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Re: Liberia – 122nd Session (12 March – 6 April 2018)

12 February 2018

Distinguished Committee Members,

We respectfully submit this letter in advance of the Human Rights Committee's (the Committee's) discussion of Liberia at its 122nd Session (12 March – 6 April 2018). Equality Now is an international human rights organization with ECOSOC status working to protect and promote the rights of women and girls worldwide since 1992, including through our membership network comprised of individuals and organizations in over 190 countries.

This letter, based on consultation with Equality Now's partners in Liberia including Women Solidarity Incorporated (WOSI) and the Association of Female Sociologists of Liberia (LAFSO) will focus on continued violations against women and girls, including female genital mutilation (FGM) and sexual and gender-based violence in Liberia which is in violation of the equality, non-discrimination and equal protection of the law principles (Articles 2, 3 and 26) of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights ("the Covenant"), and discrimination in the nationality law which in addition to the equality and non-discrimination principles, also directly violates the right to a nationality (Article 24). The letter also focuses on continued trafficking of women and girls for the purposes of sexual exploitation, in violation of the prohibitions on cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment, and forced labour / slavery (Articles 7 and 8) of the Covenant¹. Liberia does not have any reservations on any provisions of the Covenant.

In addition, passing strong and effective laws that criminalize FGM and sex trafficking on a permanent and universal basis and amending laws like the nationality law which discriminate on the basis of sex are an essential pre-condition towards meeting *Goal 5 (Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls)* of the agreed upon sustainable development goals in Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development ("Agenda 2030"), adopted by UN members states in 2015. Goal 5 includes specific targets, including target 5.1 *End all forms of*

¹ In addition, Article 9(5) of the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime ("the Palermo Protocol"), calls on State parties to enact policies "to discourage the demand that fosters all forms of exploitation of persons, especially women and children, that leads to trafficking", and Human Rights Council and General Assembly resolutions (A/HRC/RES/8/12 (OP 2(F), 18/06/2008; A/RES/667145(2012) OP 22; and A/RES/65/190 (2010) OP 19 which have noted that the demand for prostitution or the demand for fostering sexual exploitation is met by trafficking in persons.

discrimination against all women and girls everywhere; target 5.2 Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation; and target 5.3 Eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation, as well as targets 10.3 Eliminate discriminatory laws, policies and practice); 16.2 End abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against and torture of children; and 16.3 Ensure equal access to justice for all.

The Liberian Constitution guarantees the rights of life, liberty and security of person to all Liberians. Section 38 of the Children’s Act (2011) bans “all forms of harmful cultural practices.” Despite its international, regional and national obligations, Liberia does not enforce this provision and does not have a permanent law specifically banning FGM, though the recent Executive Order signed by the outgoing President on 19 January 2018 bans the practice for a period of one year.² In addition, although the current Constitution provides that either parent can pass nationality to their children, Section 20.1(b) of the Aliens and Nationality Law: Part III, Nationality and Naturalization 1973-1974 discriminates on the basis of sex. The 2005 Act to Ban Trafficking in Persons prohibits all forms of trafficking but the sentences for sex trafficking, in the case of both adults and children, are not commensurate with those for other serious crimes, such as rape.³ The government has not convicted any traffickers since 2014 and has never convicted a trafficker under the 2005 law, despite the prevalence of internal human trafficking including sex trafficking.

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)

According to Liberia’s DHS study of 2013, 49.8% percent of Liberian women and girls have undergone FGM as an initiation rite into womanhood in different ethnic groups.⁴ The forms of FGM practiced in Liberia are Type I or Clitoridectomy – the partial or total removal of the clitoris and Type II Excision – where the clitoris and labia minora (smaller lips) are removed leaving the labia majora (larger lips) intact. FGM poses serious physical and mental health risks for women and girls. A 2006 World Health Organization multi-country study found that complications during delivery are more likely to occur among women who have undergone FGM and the rate of prenatal deaths is 1-2 percent higher for the babies of such women.

FGM in Liberia is propagated by a politically influential female secret society known as the Sande, in which young girls attending traditional Sande schools go through the process of indoctrination of social and traditional training and graduate to womanhood. FGM is a key element of this indoctrination and allows their membership into the society, considering them "clean" and eligible for marriage, capable of child-bearing, and eventually able to hold important societal roles and offices. Mr. Mackins Pajibo, the Program Manager of WOSI has stated that for those who come from ethnic groups that participate in the Sande secret societies, the consequences of not undergoing FGM include discrimination and isolation by the community. Women and girls who refuse to undergo FGM are considered as social pariahs and are not allowed to participate in women’s discussions or spaces of decision making.

Equality Now has been monitoring cases of FGM around the world including in Liberia, demonstrating the need for laws against FGM and their enforcement. Equality Now issued actions

² Government of the Republic of Liberia, Executive Order No. 92 on Domestic Violence, *available at* <http://www.emansion.gov.lr/doc/sc.pdf>

³ United States Department of State Trafficking in Law Report, 2017 *available at* <https://www.state.gov/j/tip/rls/tiprpt/countries/2017/271227.htm>

⁴ Demographic and Health Survey – Liberia (2013), *available at* <https://dhsprogram.com/pubs/pdf/fr291/fr291.pdf>

(petitions) with our partners regarding FGM in Liberia in 2010 and 2012. See Action 37.1 (April 2010, updated 8 July 2011): *Liberia: Ensure justice in the case of Ruth Berry Peal who was forcibly subjected to FGM*,⁵ and Action 37.2 (26 June 2012, updated 12 March 2013, 25 March 2015, 27 April 2016, 27 July 2016, and 9 May 2017): *Liberia: Enact a law banning FGM as a matter of urgency*.⁶

In January 2010, Ms. Ruth Berry Peal, a wife, mother, and a member of the Kru Tribe, a community that does not practice FGM, had an argument with two women from the Gola ethnic group and was summoned by the Gola Chief who ruled that she undergo FGM by the Sande society. The following day, Ms. Peal was forcibly taken from her home to the “bush” where she was genitally mutilated in an initiation ritual, was forced to take an oath of secrecy and was threatened with death if she broke the oath. She was kept in the “bush” for one month and developed health complications, which required three months of treatment following her release.

Ms. Peal filed a lawsuit against the women who forcibly mutilated her. However, because she exposed their practice, Ms. Peal along with her husband and children received threats from the Gola community and the Zoes of the Sande (the traditional chiefs who run the Sande schools and carry out FGM on the girls in attendance). The perpetrators were sentenced to three years’ imprisonment by the court for kidnapping, felonious restraint and theft of property. However, Equality Now is gravely concerned that it has been almost five years since the sentence was passed, and the government has still failed to arrest and jail the perpetrators.

In June 2011, Equality Now met with the Liberian Minister of Internal Affairs regarding Ms. Peal’s case and ending FGM in Liberia. During the meeting he indicated that he would stop the issuance of FGM permits to Zoes and would work with the Ministry of Justice to draft a law banning FGM. In November 2011, the government took steps towards ending FGM by persuading Sande leaders to suspend all Sande activities and condemned all forms of forcible initiation into the Sande. A ceremony to mark the event took place in the presence of the then Liberian President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf. Subsequently in January 2013, the Ministry of Internal Affairs issued a notice to all counties directing that all Sande activities be shut down and underlined that violators would be held liable. This action was further reinforced by a second General Circular released in June 2014, which suspended all Sande and Poro (the male secret society) activities for ninety days while their licenses and registration were under review and reaffirmed the General Circular No. 12 of January 15, 2013 prohibiting the induction of any person into a “cultural practice or traditional ritual” without supervision by the Ministry of Internal Affairs.

Despite the alleged ban on Sande activities, according to Equality Now’s partners, Sande activities including FGM continue to be carried out with impunity, thereby undermining efforts towards the total elimination of FGM. Although the government has not officially reinstated the issuance of permits, Equality Now’s partners confirm that the permits are being issued underground. On 31 March 2017, 16-year-old Zaye Doe died after being taken into the “bush” in Liberia’s Tappita area to be subjected to FGM by members of the Sande Society. The Zoes forced Zaye and a friend to undergo this human rights violation as punishment for allegedly using abusive language during an argument. According to community rules, abusive language is prohibited. Though Zaye died, the

⁵ Equality Now, Action 37.1 (April 2010, updated 8 July 2011): *Liberia: Ensure justice in the case of Ruth Berry Peal who was forcibly subjected to FGM*, available at www.equalitynow.org/take_action/fgm_action371

⁶ Equality Now, Action 37.2 (26 June 2012, updated 12 March 2013, 25 March 2015, 27 April 2016, 27 July 2016 and 9 May 2017): *Liberia: Enact a law banning FGM as a matter of urgency*, available at <https://www.equalitynow.org/action-alerts/liberia-enact-law-banning-fgm-matter-urgency>

Zoes further subjected 25 more girls to FGM in April 2017. Zaye's parents filed a lawsuit against the lead Zoe and her three associates, but they were pressured to withdraw the case and settle it in the traditional way. Due to the hostility from the community, the family wanted to relocate but unfortunately there were no institutions that could facilitate the relocation and provide witness protection. Hence the family did not pursue the case further.

These cases of forced FGM have not yet resulted in the government passing a permanent ban on the practice. In September 2015, at the '*Global Leaders' Meeting on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment – A Commitment to Action*' at the UN, the then President, her Excellency Ellen Johnson Sirleaf committed to "submit[ting] laws... to ensure the abolition, the enforcement of the ban on female genital mutilation."⁷ In furtherance of this commitment, in 2016, the government proposed to address FGM as part of a domestic violence bill that was weak and had ineffective penalties against the perpetrators. Though the proposed law was weak, the Senate refused to consider passing the domestic violence law unless the provisions regarding FGM were removed all together. (CCPR/C/LBR/1, ¶31). Accordingly, the domestic violence bill was passed by the Legislature in July 2016, without any provision to ban FGM.

In her last week in office, on 19 January 2018, then President Sirleaf passed Executive Order No. 92 on Domestic Violence.⁸ The Executive Order makes it a criminal offense to perform FGM "on a person under the age of eighteen (18) or a person eighteen (18) years old or over without their consent". A penalty of a fine or imprisonment not exceeding one year is prescribed under the law. As drafted, it appears that consent is irrelevant when FGM is performed on a person under the age of 18, though FGM is permitted to be performed on girls over 18 with their consent. However, the legal provisions are not very clear, and the permanent ban that ought to be issued as a follow-up to the Executive Order should clearly state that the consent of the victim is irrelevant in establishing the offence, whether the person is under or over the age of 18. If consent is included for girls under the age of 18, this would effectively negate the criminalization of FGM and provides a legal loophole for parents or legal guardians to grant consent on behalf of their minor daughters. It would legitimize the practice and leave girls under the age of 18 – the age group with the highest risk in Liberia – unprotected. Even for women over the age of 18, consent should not be allowed to validate a human rights violation. It is important for the government of Liberia to clarify this issue. Additionally, the Executive Order is only valid for a temporary period of 1 year. Past experience has shown that temporary bans on FGM have proven to be ineffective (Liberia has passed two previous temporary bans in 2012 and September 2014).

We welcome the Committee's List of Issues which asked Liberia to provide information on the measures taken to eradicate female genital mutilation, including the "current status of legislative efforts to criminalize female genital mutilation". (CCPR/C/LBR/Q/1, ¶10). The Committee also asks Liberia about the measures taken to enforce existing criminal laws against the secret societies, to protect survivors, victims and their families who seek legal remedies from threats and reprisals, and to limit the influence of secret societies. (CCPR/C/LBR/Q/1, ¶10). As we noted in both the cases of Ms. Peal and Ms. Zaye mentioned above, the acts of forced FGM were carried out by secret societies and the victims and their families faced threats and reprisals when they took legal action, without receiving any protection from the government. We urge the Committee to ask the State to provide

⁷ <http://webtv.un.org/watch/part-1-gender-equality-and-womens-empowerment-a-commitment-to-action/4513884127001>

⁸ See note 1.

this information without delay, and also to take effective measures to protect the victims and their families in such cases.

Equality Now views the Executive Order as a step forward in criminalizing FGM. We are, however, concerned, as noted above, by the legal loopholes and limitations that the Order presents, that must be addressed to ensure all girls and women are protected. The Executive Order can only be applied against family members of the victim, rather than community members perpetrating FGM as in Ms. Peal and Ms. Zaye's cases (given that the FGM offense has been included within the scope of domestic violence). The Executive Order also requires proof of lack of consent. No one however, can consent to being subjected to a human rights violation, including FGM, and this should be clear in any law. This is especially problematic given strong societal pressures, particularly in the context of the secret societies. In its report to the Committee, Liberia maintained that it was "firmly committed" to eradicating traditional practices that are harmful to women and girls, including FGM. (CCPR/C/LBR/1, ¶31). We urge the Committee to encourage the State to stand by its commitment, and extend the criminalization of FGM by taking strong, comprehensive legislative action, which is permanent and universal in nature and which addresses the loopholes / uncertainties in the Executive Order, without delay to combat this severe form of sexual, physical and gendered violence. We also urge the Committee to encourage Liberia to, in addition to taking legislative action, take other measures towards eradicating FGM.

Discriminatory Nationality Law

Although the Liberian Constitution provides that either parent can pass nationality to their children, the nationality law itself restricts this. Section 20.1(b) of the Aliens and Nationality Law: Part III, Nationality and Naturalization 1973-1974 discriminates on the basis of sex. The provision states: "The following shall be citizens of Liberia at birth: ... A person born outside Liberia whose father (i) was born a citizen of Liberia; (ii) was a citizen of Liberia at the time of the birth of such child, and (iii) had resided in Liberia prior to the birth of such child." In effect, Liberian women cannot pass on their Liberian citizenship to their children who are born abroad, regardless of whether their children are born in or out of wedlock. Fathers, however, can pass on their Liberian citizenship to children born both in Liberia and abroad.⁹

This distinction discriminates against women. This not only denies equality to women and men, but can also result in severe consequences for children such as statelessness, risk of deportation, and lack of access to publicly funded education, health and social benefits and economic opportunities. The government of Liberia in its report to the Committee notes the right of both men and women under the Liberian Constitution to transmit their nationality to their children. However, the government fails to clarify how the contradictory provision of the Aliens and Nationality Law is enforced in practice. According to the government of Liberia, "There has been some misunderstanding of the enjoyment of this right misapplied in the Alien and Nationality Law. To deal with this misconception, the Liberian Bureau of Immigration and Naturalization (BIN) has embarked on the drafting of a new Alien and Nationality Law consistent with the 1[9]86 Constitution and

⁹ See Equality Now's *Ending Sex Discrimination in Nationality and Citizenship Laws*, (2016), available at https://www.equalitynow.org/sites/default/files/NationalityReport_EN.pdf and progress noted at <https://www.equalitynow.org/nationality-laws-progress> Equality Now is also a founding steering committee member of the Global Campaign for Equal Nationality Rights, a coalition of non-governmental organizations and UN agencies, which aims to eliminate gender discrimination in nationality laws. See www.equalnationalityrights.org

obligations undertaken to reform the nationality laws to prevent statelessness.” (CCPR/C/LBR/1, ¶161).

In the Committee’s List of Issues, the Committee requested Liberia to provide “information on article 20(1)(b) of the Alien and Nationality Law of 1973, which permits only fathers to pass on Liberian citizenship to children born outside the country, and indicate any measures taken to ensure that women can transmit Liberian nationality on an equal footing, including plans to revise that law”. (CCPR/C/LBR/Q/1, ¶9). While we appreciate the commitment of the Liberian government to reform the nationality laws, it has yet to do so despite making similar commitments as far back as 2011. The CEDAW Committee, in its Concluding Observations on the seventh and eighth periodic reports of Liberia in 2015, had also recommended that the State repeal the discriminatory provisions in its nationality law. Liberia is yet to implement this recommendation.

We urge the Committee to encourage Liberia to ensure that the Aliens and Nationality Law is effectively amended without delay, and that the current non-discriminatory provisions of the Constitution are respected and enforced by the relevant administrative authorities, in line with Liberia’s obligations under international and regional laws including the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (the Maputo Protocol) and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child.

Trafficking for the purposes of sexual exploitation

Liberia is a source, transit and destination country for women and girls trafficked for purposes of sexual exploitation. Although there is no specific national data on the extent and prevalence of sex trafficking, information gathered by civil society organizations working in this area supports the position that internal is more prevalent than transnational sex trafficking, where women and girls are trafficked within their communities, and from rural to urban and mining areas on the promise of better jobs and income but end up forced or coerced into the sex trade.

In a community focus group discussion in West Point held in 2017, Equality Now’s partner, LAFSO recorded systematic sex trafficking and sexual exploitation of girls. Comfort Gray, the Executive Director, noted that within that community it is common to find girls referring to an older lady as “Play Ma,” and the “Play Ma” referring to the girls as “Play daughters”.¹⁰ Through a complex network involving traffickers, “Play Mas”, and family members, girls from poor and marginalized homes are trafficked to West Point and lured into the homes of “Play Mas”, who initially treat them well to gain their trust and then sell them for sex. The girls are trapped in a life time of exploitation. LAFSO reports that this practice is common in many other communities in Liberia.

LAFSO also recorded anecdotal information of girls and young women who have been trafficked to a gold mine in Gbarpolu County initially to work as street vendors or domestic servants, but end up coerced into prostitution by their employers operating as pimps. Many are trapped and are unable to leave.

The Act to Ban Trafficking in Persons was passed in 2005, but sex trafficking continues to affect many women and girls in Liberia. The implementation of the Act is weak, resulting in the law having minimum impact in addressing human trafficking including sex trafficking. The United States Department of State’s 2017 Trafficking in Persons Report shows that although the Liberian

¹⁰ LAFSO Internal Report on the Situation of Sex Trafficking to Liberia, 2017

government is making efforts to address human trafficking, much more still needs to be done. For instance, the lack of convictions under the trafficking law means that traffickers continue to operate with impunity. In addition, although a number of sex trafficking victims were identified, the protection and support provided was inadequate. For instance, the government has one shelter for survivors of gender based violence that can also accommodate female victims of sex trafficking and had to rely on NGO shelters.

In the Committee's List of Issues, the Committee requested Liberia amongst other things, to provide further information about any efforts to effectively detect, prevent and investigate cases of trafficking and punish the perpetrators, particularly with respect to internal trafficking, and provide the specific data from the last five years on the number of complaints of human trafficking received, the investigations and prosecutions pursued, the convictions secured, the nature of the sentences imposed and the reparation and protection afforded to victims, disaggregated by internal and international trafficking. (CCPR/C/LBR/Q/1, ¶16).

In addition, we request that the Liberian government provides the data disaggregated by the four forms of trafficking as provided in the Palermo Protocol, i.e. "Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs."¹¹ We further request the Committee to seek clarification regarding the specific measures that the government has put in place address demand for trafficking for sexual exploitation in particular, and to empower women and girls in order to reduce vulnerabilities to sex trafficking and sexual exploitation.

Sexual and Gender-based Violence (SGBV)

According to the Investment Case for Reproductive, Maternal, Newborn, Child and Adolescent Health (RMNCAH), sexual and gender-based violence especially rape is a major issue in Liberia¹². This is despite the existing legislation (national and international legal instruments) that seeks to protect girls and women from sexual violence. According to the official statistics, adolescent girls are disproportionately affected; of the total cases received more than 90% of the cases were children from 6-17 years.¹³ During our visit in April 2017, we met with local partners LAFSO and West Point Women who expressed concern over the many cases of sexual violence. We note that most of these cases fall through the criminal justice system as once they are reported police hardly take any action or delay in taking action. This therefore means that crucial evidence is not collected. In one particular case that was brought to our attention by our partner LAFSO, an eight-year-old girl was raped on 13th December 2017 and it took the police almost two months to investigate and arrest the perpetrator. In yet another case a nine-year-old girl was raped by a fifty nine (59) year old man.¹⁴ Although the perpetrator was arrested, there have been efforts to tamper with this case.

We welcome the Committee's List of Issues, which apart from asking Liberia to provide detailed information on efforts to ensure effective enforcement of the Rape Law of 2005, specifically

¹¹ OHCHR, "Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons Especially Women and Children, Supplementing the United Nations Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime," *available at* <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/ProtocolTraffickingInPersons.aspx>.

¹² http://globalfinancingfacility.org/sites/gff_new/files/documents/Liberia%20RMNCAH%20Investment%20Case%202016%20-%202020.pdf

¹³ Ibid

¹⁴ <http://allafrica.com/stories/201801080015.html>

requested the government to address the activities and impact of Criminal Court E, including the sufficiency of its mandate, budget and resources. (CCPR/C/LBR/Q/1, ¶11). The establishment of the Criminal Court E that handles only SGBV cases is laudable. However, there is need to resource this court to ensure that access to justice is not delayed for victims of SGBV. We also noted that the lack of government funded shelters/safe spaces for girls who have been abused puts them in jeopardy as at times they are forced to remain in the same environment as their perpetrators. This is more so in cases where the perpetrator is a relative, a teacher or a neighbour.

Suggested Questions for Liberia

We respectfully urge the Committee to raise the following questions with the Liberian government regarding violations of the Covenant addressed in this letter:

FGM

- What are the government's plans and timeframe for enacting and enforcing a comprehensive law that permanently and universally prohibits FGM (even after the expiry of the Executive Order, and without requiring proof of lack of consent), guaranteeing the protection of women and girls at risk of undergoing FGM and ensuring that the suspension of Sande FGM activities is enforced?
- What policies are in place that will support awareness-raising and educational outreach to practicing communities and local traditional leaders (Zoes), in particular, on the harms of FGM?
- What are the government's plans for ensuring that all women and girls who are forcibly mutilated receive justice and protection?

Nationality

- What are the government's plans and timeframe to amend Section 20.1(b) in Part III of the Aliens and Nationality Law so that women can transfer their nationality on an equal basis with men? Could the government confirm that it will give its full support to ensure that the current Constitutional provision granting equal rights to women and men to transfer their nationality to their children is not weakened?

Sex Trafficking

- What resources has the government put in place to support the implementation of the 2014 – 2019 National Action Plan against Trafficking? How much of these resources if any are towards addressing sex trafficking and provision of direct support to victims? To what extent is the government collaborating with civil society organisations that provide direct support to victims of sex trafficking?
- Why was the Draft National Referral Mechanism not adopted by the Ministry of Labour in 2017? Are there any plans to ensure its adoption?
- What measures has the government put in place to ensure the registration of births as well as the protection of orphaned girls, who are at great risk of sex trafficking?
- What is the extent of the investigations regarding the middle man responsible for the

trafficking of 16 Liberian women into Lebanon in 2015? Why was the conviction of the suspect not upheld?

Suggested Recommendations

We also respectfully urge the Committee to make the following proposed recommendation to the Liberian government regarding violations of the Covenant addressed in this letter:

FGM

- Enact and enforce a comprehensive law that imposes a permanent and universal prohibition on FGM as soon as possible, guarantee the protection of women and girls at risk of undergoing FGM; and permanently suspend the issuance of Sande school licenses and ensure regulation of Sande schools.
- Clarify the scope of the Executive Order, particularly to ensure that consent is irrelevant when FGM is performed on persons under the age of 18. Ensure that a permanent ban on FGM does not create an exception for consent irrespective of age.
- Develop policies supporting awareness raising and educational outreach to practicing communities and local traditional leaders (Zoes), in particular, highlighting FGM as a human rights violation and on the harms of FGM.
- Ensure that all women and girls who are forcibly mutilated receive justice and protection.
- Empower local traditional leaders economically by supporting and transitioning them to alternative sources of income.

Nationality

- Repeal or amend Section 20.1(b) in Part III of the Aliens and Nationality Law so that women can transfer their nationality on an equal basis with men, and ensure that non-discriminatory provisions of the current Constitution are upheld by administrative authorities.

Sex Trafficking

- Provide adequate funding to the national institutions responsible for criminal investigations, including the National Taskforce on Trafficking, Victim protection services, women and children protection services of the Liberian National Police as well as train officials within these institutions on the gendered aspects of trafficking, especially sex trafficking.
- Strengthen the provisions of the Ban on Trafficking in Persons Act, i.e. ensure that it provides for specific provisions against sex trafficking and that sentences are commensurate to the offence for both adults and children, as well as its enforcement and implementation (through provision of resources for investigations and prosecutions of traffickers, capacity strengthening of law enforcement and increased collaboration with civil society organizations for sharing of information and potential cases).

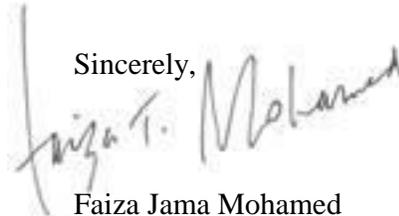
- Invest in reliable and comprehensive data collection and analysis mechanisms that will enable proper tracking and monitoring of sex trafficking, especially those of internal trafficking where limited information is available.

Sexual and Gender-based Violence

- Effectively enforce the legal provisions dealing with sexual and gender-based violence, including through providing adequate resources to Criminal Court E as well as the establishment of government-run shelters and safe places to protect and support survivors of all forms of SGBV.

Thank you very much for your kind attention, and please do not hesitate to contact us if we can provide further information.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Faiza T. Mohamed". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above the printed name.

Faiza Jama Mohamed
Director, Equality Now Africa Office