



STATE OF THE  
**AFRICAN  
DIASPORA**

# SOAD STATE NEWS

A GLOBAL STATE WITHOUT BORDERS NEWSLETTER  
March 2021 SOAD AND LIBERIA – A SPECIAL ISSUE



*George Weah, President of Liberia*



*D. Zeogar Wilson, Minister of Sports of Liberia*



*Chief Zanzan Karwor, Leader of the National Council of Chiefs and Elders of Liberia*



*Roland Goprou, Roving Ambassador of SOAD*

**CONTENT**

-Liberia, a Bridge Between Africa and Diaspora.....p.1

-SOAD Officially Recognised by the Republic Of Liberia.....p.2

-SOAD and the Kingdoms of Liberia Sign a Cooperation Agreement.....p.2

-Discover the Man Behind these Agreements : Mr Goprou, Ambassador of the Year 2020!.....p.3

-The Team with Mr Goprou.....p.4

-Creating a Lumi City in Edina.....p.5

-The Program with Scholarships in Liberia.....p.6

-SOAD, Liberia and the Panafrican Bicycle Tour .....p.7

-The Panafrican Olympiads in Liberia.....p.8

-Interview with Thomas Kojo, SOAD Minister of Sports.....p.9

-SOAD, Liberia, Legacy and Restitution.....p.10

**Liberia, a Bridge Between Africa and Diaspora**



When slavery was gradually abolished in the United States, a new debate emerged about the future of the former slaves. Created by a group of people including Robert Finley, a clergyman whose family was coming from Scotland, the Society for the Colonization of Free People of Color of America was campaigning to help former slaves to go back to Africa. The organisation received support from abolitionists, who sincerely wanted to help the people of color to relocate, and from racist people, who did not want these free black people to remain in America, especially as they were a source of potential rebellion for those who were still slaves.

The Society bought some land on the west coast of Africa, and between 1821 and 1847, a few thousand African people from the United States, and a smaller number from the Caribbean Islands, migrated towards this place : it was the beginning of Liberia. A private property of the Society, it became an independant state in 1847, the first independant Republic in Africa, and was recognized by the United States in 1862.

Since then, in spite of all its challenges, Liberia always remained a bridge between Africa and the Diaspora. And today, the State of the African Diaspora is very glad to reinforce this historical connection.



### **SOAD Officially Recognised by the Republic of Liberia**



On May 18th 2020, Dr Louis-Georges Tin signed a Cooperation agreement with Liberia. In Article 2, it stated clearly : « The Republic of Liberia recognizes the State of the African Diaspora and the essential contribution of the Diaspora to Africa. » The decision was made unanimously by the Council of Ministers of Liberia, and signed by the Deputy Minister for International Cooperation, Hon. Abraham K. Korvah Sr.

Coming after the Cooperation Agreements signed with Mauritania, Somalia, the Maroon States, the Quilombos and a few other peoples, this was a very important step towards the building of a Panafrican Nation.

The Prime Minister of the SOAD, Dr Louis-Georges Tin, declared :

*“I would like to thank President Weah and the Government of Liberia for this great honour. They are preparing the future not only of Liberia, but of Africa and we want to bring all our energy to support the people. We have different programs of cooperation we will implement in the country about economy, education, culture, etc. Africa and Diaspora working hand-in-hand : that is Pan-africanism in action !”*



*Mr Goprou, Roving Ambassador of SOAD, in the  
Ministry of Foreign Affairs,*

### **SOAD and the Kingdoms of Liberia Sign a Cooperation Agreement**



*Chief Zanzan Karwor*

On March 1st 2021, a Cooperation Agreement was signed between the State of the African Diaspora, represented by Prime Minister Dr Louis-Georges Tin, and the National Council of Chiefs and Elders of Liberia, represented by Chief Zanzan Karwor. Mr Goprou, Roving Ambassador of SOAD, was instrumental in facilitating this agreement.



The Cooperation Agreement included 6 main sections. The 1st section is about diplomacy, as « the State of the African Diaspora and the National Council of Chiefs and Elders of Liberia recognize officially each other ».

The 2<sup>nd</sup> Section is about Membership, as the « citizens of the State of the African Diaspora will have the option to become members of the traditional communities of Liberia », and they can get their Kingdom membership card, which is a great act towards repatriation.

That is exactly the topic of the 3rd Section of the Agreement, which refers to the Decade of Great Return, 2020-2030 decreed by the SOAD. That is why « the traditional communities are willing to invite certain number of returnees from the Diaspora, who will be welcomed by the authorities in a ceremony, and will have the opportunity to invest in the traditional communities. »

The 4th Section is about the Royal Chamber of SOAD as Chief Zanzan Karwor has accepted to be a Member of this organisation.

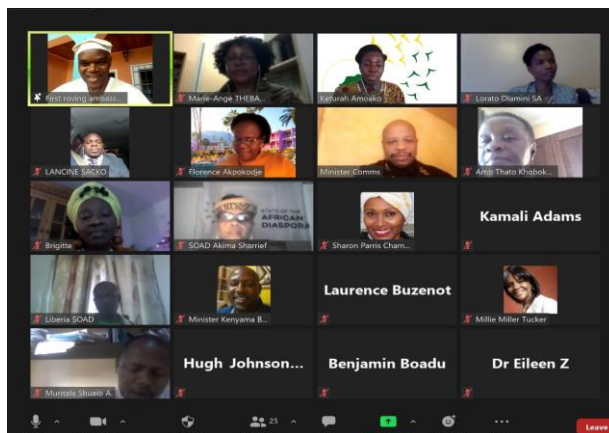
Section 5 is an opportunity for cooperation in terms of Agribusiness. The farmers of the Kingdoms will have access to the Panafrikan Agribusiness Commodity Exchange.

In Section 6, « the Council gives a mandate to the State of the African Diaspora to discuss with any public or private entity detaining African artefacts, and to return them to the continent. »

After signing the Cooperation Agreement, the Prime Minister of SOAD declared : « I can only praise His and

Excellency's vision. Chief Zanzan Karwor is truly a Panafrikan leader, and thanks to him, Africans from the continent and from the Diaspora will be able to advance and develop together. »

**Discover the Man behind these Agreements :  
Mr Goprou, Ambassador of the Year 2020 !**



On February 18th 2021, during the meeting with the SOAD Ambassadors, the Prime Minister made an announcement : « After consulting the two Vice Prime Ministers, who both agreed with this idea, I have decided to nominate His Excellency Roland Goprou as the **Ambassador of the Year 2020**. »

This designation was no surprise for the people who know the Roving Ambassador. Mr Goprou was the first Ambassador nominated by the Prime Minister. He was already in Mauritania with Dr Tin, for the launching of SOAD during the Summit of the African Union, in June and July 2018, when very few people believed the State of the African Diaspora could become real. But he never had any doubt and his contribution proved to be crucial for the official launching of SOAD.

In June 2020, in an interview that Mr Goprou gave, he declared : « the creation of the State of the African Diaspora is a spiritual event. It cannot be understood from a human perspective. »

Being from Ivory Coast, Mr Goprou who used to be the Mayor of the City of Gagnoa, travelled extensively as a Roving Ambassador. He established himself in the Mano



River Union in general, and in Liberia in particular. From there, he continued to work endlessly : he met with several authorities, Kings, Ministers, Governors, business people, local farmers, etc.

In 2020, the President of Liberia, His Excellency George Weah, officially decided to recognize the State of the African Diaspora. Mr Goprou was obviously the man behind the Cooperation Agreement that was signed between Liberia and SOAD. It was also thanks to Mr Goprou, that another Cooperation Agreement was signed between SOAD and the National Council of Chiefs and Elders of Liberia, represented by Chief Zanzan Karwor.



*Mr Goprou, receiving his nomination as an Ambassador, during the Summit of the African Union (July 2018)*



*Mr Goprou on the ground, working with the people in the village*

### **The Team with Mr Goprou**

The achievements of SOAD in Liberia are obviously a collective endeavour. Beyond Mr Goprou, SOAD Liberia includes about 15 people. Here are the main leaders of the team :



Mr. Moses L. Soribah, Magistrate, Director of the Judicial Training Institute of Liberia, has worked many years as a Magistrate and Project Manager with international institutions. Mr Soribah has extensive experience in administrative and judicial case management. He is an Ambassador for SOAD.



Denise Karwa, an agricultural technician within SOAD Liberia, is in charge of the four countries of the Mano River (Liberia, Sierra Leone, Ivory Coast, Guinea). She serves at the Liberia Agricultural Research Center (CARI), where she is in charge for cocoa cultivation and palm oil. Her proven skills have led Ambassador Roland Goprou to appoint her to be part of SOAD Liberia.



A teacher by training, having held various administrative positions in the Ministry of National Education in Ivory Coast, M. Bertin Amissale was a teacher of English at university level, and then assistant director in charge of administration and finance. He has a proven experience in administrative, financial and human relations management, supported by his mastery of French and English, which makes him an indispensable collaborator with Mr Goprou, the roving ambassador.

## Creating a Lumi City in Edina



In 2020, Chief Zanzan Karwor, the leader of the National Council of Chiefs and Elders of Liberia, and the local authorities of the city of Edina decided to grant some land to the State of the African Diaspora, so that SOAD could build in Edina a smart city, what we call a Lumi City, as it will be financed by our currency, the Lumi.

Edina was not proposed to SOAD by chance. The city has a long history related to the African Diaspora. In fact, this settlement was originally a colony of the American Colonization Society, founded in 1832. When the American slaves who became free returned to Africa, they did so via Edina. A school, then a church were established in the village. When the Constitution of Liberia was written in 1839, Edina was mentioned as one of the first founding communities. So Edina is indeed the symbol of repatriation. And repatriation is, of course, one of the main objectives of SOAD, which is the reason why it is the mission and portfolio of the first Vice Prime Minister, Keturah Amoako.



*Baptist Mission in Edina, circa 1840*



On November 30th, three SOAD Ambassadors, Mr. Goprou, Mr Soribah and Mr. Amissale, went to Edina. They met with the local authorities, including Mr Charles Benson, the City Inspector who led them to the place where three rivers join before pouring into the ocean : Saint John River, Saint Paul River, Farminton River. Mr Benson showed them the place where the freed slaves first arrived, when they came back to Africa, and he also showed them the 50 000 acres that is granted to SOAD to build the Lumi City in Edina.



Mr Soribah, Mr Goprou and Mr Amissale, Ambassadors of SOAD, visiting Edina

At that time, Mr Goprou phoned the Prime Minister of SOAD to make a report about the trip to Edina and the expanse of the land given to the Diaspora. Dr Tin then made a statement and a commitment :

*« We are humbled by this gift, which is indeed a material, but also a spiritual donation. We want to thank the authorities of Edina who are so generous to us. We recognize the place where repatriation started as a sacred place. We will build a memorial in Edina, as a tribute to our ancestors, who paved the way, and as an encouragement to the others to follow the path in the future. Also, this legacy has to be revived every year, as the Panafrican Bicycle Tour will go each year from the Diaspora back to Africa, starting in 2022. Liberia will be the first stage in Africa, and Edina will be the first stage in Liberia. It will be an active commemoration of the journey of our ancestors, back to Africa. »*

### The Program with Scholarships in Liberia



Samuel Mathey is an advisor to the Prime Minister of SOAD. CEO of the FAFEDE Foundation, he is working to train students to become entrepreneurs, as explained in the previous issue of the newsletter about trade. This initiative is a program for scholarships, or let us say, reversed scholarships : teachers of African Descent will teach to students in the Diaspora or in the continent ; our young generations and their projects will be funded by SOAD. Thousand of students in many countries have already had the opportunity to benefit from this program.

Liberia is one of the countries where the program will be implemented : 1000 students will benefit from this initiative in the country. The Ministry of foreign affairs has already made a distribution list to see, in each university and in each faculty, how many students are going to be involved. These students will be invited also to work on the projects related to the the Lumi Cities and the Panafrican Agribusiness Commodity Exchange, that will operate in many countries including Liberia.



The Prime Minister stated :

*« As members of the State of the African Diaspora, we are glad to promote our Panafrikan youth. To promote our youth is to promote ourselves, and to promote our future ».*

### **SOAD, Liberia and the Panafrikan Bicycle Tour**



On March 3rd 2021, the Prime Minister of the State of the African Diaspora received an official letter from the Minister of Sports of Liberia, His Excellency D. Zeogar Wilson. The letter was written as follows :

*« Dear Dr Tin*

*I present compliments and wish to recall that, on May 18, 2020, the Republic of Liberia signed a Cooperation Agreement with the State of the African Diaspora.*

*In furtherance thereof, for and on behalf of the Ministry of Youth and Sports of the Republic of Liberia, I request the partnership of the State of the African Diaspora (SOAD) to organize one stage of the Panafrikan Bicycle Tour in Liberia ».*

The Panafrikan Bicycle Tour is an event that will happen in August 2022. It is a round-the-world bicycle tour. It is part of a PanAfrican logic and aims to cross the Diaspora and Africa, therefore the whole world, in 15 stages. The Tour will cross sumptuous landscapes, such as the Andes, and also cultural and historical heritage sites connected to slavery. The participants will ride from the Diaspora back to Africa.

Liberia will be the first stage in Africa, and Edina will be the first stage in Liberia. As a matter of fact, Liberia in general, and Edina in particular are the symbol of repatriation, which is the essence and the significance of the Panafrikan Bicycle Tour. When the slaves became free and came back to Africa, they arrived to Edina. That is why the first stage of the Panafrikan Tour in Africa is in Edina and the arrival of this stage will be in Monrovia, the capital of the country.

The State of the African Diaspora wants to thank the President of Liberia, His Excellency George Weah, as well as the Minister of Sports, His Excellency D. Zeogar Wilson, for their truly Panafrikan vision which will reinforce Africa through the Diaspora, and the Diaspora through Africa. The Government of SOAD also wants to congratulate His Excellency Thomas Kojo, Minister of Sports of SOAD, His Excellency Roland Goprou, Ambassador of the Year 2020, and all the team on the ground in Liberia for their efforts and achievements.

The Prime Minister wants to thank particularly Mr Saah Roberts, the President of the Liberia National Cycling Association, who sent a very strong letter of support to SOAD on February 9th 2021 :

*« I Saah Roberts, President of Liberia National Cycling Association, it is with great pleasure that I am writing this letter in support of the Panafrikan Bicycle Tour, organized by the State of the African Diaspora (SOAD). I consider it a privilege to join your team. »*

The Prime Minister of SOAD in his response said :

*« Dear Saah Roberts, it is a privilege for us to have the opportunity to create this connection between Africa and the Diaspora thanks to you. This sport programme is also a spiritual process ».*





### **The Panafrican Olympiads**

On March 2021, the Prime Minister of SOAD received another letter from the Minister of Sports of Liberia, as can be seen below. The letter was requesting the State of the African Diaspora « to organize the Panafrican Games in Liberia ».

March 2, 2021

Dr. Louis-Georges Tin  
**PRIME MINISTER**  
State of the African Diaspora  
Paris, France

Dear Dr. Tin:

I present compliments and wish to recall that on May 18, 2020, the Republic of Liberia signed a Cooperation Agreement with the State of the African Diaspora.

In furtherance thereof, for and on behalf of the Ministry of Youth and Sports of the Republic of Liberia, I request the partnership of the State of the African Diaspora (SOAD) to organize and host the Panafrican Games in Liberia.

Meanwhile, we look forward to a cordial working relationship in the premise.

Sincerely,

  
D. Zeogor Wilson  
**MINISTER**

The Greeks invented the Olympic Games. The Anglophones nations have the Commonwealth Games. Recently, the Games of la Francophonie were created. That is why the State of the African Diaspora is launching the Panafrican Games, which are our Panafrican Olympiads. Whether from the African continent or from the diaspora, our athletes will compete in the disciplines they excel, from African wrestling to capoeira, through basketball, football, boxing, drums or urban dance battles. These Panafrican Games will highlight the physical and cultural aspects of our Panafrican Communities.

The Panafrican Games are aimed at promoting the culture of Panafrican countries. That is why beyond traditional sports, like football or long jump, this competition seeks to promote

traditional practices such as capoeira or the African high jump. Intellectual and strategic disciplines such as Awèlè will also be integrated. The games will also include practices beyond sport, which contribute to physical and artistic expression, and are an integral part of the Pan-African heritage, be it percussion groups, that exist around the world (from the djembe to the steel band, to the batucas), or the street dance battles, which come from African American urban young people in the United States. The history of these physical and cultural practices will be shared on the occasion of these Panafrican Olympiads.



The Panafrican Olympiads are also intended to promote the memory of sport and athletes linked to the Panafrican world. Indeed, Africans and Afro-descendants have had to fight both on the sportsground and on the political field to achieve their emancipation - these fights are closely linked. The Panafrican Games will therefore aim to honor these figures, some of whom are illustrious, while others have been unjustly forgotten. In the promotional campaigns of the Games, documentary stickers will be shown to the public, and especially to the youngest, to highlight the contribution of the Panafrican athletes to the sporting, political and moral values that must be celebrated, to put all this history in perspective, and to open new avenues for the Panafrican youth.





*1936, Champion Jesse Owens challenges Hitler and white supremacist theories*

So, the first Panafrican Olympiads will happen in August 2023, in Liberia. Liberia was chosen for many reasons, one of them being, in particular, the fact that the President of Liberia, His Excellency George Weah, was a great footballer, and won the Golden Ball in 1995. So, Liberia, the first independent Republic in Africa, the symbol of repatriation, and a country headed by a world class sportsman is really, for the Panafrican Olympiads, *the place to be*.



*George Weah, 1995*

### **An Interview with Mr Thomas Kojo, Our SOAD Minister of Sports, from**



**Q-Excellency, you are the Minister of Sports of SOAD. You are also very close to President Weah. Could you tell us a little bit about your background ?**

My name is Thomas Sebwe Kojo, My father name is Bonziedu Kojo and my mother name is Theresa Kojo. I have four sisters and one brother. I grew up in Monrovia. While I was growing up, I started playing soccer at an early age. My interest in the game of soccer got me to play in the third division league up to the first division league as the years went by. I played for the senior national team with our President, George Manneh Weah. I was fortunate to travel to France during Liberia civil crisis. Then I played for Liberia, for the USA, for the Athinaikos Football club in Greece. After a few years, I was selected to play for the Liberia national team. Then I got involved in coaching. After two years I was appointed as head coach of the Senior National team, and now I am the Director of Sports in Liberia and Minister of Sports of SOAD.

**Q -You have discussed with the Minister of Sports of Liberia, and he has accepted to host one stage of the Panafrican Bicycle Tour in Liberia. How did it happen, and what does this initiative represent for you ?**



I discussed with him, and he accepted our Panafrican project. The initiative means a whole lot to me because this will be the first time that, through the effort of SOAD, Liberia will be hosting such a historical event.

**Q -The Panafrican Games, or Panafrican Olympiads, is another event that will happen in Liberia, August 2023. The initiative is supported by the Minister of Sports of Liberia and by President Weah himself. Why is it important for Liberia ?**

The Panafrican Games are important for Liberia, because it will be a historical event, it will be the first time ever, and it will be in Liberia. But also, it is important for us because people from all over Africa and the Diaspora will be coming to see Liberia and to participate in the games.

**Q-Originally, black people were excluded from sports. In fact, modern sports institutions were created by the Frenchman, Pierre de Coubertin, to support his vision of white supremacy. However, black people fought very hard, and now, they are number 1 in sports and everybody has even forgotten these discriminations, that still exist, however. But whether people like it or not, we have become n°1 in sports. How can that help us to be number 1 in all the other sectors ?**

-If we want African people to be number 1 in all other sectors, we have to empower our people in all aspects of life. We have to reinforce the process of educating Black people, and people will see that it is not only through sports and music that we can be number 1. Black young people need to see that we can be whatever we want to be. Black people can produce the best doctors, the best engineers, the best financial experts and be the best in many other sectors.

**Q -How do you see your ministry in SOAD, and what are your other programs ?**

Firstly, it is a privilege and an opportunity for me to serve in this position. I see my Ministry as a very important ministry, because sports play a major role in every society. Other programmes that will be included are about empowering of youth through formal education, vocational education and youth career training in the area of sports. Education is the key.

### **SOAD, Liberia, Legacy and Restitution**



*This "helmet mask," made of wood and tar, dates to the early 20th century and is currently in the collection of the Brooklyn Museum, in New York. Taken from Liberia.*

95 % of the African classical legacy is out of Africa. It is in United Kingdom, in France, in Germany, in Spain, in Italy, in the Vatican, in Switzerland, in the United States, everywhere, but in Africa. People were killed during these colonial massacres, and then, these artefacts were stolen. In the Tervuren Museum, only, located in Brussels, more than 180 000 African artefacts are detained. Most of them are coming from Congo, where between 6 and 12 millions people were killed under King Leopold, not to mention all the African men, women and even children, whose hands were cut off when they did not work hard enough, according to the standards of the colons.

That is why Dr Tin launched a campaign for restitution. It is a matter of human rights, of cultural heritage, of African dignity, of spiritual integrity and even of economic development, as it relates to tourism. Many achievements resulted from this initiative in France, in Belgium, in Senegal, in Benin, in Algeria, and including in the European Union, were a resolution was voted in 2019 after these lobbying efforts. According to this law, the European Parliament

7. Recalls that some Member States have taken steps toward meaningful and effective redress for

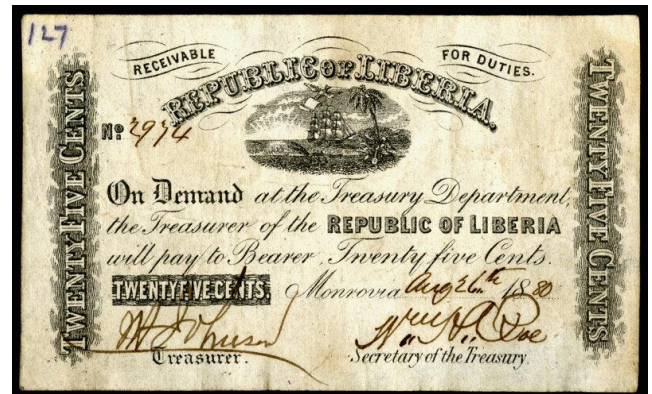


past injustices and crimes against humanity - bearing in mind their lasting impacts in the present - against people of African descent;

8. Calls for the EU institutions and the remainder of the Member States to follow this example, which may include some form of reparations such as offering public apologies and the restitution of stolen artefacts to their countries of origin;

9. Calls on the Member States to declassify their colonial archives;

[https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/B-8-2019-0212\\_EN.html](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/B-8-2019-0212_EN.html)



*This Liberian 25 cent banknote, from 1880, is on display at the National Museum of American History. Before the note was found, it was not known that this denomination existed at all. Taken from Liberia.*

SOAD is currently discussing with the authorities of the European Parliament to implement the resolution.

Also, Felix Tshisekedi made a very strong statement, when he became the President of the African Union in February 2021, he said : « The objective is for member states, to obtain the restitution and repatriation of African works of art kept outside the continent ». Moreover, the State of the African Diaspora has received a mandate to operate on this topic on behalf of the Democratic Republic of Congo.

What about Liberia ? Of course, Liberia also has to get back its artefacts. Chief Zanzan Karwor and the National Council of Chiefs and Elders of Liberia, gave « a mandate to the State of the African Diaspora to discuss with any public or private entity detaining African artefacts, and to return them to the continent. »

SOAD is now waiting for the support that is requested from the Minister of Culture and Tourism of Liberia. Dr Tin is hoping to receive soon a mandate for restitution, and then to be able to work for the return of the artefacts stolen from Liberia. Being the country of repatriation for deported African people, Liberia needs also to become the country of repatriation for deported African artefacts.



*This wooden figure, on display in the Ethnological Museum in Berlin, shows Zan, a wife of the Krai chief. Taken from Liberia.*