

December 7, 2023

## **A welcome Message from the Founder of Council of Liberian Experts in the Diaspora (COLED)**

2023 marked the 176<sup>th</sup> independence anniversary of our ancestral homeland, Liberia. In spite of its colossal mineral and natural resource endowments, its social-economic development is not in tandem with its age. The United Nations and other organizations that track economic development around the globe continue to characterize Liberia as one of the least developed countries as manifested by very high illiteracy rates, high infant mortality, food insecurity, low levels of manufacturing/industrialization, poor infrastructure, low life expectancy that is triggered by an abysmal healthcare delivery system as well as unemployment/underemployment rates that are astronomical. All of this has contributed to wide spread poverty in the country. In the same vein, external and internal shocks like our Civil War, the EBOLA Virus and COVID-19 have compounded, indeed, exacerbated the situation. Today, pipe borne water and electricity are inadequate to meet public and private demands; the educational system is dysfunctional for workforce development; poor road network and public transportation remain problematic for most citizens; agricultural activities are largely subsistence resulting in food insecurity; the public rather than the private sector remains the engine for growth; governance is abominable; the financial system does not promote robust savings and investment activities that are *sine qua non* for economic development; foreign investments create enclaves rather than linkages that promote industrialization via value additivity, and the health care delivery system is woefully deficient as the Ebola crisis revealed. Similar crises are continuously reported on social media among other outlets.

### **A pathway for transforming our ancestral homeland.**

The search for programs and policies to effectively address the problems referenced above has challenged policymakers for decades, and remain a preoccupation today. This creates an opportunity for Liberians in the diaspora to consider two options, namely, they can join the chorus of critics and lament the failures of government, previous and current, without offering concrete solutions to the problems that afflict their homeland or they can unite and embark on private sector initiatives as well as develop strategies for policymakers that will accelerate the socio-economic development of Liberia in ways that are sustainable. Like minded Liberians have decided to do the latter by forming an action/results oriented group called **Council of Liberian Experts in the Diaspora, Inc. (COLED)**.

## Our Vision

There are thousands of Liberian professionals like doctors, nurses, engineers, economists, bankers, lawyers, educators, dentists, computer experts, agriculturalists, accountants, auditors, law enforcement officers, public administrators, architects, pharmacists, geologists, and tourism experts among many others in the diaspora, the typical ***brain drain***. Our fundamental purpose is to identify Liberians with these requisite skill sets and create a data base of experts who are willing to use their capabilities to undertake and/or advise on private sector strategies that will revitalize the Liberian economy, ***a reverse brain drain***. Such a data base, indeed, ***Think Tank***, will be shared with the Liberian government as well as donor nations, multilateral organizations and aid agencies providing development assistance to Liberia with the proviso that Liberians in the diaspora are not only capable but are willing to become stakeholders in the socio-economic development of their ancestral homeland. We embark on this mission with a commitment to work assiduously with colleagues who reside in the Motherland to reverse the malaise that has plagued our homeland for so long. Simply put, our organization will energize and inspire Liberians as well as serve as the conduit via which they will contribute their quotas to Liberia's development efforts, indeed, ***its transformation to a modern society where healthcare, education, electricity, transportation, food security, clean water, justice, public safety, and financial services are not the privilege for a few but the right of all Liberians***. While others may assist, no one will do this for us but us. This is our ***purpose and challenge***. It is consistent with President John F. Kennedy's famous words "ask not what your country can do for you, ask what you can do for your country." in this spirit, I am delighted to welcome you to ***COLED***. Remember, " in union strong success is sure, we cannot fail." Let's continue working together today for a better Liberia tomorrow.

Sincerely,



Robert G. Sherman, Ph.D.

Founder, **COLED**