

Liberia Media Laws Reform Symposium kicks off

Government officials, international participants and other key stakeholders yesterday, 17 January 2013, gathered at Monrovia's Mamba Point Hotel to participate in Liberia's first Media Law Reform Roundtable.

Under the theme 'Charting the Way Forward for a Better Liberia', the participants will review and urge lawmakers to adopt three media reform bills pending before Legislature: the Public Broadcaster, the Community Radio Sustainability and the National Media Regulator.

Lewis Browne, Liberia's information minister, has been invited to open the symposium - organised by the Center for Media Studies and Peacebuilding (CEMESP), in partnership with the Press Union of Liberia (PUL), and the Liberia Media Center (LMC), under the sponsorship of UNESCO and IREX/USAID.

Organisers say the forum will help to assess current impediments to progress in adopting urgently needed media laws, while analysing the experiences of neighbouring countries to chart the right course for Liberia.

"Sierra Leone and Ghana are countries where media laws and reforms have had success or setbacks, so we will be learning from their respective experiences and inputs, and ensure that Liberia chooses the right path", said Malcolm Joseph, CEMESP's executive director.

He added that he is planning on presenting an historic 10-year perspective of the media law reform process that began in 2003 when the country's civil war ended. The roundtable will also include working sessions between national officials and media law reforms' activists to generate an advocacy strategy that can help ensure the passage of the legislative acts and their effective implementation.

The organisers anticipate that enactment of the media laws will greatly boost the output of Liberia's media, with cascading effects that can transform the country and enhance democracy. In 2010, Liberia became the first West African country to adopt the Freedom of Information Act, and in 2012, the government adopted the Table Mountain Declaration, which aims at decriminalising libel and defamation laws.

Source: [allAfrica](#)