



Legislation Text

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Res. No. 132

Resolution calling upon the United States to continue to support the peaceful resolution of conflict in Liberia through the involvement of the United Nations and African Union; and further calling upon the United Nations to expedite the deployment of a significant peacekeeping force to help put an end to the violence and conflict in Liberia, ensure that humanitarian aid reaches the approximately one million people who are facing an acute shortage of food, water and medicines, and help the country continue on its path towards free and democratic elections.

By Council Members Barron, Clarke, Comrie, Fidler, Foster, Koppell, Lopez, McMahon, Recchia, Rivera, Seabrook, Stewart, Vann, Gennaro, James, Weprin and Jackson

Whereas, Liberia, Africa's oldest republic, gained independence on July 26, 1847, twenty-six years after it was founded in 1821 when officials of the American Colonization Society were granted possession of Cape Mesurado by local Dey and Bassa chiefs for the settlement of freed African-American slaves; and

Whereas, Liberia enjoyed relative stability until 1980 when President William R. Tolbert was assassinated and the government was overthrown in a military coup led by Army Master Sergeant Samuel K. Doe after the country experienced food riots when the government tried to raise the price of rice; and

Whereas, Master Sergeant Doe's coup heralded a period of political and economic instability that culminated in a civil war that started in 1989 when dissidents of Charles Taylor's National Patriotic Front of Liberia overran much of the countryside, and intensified in 1990 when members of a splinter group of rebels led by Prince Yormie Johnson of the Independent National Patriotic Front of Liberia captured and executed Master Sergeant Doe; and

Whereas, The civil war in Liberia, which lasted between 1989 and 1997, had a disastrous effect on the country's economy, cost the lives of approximately 200,000 people and caused hundreds of thousands of refugees to flee the country; and

Whereas, In 1995, the 16 member Economic Community of West African States brokered a peace treaty between Liberia's warring factions that eventually led to the end of the civil war in 1997 and to multiparty presidential and legislative elections that resulted in the election of Charles Taylor as the country's president; and

Whereas, According to the Bureau of Consular Affairs at the United States Department of State, although an elected government has been in place in Liberia since August of 1997, the government has made little progress towards the resettlement of

refugees and displaced persons, the reintegration of former combatants, the reconstruction of the country's infrastructure, respect for human rights and the rule of law and a stable environment for economic development and the elimination of corruption; and

Whereas, In 1999, Liberian President Charles Taylor was accused of supporting and arming rebels in neighboring Sierra Leone's civil war, causing the United Nations to impose sanctions against Liberia in 2001 and eventually leading a United Nations-backed war crimes tribunal in Sierra Leone to indict President Taylor in June 2003 for his alleged support of the Sierra Leone rebels; and

Whereas, In 2000, Liberian government forces began battling Anti-Taylor rebels in the northern Town of Voinjama, a conflict that intensified by mid-2002, spread to other parts of the country, including the Capital of Monrovia, and left more than 1,000 civilians deaths, an estimated one million Liberians facing a humanitarian crisis, and caused the Capital of Monrovia to become home to approximately 250,000 displaced people living in deplorable conditions without food, water and medicine; and

Whereas, An August 7, 2003 Washington Post article, entitled "U.N. Maps Goals in Liberia," indicated that the United Nations was drawing up plans to help rebuild Liberia's infrastructure and government and to create a 15,000 strong peacekeeping force to help disarm the warring factions - plans that the newspaper claimed had raised concerns in the United States due to its size and cost; and

Whereas, On August 11, 2003, Liberian President Charles Taylor resigned and surrendered his executive powers to Vice President Moses Blah and then headed into exile in Nigeria, which, according to an August 7, 2003 article appearing in The New York Times, entitled "African Peace Force Gets Warm Welcome in Liberia Streets," was one of the primary conditions for a broader deployment of American troops into Liberia by United States President George W. Bush; and

Whereas, On August 18, 2003, the Liberian government and two rebel movements signed the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in Accra, also known as the Accra Agreement, which paved the way for an interim government headed by an independent civilian to assume power to help rebuild the nation and to prepare for democratic elections in two years; and

Whereas, As a result of the Accra Agreement, on October 14, 2003, the National Transitional Government of Liberia, headed by Chairman Gyude Bryant, was inaugurated in the country's capital of Monrovia; and

Whereas, During a press conference at the United Nations on December 18, 2003, Secretary-General Kofi Annan indicated that the United Nations had only been able to deploy to Liberia about half of the peacekeeping troops they had anticipated and hoped that they would be able to reach their goal of 15,000 by March 2004; and

Whereas, Despite the Accra Agreement, a new transitional government and the presence of a United Nations peacekeeping force in Liberia, violence and conflict persist and, according to U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan, the country's humanitarian needs

remain largely unmet; and

Whereas, It is incumbent upon the international community to pave the way for peace, stability and democracy in Liberia as evidenced during the recent International Reconstruction Conference on Liberia, which was held at the United Nations on February 5-6, 2004, and where western nations pledged approximately \$520 million to finance the reconstruction of Liberia over the next years, including \$200 million that was pledged by the United States; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Council of the City of New York calls upon the United States to continue to support the peaceful resolution of conflict in Liberia through the involvement of the United Nations and African Union; and, be it further

Resolved, That the Council of the City of New York calls upon the United Nations to expedite the deployment of a significant peacekeeping force to help put an end to the violence and conflict in Liberia, ensure that humanitarian aid reaches the approximately one million people who are facing an acute shortage of food, water and medicines, and help the country continue on the path towards free and democratic elections.