United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. To that end, scientists and leaders of small island states in the Indian Ocean, the Pacific Ocean and the Caribbean Sea, have highlighted the existential threat posed by global warming and the concomitant rise in sea level.

China aside, attention was also on [India](#) -- another major player in the developing world and a country with an industrializing economy that was impacting the environment. At issue was the Indian government's decision to set a carbon intensity target, which would slow emissions growth by up to 25 percent by the 2020 deadline. This strong position was resisted by some elements in [India](#), who argued that their country should not be taking such a strong position when developed wealthy countries were yet to show accountability for their previous commitments to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The matter grew so heated that the members of the opposition stormed out of the parliament in protest as Indian Environment Minister Jairam Ramesh defended the policy. But the political pressure at home in [India](#) was leaving the Indian delegation in Copenhagen in a state of chaos as well. In fact, India's top environmental negotiator refused to travel to Copenhagen in protest of the government's newly-announced stance.

China and [India](#) were joined by [Brazil](#) and [South Africa](#) in the crafting of a draft document calling for a new global climate treaty to be completed by June 2010. Of concern has been the realization

that there was insufficient time to find concurrence on a full legal treaty, which would leave countries only with a politically-binding text by the time the summit at Copenhagen closed. But Guyana's leader, President Bharrat Jagdeo, warned that the summit in [Denmark](#) would be classified as a failure unless a binding document was agreed upon instead of just political consensus. He urged his cohorts to act with purpose saying, "Never before have science, economics, geo-strategic self-interest and politics intersected in such a way on an issue that impacts everyone on the planet."

Likewise, [Tuvalu](#) demanded that legally binding agreements emerge from Copenhagen. Its proposal was supported by many of the vulnerable countries, from small island states and sub-Saharan Africa, all of whom warned of the catastrophic impact of climate change on their citizens. [Tuvalu](#) also called for more aggressive action, such as an amendment to the 1992 agreement, which would focus on sharp greenhouse gas emissions and the accepted rise in temperatures, due to the impact the rise in seas. The delegation from [Kiribati](#) joined the call by drawing attention to the fact that one village had to be abandoned due to waist-high water, and more such effects were likely to follow. Kiribati's Foreign Secretary, Tessie Lambourne, warned that the people of [Kiribati](#) could well be faced with no homeland in the future saying, "Nobody in this room would want to leave their homeland." But despite such impassioned pleas and irrespective of warnings from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change that the rise in sea level from melting polar ice caps would deleteriously affect low-lying atolls such as such as [Tuvalu](#) and [Kiribati](#) in the Pacific, and the [Maldives](#) in the Indian Ocean, the oil-giant [Saudi Arabia](#) was able to block this move.

Meanwhile, within the developed countries, yet another power struggle was brewing. The European Union warned it would only agree to raise its target of 20 percent greenhouse gas emissions reductions to 30 percent if the [United States](#) demonstrated that it would do more to reduce its own emissions. It was unknown if such pressure would yield results. [United States](#) President Barack Obama offered a "provisional" 2020 target of 17 percent reductions, noting that he could not offer greater concessions at Copenhagen due to resistance within the [United States](#) Congress, which was already trying to pass a highly controversial "cap and trade" emissions legislation. However, should that emissions trading bill fail in the Senate, the [United States](#) Environment Protection Agency's declaration that greenhouse gases pose a danger to human health and the environment was expected to facilitate further regulations and limits on power plants and factories at the national level. These moves could potentially strengthen the Obama administration's offering at Copenhagen. As well, President Obama also signaled that he would be willing to consider the inclusion of international forestry credits.

Such moves indicated willingness by the Obama administration to play a more constructive role on the international environmental scene than its predecessor, the Bush administration. Indeed, ahead of his arrival at the Copenhagen summit, President Barack Obama's top environmental advisors promised to work on a substantial climate change agreement. To that end, [United States](#)

Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Lisa Jackson said at a press conference, "We are seeking robust engagement with all of our partners around the world." But would this pro-engagement assertion yield actual results?

By Dec. 12, 2009, details related to a draft document prepared by Michael Zammit Cutajar, the head of the Ad-hoc Working Group on Long-Term Cooperative Action, were released at the Copenhagen climate conference. Included in the document were calls for countries to make major reductions in carbon emissions over the course of the next decade. According to the Washington Post, industrialized countries were called on to make cuts of between 25 percent and 40 percent below 1990 levels -- reductions that were far more draconian than the [United States](#) was likely to accept. As discussed above, President Obama had offered a provisional reduction target of 17 percent. The wide gap between the released draft and the United States' actual stated position suggested there was much more negotiating in the offing if a binding agreement could be forged, despite the Obama administration's claims that it was seeking greater engagement on this issue.

In other developments, the aforementioned call for financial support of developing countries to deal with the perils of climate change was partly answered by the European Union on Dec. 11, 2009. The European bloc pledged an amount of 2.4 billion euros (US\$3.5 billion) annually from 2010 to 2012. Environment Minister Andreas Carlgren of [Sweden](#) -- the country that holds the rotating presidency of the European Union at the time of the summit -- put his weight behind the notion of a "legally binding deal." Meanwhile, Yvo de Boer, a top United Nations climate change official, focused less on the essence of the agreement and more on tangible action and effects saying, "Copenhagen will only be a success if it delivers significant and immediate action that begins the day the conference ends."

The division between developed and developing countries in Copenhagen reached new heights on Dec. 14, 2009, when some of the poor and less developed countries launched a boycott at the summit. The move, which was spurred by African countries but backed by [China](#) and [India](#), appeared to be geared toward redirecting attention and primary responsibility to the wealthier and more industrialized countries. The impasse was resolved after the wealthier and more industrialized countries offered assurances that they did not intend on shirking from their commitments to reducing greenhouse gases. As a result, the participating countries ceased the boycott.

Outside the actual summit, thousands of protestors had gathered to demand crucial global warming, leading to clashes between police and demonstrators elsewhere in the Danish capital city. There were reports of scattered violence across Copenhagen and more than 1,000 people were arrested.

Nevertheless, by the second week of the climate change summit, hopes of forging a strong deal were eroding as developed and developing nations remained deadlocked on sharing cuts in greenhouse gases, and particularly on the matters of financing and temperature goals. In a bid to

shore up support for a new climate change, [United States](#) President Barack Obama joined other world leaders in Copenhagen. On Dec. 14, 2009, there was a standoff brewing between the [United States](#) and [China](#). At issue was China's refusal to accept international monitoring of its expressed targets for reducing greenhouse gas emissions. The [United States](#) argued that China's opposition to verification could be a deal-breaker.

By the close of the summit, the difficult process eventually resulted in some consensus being cultivated. A draft text called for \$100 billion a year by 2020 to assist poor nations cope with climate change, while aiming to limit global warming to two degrees Celsius compared with pre-industrial levels. The deal also included specific targets for developed countries to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and called for reductions by developing countries as a share of their economies. Also included in the agreement was a mechanism to verify compliance. The details of the agreement were supported by President Barack Obama, Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao, Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva.

This draft would stand as an interim agreement, with a legally-binding international pact unlikely to materialize until 2010. In this way, the summit in Copenhagen failed to achieve its central objective, which was to negotiate a successor to the Kyoto Protocol on greenhouse gas emissions.

Editor's Note

In the background of these developments was the growing global consciousness related to global warming and climate change. Indeed, as the Copenhagen summit was ongoing, it was clear there was enormous concurrence on the significance of the stakes with an editorial on the matter of climate change being published in 56 newspapers in 45 countries. That editorial warned that without global action, climate change would "ravage our planet." Meanwhile, a global survey taken by Globescan showed that concern over global warming had exponentially increased from 1998 -- when only 20 percent of respondents believed it to be a serious problem -- to 64 percent in 2009. Such survey data, however, was generated ahead of the accusations by climate change skeptics that some climate scientists may have overstated the case for global warming, based on emails derived in an illicit manner from a British University.

Special Entry: Climate change talks in Doha in [Qatar](#) extend life of Kyoto Protocol (2012)

December 2012 saw climate talks ensue in the Qatari city of Doha as representatives from countries across the world gathered to discuss the fate of the Kyoto Protocol, which seeks to minimize greenhouse gas emissions. The summit yielded results with decisions made (1) to extend the Kyoto Protocol until 2020, and (2) for wealthier countries to compensate poorer countries for the losses and damage incurred as a result of climate change.

In regards to the second matter, Malia Talakai of [Nauru](#), a leading negotiator for the Alliance of Small Island States, explained the necessity of the compensation package as follows: "We are trying to say that if you pollute you must help us."

This measure was being dubbed the "Loss and Damage" mechanism, and was being linked with [United States](#) President Barack Obama's request for \$60 billion from Congress to deal with the devastation caused by Hurricane Sandy months before. The sight of a hurricane bearing down on the northern Atlantic seaboard, along with the reality of the scope of reconstruction, appeared to have illustrated the economic costs of climate change -- not so much as a distant environmental issue -- but as a danger to the quotidian lives of people. Still, there was blame to be placed on the [United States](#) and European countries -- some of world's largest emitters -- for failing to do more to reduce emissions.

To that latter end, there was in fact little progress made on the central issue of reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Had those emissions been reduced, there would have been less of a need to financially deal with the devastation caused by climate change. One interpretation was that the global community was accepting the fact that industrialization was contributing to global warming, which had deleterious effects on the polar ice caps and concomitantly on the rise of sea level, with devastating effects for small island nations. Thus, wealthier countries were willing to pay around \$10 billion a year through 2020, effectively in "damages," to the poor countries that could be viewed as the "collateral damage" of industrial progress. But damages today could potentially be destruction tomorrow, leaving in place the existential challenges and burdens to be born by some of the world's smallest and least wealthy island countries.

Perhaps not surprisingly, the representative for the small island nation states at the Doha summit responded with ire, characterizing the lack of progress on reducing emissions as follows: "We see the package before us as deeply deficient in mitigation (carbon cuts) and finance. It's likely to lock us on the trajectory to a 3,4,5C rise in global temperatures, even though we agreed to keep the global average temperature rise of 1.5C to ensure survival of all islands. There is no new finance (for adapting to climate change and getting clean energy) -- only promises that something might materialize in the future. Those who are obstructive need to talk not about how their people will live, but whether our people will live."

Indeed, in most small island countries not just in the Pacific, but also the Caribbean and Indian Ocean, ecological concerns and the climate crisis have been dominant themes with dire life and death consequences looming in the background for their people. Small island nations in these region are already at risk from the rise of sea-level, tropical cyclones, floods. But their very livelihoods of fishing and subsistence farming were also at risk as a result of ecological and environmental changes. Increasingly high storm surges can wipe out entire villages and contaminate water supplies. Accordingly, the very existence of island nations, such as [Kiribati](#) and [Tuvalu](#), are at severe risk of being obliterated from the map. Yet even with the existential threat of being wiped

off the map in the offing, the international community has been either slow or restrictive in its efforts to deal with global warming, climate change, economic and ecological damage, as well as the emerging global challenge of environmental refugees.

A 2012 report from the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) and the Pacific Regional Environment Program underlined the concerns of small island nations and their people as it concluded that the livelihoods of approximately 10 million people in Pacific island communities were increasingly vulnerable to climate change. In fact, low-lying islands in that region would likely confront losses of up to 18 percent of gross domestic product due to climate change, according to the report. The report covers 21 countries and territories, including [Fiji](#), [Kiribati](#), [Samoa](#) and [Tonga](#), and recommended environmental legislation intended to deal with the climate crisis facing the small island countries particularly. As noted by David Sheppard, the director general of the Pacific Regional Environment Program that co-sponsored this study: "The findings... emphasize the need more than ever to raise the bar through collective actions that address the region's environmental needs at all levels."

Regardless of the failures of the summit in [Qatar](#) (discussed above), the meeting did facilitate a process starting in 2015, which would bind both wealthy and poor countries together in the mission of forging a new binding treaty that would replace the Kyoto Protocol and tackle the central causes of climate change.

For more information on the threats faced in small island nations by climate change and the measures being undertaken to lobby for international action, please see the Alliance for Small Island States available online at the URL: <http://aosis.org/>

Special Report

COP 21 summit in Paris ends with historic agreement to tackle climate change; rare international consensus formed on environmental crisis facing the planet (2015) --

In mid-December 2015, the highly-anticipated United Nations climate conference of parties (COP) in Paris, [France](#), ended with a historic agreement. In fact, it would very likely be understood as the most significant international agreement signed by all the recognized countries of the world since the Cold War. Accordingly, the Paris Agreement was being distinguished as the first multilateral pact that would compel all countries across the world to cut its carbon emissions -- one of the major causes of increasing greenhouse gas emissions, which contribute to global warming, and its deleterious effects ranging from the dangerous rise in sea level to catastrophic climate change.

The accord, which was dubbed to be the "Paris Agreement," was the work of rigorous diplomacy

and fervent environmental advocacy, and it aimed to address the climate change crisis facing the planet. As many as 195 countries were represented in the negotiations that led to the landmark climate deal. Indeed, it was only after weeks of passionate debate that international concurrence was reached in addressing the environmental challenges confronting the world, with particular attention to moving beyond fossil fuels and reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

The success of the COP 21 summit in Paris and the emergence of the landmark Paris Agreement was, to some extent, attributed to the efforts of France's Foreign Minister Laurent Fabius who presided over the negotiations. The French foreign minister's experience and credentials as a seasoned diplomat and respected statesman paid dividends. He skillfully guided the delegates from almost 200 countries and interest groups along the negotiations process, with ostensibly productive results and a reasonably robust deal to show for it.

On Dec. 12, 2015, French Foreign Minister Fabius officially adopted the agreement, declaring: "I now invite the COP to adopt the decision entitled Paris Agreement outlined in the document. Looking out to the room I see that the reaction is positive, I see no objections. The Paris agreement is adopted." Once Foreign Minister Fabius' gavel was struck, symbolically inaugurating the Paris Agreement into force, the COP delegate rushed to their feet with loud and bouyant cheers as well as thunderous applause.

In general, the Paris Agreement was being hailed as a victory for enviromental activists and a triumph for international diplomats, while at the same time being understood as simply an initial -- and imperfect -- move in the direction of a sustainable future. China's chief negotiator, Xie Zhenhua, issued this message, saying that while the accord was not ideal, it should "not prevent us from marching historical steps forward."

United States President Barack Obama lauded the deal as both "ambitious" and "historic," and the work of strenuous multilateral negotiations as he declared, "Together, we've shown what's possible when the world stands as one." The [United States](#) leader acknowledged that the accord was not "perfect," but he reminded the critics that it was "the best chance to save the one planet we have."

Former [United States](#) Vice President Al Gore, one of the world's most well known environmental advocates, issued a lengthy statement on the accomplishments ensconced in the Paris Agreement. He highlighted the fact that the Paris Agreement was a first step towards a future with a reduced carbon footprint on Planet Earth as he said, "The components of this agreement -- including a strong review mechanism to enhance existing commitments and a long-term goal to eliminate global-warming pollution this century -- are essential to unlocking the necessary investments in our future. No agreement is perfect, and this one must be strengthened over time, but groups across every sector of society will now begin to reduce dangerous carbon pollution through the framework of this agreement."

The central provisions of the Paris Agreement included the following items:

- Greenhouse gas emissions should peak as quickly as possible, with a move towards balancing energy sources, and ultimately the decrease of greenhouse gases in the second half of this century
- Global temperature increase would be limited to 1.5 degrees Centigrade above pre-industrial levels and would be held "well below" the two degrees Centigrade threshold
- Progress on these goals would be reviewed every five years beginning in 2020 with new greenhouse gas reduction targets issued every five years
- \$100 billion would be expended each year in climate finance for developing countries to move forward with green technologies, with further climate financing to be advanced in the years beyond

It should be noted that there both legally binding and voluntary elements contained within the Paris Agreement. Specifically, the submission of an emissions reduction target and the regular review of that goal would be legally mandatory for all countries. Stated differently, there would be a system in place by which experts would be able to track the carbon-cutting progress of each country. At the same time, the specific targets to be set by countries would be determined at the discretion of the countries, and would not be binding. While there was some criticism over this non-binding element, the fact of the matter was that the imposition of emissions targets was believed to be a major factor in the failure of climate change talks in Copenhagen, [Denmark](#), in 2009.

In 2015, the talks faced challenges as several countries, such as [China](#) and [India](#), objected to conditions that would stymie economic and development. In order to avoid that kind of landmine, a system Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDCs) was developed and formed the basis of the accord. As such, the Paris Agreement would, in fact, facilitate economic growth and development, as well as technological progress, but with the goal of long-term ecological sustainability based on low carbon sources. In fact, the agreement heralded as "the beginning of the end of the fossil fuel era." As noted by Nick Mabey, the head of the climate diplomacy organization E3G, said, "Paris means governments will go further and faster to tackle climate change than ever before. The transition to a low carbon economy is now unstoppable, ensuring the end of the fossil fuel age."

A particular sticking point in the agreement was the \$100 billion earmarked for climate financing for developing countries to transition from traditional fossil fuels to green energy technologies and a low carbon future. In 2014, a report by the International Energy Agency indicated that the cost of that transition would actually be around \$44 trillion by the mid-century -- an amount that would render the \$100 billion being promised to be a drop in the proverbial bucket. However, the general expectation was that the Republican-controlled Senate in the [United States](#), which would have to ratify the deal in that country, was not interested in contributing significant funds for the cause of climate change.

A key strength of the Paris Agreement was the ubiquitous application of measures to all countries. Of note was the frequently utilized concept of "flexibility" with regard to the Paris Agreement. Specifically, the varying capacities of the various countries in meeting their obligations would be anticipated and accorded flexibility. This aspect presented something of a departure from the 1997 Kyoto Protocol, which drew a sharp distinction between developed and developing countries, and mandated a different set of obligations for those categories of countries. Thus, under Kyoto, [China](#) and [India](#) were not held to the same standards as the [United States](#) and European countries. In the Paris Agreement, there would be commitments from all countries across the globe.

Another notable strength of the Paris Agreement was the fact that the countries of the world were finally able to reach consensus on the vital necessity to limit global temperature increases to 1.5 degrees Centigrade. Ahead of the global consensus on the deal, and as controversy continued to surface over the targeted global temperature limits, the leaders of island countries were sounding the alarm about the melting of the Polar ice caps and the associated rise in sea level. Prime Minister Enele Sopoaga of [Tuvalu](#) issued this dismal reminder: "Tuvalu's future ... is already bleak and any further temperature increase will spell the total demise of [Tuvalu](#). No leader in this room carries such a level of worry and responsibility. Just imagine you are in my shoes, what would you do?" It was thus something of a victory for environmental advocates that the countries of the world could find consensus on the lower number -- 1.5 degrees rather than 2 degrees.

A significant weak point with regard to the Paris deal was a "loss and damage" provision, which anticipates that even with all the new undertakings intended to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and move to a low carbon future, there would nonetheless be unavoidable climate change consequences. Those consequences ranged from the loss of arable land for farmers as well as soil erosion and contamination of potable water by sea water, to the decimation of territory in coastal zones and on small islands, due to the rise in sea level, with entire small island countries being rendered entirely uninhabitable. The reality was that peoples' homes across the world would be destroyed along with their way of life.

With that latter catastrophic effect being a clear and present danger for small island countries, the Association of Small Island States (AOSIS) demanded that the developed world acknowledge its responsibility for this irreversible damage.. Despite the fact that greenhouse gas emissions and the ensuing plague of global warming was, indeed, the consequence of development in the West (the [United States](#) and Europe) and the large power house countries, such as [Russia](#), [China](#) and [India](#), there was no appetite by those countries to sign on to unlimited liability. Under the Paris Agreement, there was a call for research on insurance mechanisms that would address loss and damage issues, with recommendations to come in the future.

The call for research was being regarded as an evasion of sorts and constituted the weakest aspect of the Paris Agreement. Not surprisingly, a coalition of small island nations demanded a "Marshall

Plan" for the Pacific. Borrowing the term "Marshall Plan" from the post-World War II reconstruction effort, the coalition of Pacific island nation, which included [Kiribati](#), [Tuvalu](#), [Fiji](#), and the [Marshall Islands](#), called for an initiative that would include investment in renewable energy and shoreline protection, cultural preservation, economic assistance for economies in transition, and a plan for migration and resettlement for these countries as they confront the catastrophic effects of the melting of the Polar ice caps and the concomitant rise in sea level. The precise contours of the initiative remained unknown, unspecified, and a mere exercise in theory at the time of writing. Yet such an initiative would, at some point, have to be addressed, given the realities of climate change and the slow motion calamity unfolding each day for low-lying island nations across the world.

As noted by Vice President Greg Stone of Conservation International, who also functions as an adviser to the government of [Kiribati](#), "Imagine living in a place where you know it's going to go away someday, but you don't know what day that wave's going to come over and wash your home away." He added, "It's a disaster we know is going to happen." Meanwhile, the intervening years promised to be filled with hardship for small island nations, such as [Kiribati](#). Stone explained, "For every inch of sea-level rise, these islands lose 10 feet of their freshwater table to saltwater intrusion," Stone explained. "So it's not just about the day the water finally goes over the island; it's also about the day that there's just not enough water left and everyone has to move off the island." Presaging the future for island nations that could face submersion, Stone said, "If you look ahead 50 years, a country like [Kiribati](#) could become the first aqueous nation. possibility of migration. That is, they own this big patch of ocean, and they administer it from elsewhere."

Foreign Minister Minister Tony Debrum of the [Marshall Islands](#) emerged as the champion advocating on behalf of small island nation states and a loose coalition of concerned countries from the Pacific to the Caribbean, but with support from the [United States](#). He addressed the comprehensive concerns of small island nations regarding the weaknesses of the deal, while simultaneously making clear that the Paris Agreement signified hope for the countries most at risk. In a formal statement, Debrum declared: "We have made history today. Emissions targets are still way off track, but this agreement has the tools to ramp up ambition, and brings a spirit of hope that we can rise to this challenge. I can go back home to my people and say we now have a pathway to survival." Debrum highlighted the imperatives of Pacific island nations, saying, "Our High Ambition Coalition was the lightning rod we needed to lift our sights and expectations for a strong agreement here in Paris. We were joined by countries representing more than half the world. We said loud and clear that a bare-bones, minimalist agreement would not fly. We instead demanded an agreement to mark a turning point in history, and the beginning of our journey to the post-carbon era."

Debrum of the [Marshall Islands](#) espoused the quintessential synopsis of the accord and its effects for those most likely to be affected by climate change as he noted, "Climate change won't stop

overnight, and my country is not out of the firing line just yet, but today we all feel a little safer.”

Editor's Entry on [Environmental Policy](#):

The low-lying Pacific island nations of the world, including [Kiribati](#), [Tuvalu](#), the [Marshall Islands](#), [Fiji](#), among others, are vulnerable to the threats posed by global warming and climate change, derived from carbon emissions, and resulting in the rise in sea level. Other island nations in the Caribbean, as well as poor countries with coastal zones, were also at particular risk of suffering the deleterious effects of climate change.

Political policy in these countries are often connected to ecological issues, which have over time morphed into an existential crisis of sorts. Indeed, ecological concerns and the climate crisis have also been dominant themes with life and death consequences for the people of island nations in the Pacific. Indeed, the very livelihoods of fishing and subsistence farming remain at risk as a result of ecological and environmental changes. Yet even so, these countries are threatened by increasingly high storm surges, which could wipe out entire villages and contaminate water supplies. Moreover, because these are low lying island nations, the sustained rise in sea level can potentially lead to the terrain of these countries being uninhabitable at best, and submerged at worst. Stated in plain terms, these countries are at severe risk of being obliterated from the map and their plight illuminates the emerging global challenge of environmental refugees. In these manifold senses, climate change is the existential crisis of the contemporary era.

Since the time of the 1997 Kyoto Protocol, there have been efforts aimed at extending the life of that agreement, with an eye on minimizing greenhouse gas emissions, and thus minimizing the effects of climate change. Those endeavors have largely ended in failure, as exemplified by the unsuccessful Copenhagen talks in 2009 and the fruitless Doha talks in 2012 respectively. The success of the COP 21 talks in [France](#), with the adoption of the landmark Paris Agreement in 2015, was regarded as the first glimmer of hope. Not only did the Paris Agreement signify the triumph of international diplomacy and global consensus, but it also marked the start of the end of the fossil fuel era, with the path forward toward a low carbon future reliant on greener technologies. Most crucially, the Paris Agreement stood as the first significant response in recent times to the central challenge of climate change and its quotidian effects on the lives of real human beings across the world.

1. Major International Environmental Accords:

General Environmental Concerns

Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context, Espoo, 1991.

Accords Regarding Atmosphere

Annex 16, vol. II (Environmental Protection: Aircraft Engine Emissions) to the 1044 Chicago Convention on International Civil Aviation, Montreal, 1981

Convention on Long-Range Transboundary Air Pollution (LRTAP), Geneva, 1979

United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), New York, 1992

Vienna Convention for the Protection of the Ozone Layer, Vienna, 1985 including the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Depleted the Ozone Layer, Montreal, 1987

Accords Regarding Hazardous Substances

Convention on the Ban of the Import into Africa and the Control of Transboundary Movements and Management of Hazardous Wastes within Africa, Bamako, 1991

Convention on Civil Liability for Damage Caused during Carriage of Dangerous Goods by Road, Rail and Inland Navigation Vessels (CRTD), Geneva, 1989

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Global Conventions

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Convention on Liability and Compensation for Damage in Connection with the Carriage of Hazardous and Noxious Substances by Sea (HNS), London 1996

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Convention for the Prevention of Marine Pollution from Land-based Sources (Paris Convention), Paris, 1974

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Conventions within the UNEP Regional Seas Programme

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Convention for the Protection, Management, and Development of the Marine and Coastal Environment of the Eastern African Region, Nairobi, 1985

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Regional Convention for the Conservation of the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden Environment, Jeddah, 1982

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Marine Living Resources

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International Convention for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT), Rio de Janeiro, 1966

International Convention for the Regulation of Whaling (ICRW), Washington, 1946

Nature Conservation and Terrestrial Living Resources

Antarctic Treaty, Washington, D.C., 1959

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Freshwater Resources

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Convention on Early Notification of a Nuclear Accident (Notification Convention), Vienna, 1986

Convention on Nuclear Safety, Vienna, 1994

Vienna Convention on Civil Liability for Nuclear Damage, Vienna, 1963

5. Major Intergovernmental Organizations

Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD)

European Union (EU): Environment

Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)

Global Environment Facility (GEF)

International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)

International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES)

International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)

International Labour Organization (ILO)

International Maritime Organization (IMO)

International Monetary Fund (IMF)

International Oil Pollution Compensation Funds (IOPC Funds)

Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), Environment Policy Committee (EPOC)

United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)

United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)

United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO)

United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)

World Bank

World Food Programme (WFP)

World Health Organization (WHO)

World Meteorological Organization (WMO)

World Trade Organization (WTO)

6. Major Non-Governmental Organizations

Atmosphere Action Network East Asia (AANE)

Climate Action Network (CAN)

Consumers International (CI)

Earth Council

Earthwatch Institute

Environmental Liaison Centre International (ELCI)

European Environmental Bureau (EEB)

Forest Stewardship Council (FSC)

Friends of the Earth International (FoEI)

Greenpeace International

International Chamber of Commerce (ICC)

International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU)

International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF)

International Solar Energy Society (ISES)

IUCN-The World Conservation Union

Pesticide Action Network (PAN)

Sierra Club

Society for International Development (SID)

Third World Network (TWN)

Water Environment Federation (WEF)

Women's Environment and Development Organization (WEDO)

World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD)

World Federalist Movement (WFM)

World Resources Institute (WRI)

World Wide Fund For Nature (WWF)

7. Other Networking Instruments

Arab Network for Environment and Development (RAED)

Global Legislators for a Balanced Environment (GLOBE)

Regional Environmental Center for Central and Eastern Europe (REC)

United Nations Non-Governmental Liaison Service (UN-NGLS)

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Methodology Note for Demographic Data:

The demographic numbers for cities and national populations listed in CountryWatch content are derived from the Geoba.se website, which analyzes data from the World Bank. The current demographic numbers displayed on the Countrywatch website are reflective of the latest available estimates.

The demographic information for language, ethnicity and religion listed in CountryWatch content is

derived from a mix of sources including the Altapedia, Central Intelligence Agency Factbook, Infoplease, and State Department Background Notes.

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-- See also list of News Wires services below, which are also used for research purposes. --

Note on Edition Dates:

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Methodology Notes for Economic Data:

Estimates by CountryWatch.com of GDP in dollars in most countries are made by converting local currency GDP data from the International Monetary Fund World Economic Outlook to US dollars by market exchange rates estimated from the International Monetary Fund International Financial Statistics and projected out by the CountryWatch Macroeconomic Forecast. Real GDP was estimated by deflating current dollar values by the US GDP Implicit Price Deflator.

Exceptions to this method were used for:

- Bosnia-Herzegovina
- Nauru
- Cuba
- Palau
- Holy See
- San Marino
- Korea, North
- [Serbia](#) & Montenegro
- Liberia
- Somalia
- Liechtenstein
- Tonga
- Monaco
- Tuvalu

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Methodology Notes for the HDI:

Since 1990, the United Nations Development Programme, in concert with organizations across the globe, has produced the [Human Development Index](#) (or HDI). According to the UNDP, the index measures average achievement in basic human development in one simple composite index, and produces from this index a ranking of countries. The HDI is a composite of three basic components of human development: longevity, knowledge and standard of living. Longevity is measured by life expectancy. Knowledge is measured by combination of adult literacy and mean

years of schooling. Standard of living is measured by purchasing power, based on real GDP per capita (in constant US\$) adjusted for differences in international living costs (or, purchasing power parity, PPP). While the index uses these social indicators to measure national performance with regard to human welfare and development, not all countries provide the same level of information for each component needed to compute the index; therefore, as in any composite indicator, the final index is predicated on projections, predictions and weighting schemes. The index is a static measure, and thus, an incomplete measure of human welfare. In fact, the UNDP says itself the concept of human development focuses on the ends rather than the means of development and progress, examining in this manner, the average condition of all people in a given country.

Specifically, the index is calculated by determining the maximum and minimum for each of the three components (as listed above) and then measuring where each country stands in relation to these scales-expressed as a value between 0 and 1. For example, the minimum adult literary rate is zero percent, the maximum is 100 percent, and the reading skills component of knowledge in the HDI for a country where the literacy rate is 75 percent would be 0.75. The scores of all indicators are then averaged into the overall index.

For a more extensive examination of human development, as well as the ranking tables for each participating country, please visit: <http://www.undp.org>

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Other Sources:

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Note: Some or all these news services have been used to research various sections of this Country Review.

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Examples:

Youngblood-Coleman, Denise. *Country Review: France*. 2003. Houston, Texas: CountryWatch Publications, 2003. *Country Review:France*. Online. Available URL : http://www.countrywatch.com/cw_country.asp?vCOUNTRY=61 October, 12, 2003.

Note:

This is the citation format used when the print version is not used in the reference.

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Examples:

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