



**Statement Delivered by Josiah F. Joekai, Jr., Director-General of the
Civil Service Agency, at the Regular
Press Briefing of the Ministry of Information, Cultural Affairs and Tourism (MICAT)**

Hon. Jerelimick M. Piah, Minister of Information, Cultural Affairs, and Tourism
**Hon. Darlington A. P. Smith, Deputy Director General for Human Resource Management
and Policy of the CSA**
Hon. Dahnu Mianyen., Deputy Director General for Administration of the CSA
Other Esteemed Officials of Government and Special Guests
Our Distinguished Fourth Estate
Ladies and Gentlemen

On behalf of the Civil Service Agency (CSA), I express sincere gratitude to Minister Jerelimick M. Piah and the entire leadership team of the Ministry of Information Cultural Affairs and Tourism for the opportunity to provide regular updates to the Liberians on ongoing reform efforts at the CSA.

Today, we are pleased to provide the public with major updates on the Personnel Action Notice (PAN) completion process, the 2021 Payroll Compliance Audit recommendations implementation, and the CSA's 100-Day Deliverables.

Since the CSA announced the requirement for individuals on the payroll to regularize their status by completing the Personnel Action Notices (PAN), we continue to receive calls and messages from individuals nationwide who have not complied with this key employment requirement. Many have expressed excitement and interest in regularizing their status in

order for the CSA to have a comprehensive employee data for each of them. In short, they are eager to regularize their status which is the right thing to do.

These employees are inquiring daily about the steps and procedures for the regularization process. This crucial exercise will enable the CSA to have accurate data for each employee with regards to their qualification and processing of pension and other benefits. Section 35 of the Civil Service Standing Orders of 2012 provides that Personnel Action Notices are processed for new employment, deletions, transfers and promotions. This vital legal framework clearly provides the roles of Spending Entities, as well as the steps, and procedures in completing the PAN. Unfortunately, this legally binding instrument has been consistently violated by my predecessors at the CSA thereby creating the problems we have today.

Notwithstanding, today I want to assure all civil servants affected by this situation that the problem is a shared responsibility, theirs alone. The CSA under my predecessors, and Ministries, Agencies, and Commissions take a bigger portion of the blame for not complying with this crucial employment requirement. In the same vein, the affected employees also shared a portion of the blame for failing to ask the relevant questions about their statuses, especially the incomplete nature of their PANs for those who initiated the process. In other words, there's no need to panic as the CSA is instituting the appropriate measures to ensure a smooth employee status regularization process.

- The 90-day period for the PAN completion process has been extended to 120 days, four months starting from April 2 to August 2, 2024. This will allow the CSA to deploy the required logistics and teams of analysts to work with the Human Resource Departments of Spending Entities to in bona fide employees to complete the PAN process.
- The CSA will produce jingles with relevant messages in English and local languages to adequately educate and inform our people on the entire PAN completion exercise and air the messages on national and local radio stations. We will also continue to work closely with the Ministry of Information, Cultural Affairs, and Tourism (MICAT) to provide regular updates on the exercise.

Towards this end, I am pleased to inform you that the Resident Representative of ECOWAS, Her Excellency Josephine Nkrumah has provided the CSA a golden opportunity to use the ECOWAS Radio Station to adequately educate and inform the public PAN completion process and other civil service reform activities. ECOWAS Radio's programs are aired on 17 local radio stations across the country. This is a big boost to this national effort for which the CSA is very grateful to ECOWAS for this vital support.

- In the coming days, the CSA will send a timeline to all the Spending Entities for the entire exercise detailing key activities with execution dates and assigned teams. The

timeline will aid Spending Entities, Human Resource Departments in particular to appropriately prepare themselves for the exercise.

Distinguished ladies and gentlemen of the press, a Public Sector Modernization Project (PSMP) was implemented by the CSA, the Ministry of Finance and Development Planning (MFDP), and a host of other Spending Entities over the last six years with the goal of instituting major reforms to ensure prudent public finance management. An integral part of the PSMP was the national payroll management and control system to ensure accountability and transparency in the usage of public funds to pay Government employees.

The CSA extends profound gratitude to development partners, especially the Government of the United States through USAID, the Swedish Government, the EU, and the World Bank Group for providing the much-needed funding supported to this vital project. Also, The CSA expresses gratitude to former President George Weah and his government for allowing the General Auditing Commission to conduct this comprehensive payroll compliance audit across the 103 Spending Entities.

In keeping with accountability and transparency, the General Auditing Commission (GAC) conducted a forensic payroll compliance audit from January 1, 2018, to December 31, 2021. The payroll audit uncovered alarming proportions of financial mismanagement, fraud, and waste in the as laid out in the Auditor General's findings and recommendations. The recommendations are divided into segments, with some requiring a multisectoral implementation approach and the majority needing simple and straightforward actions. Unfortunately, the Weah administration did not implement the Auditor General recommendations. Today, with immediate effect, the CSA is taking the following actions to implement the Auditor General's recommendations:

1. During the audit, the GAC observed that 122 (one hundred twenty-two) employees from across 20 ministries and agencies had shared bank accounts. There are two scenarios associated with this discrepancy. For the first scenario, one employee with the same name, same NIR number, and same date of birth is listed twice under two different entities with two positions but one bank account at a single bank. This is double dipping, meaning the employee alone is receiving two salaries. For the second scenario, two different individuals have the same bank account number, different positions, and are working in the same entity. These are ghost names representing ghost employees who are receiving payment for work not done. The government is losing US\$30,795.09 monthly.

The Auditor General recommends that these individuals illegally or fraudulently sharing bank account numbers be permanently removed from the payroll. In keeping with the Auditor General's recommendation, the CSA has placed a moratorium on all salary payments to the 122 individuals concerned for the month of April 2024, pending a

one-month verification. Failure to be verified during the stipulated period, the affected individuals will be permanently removed from the payroll as of May 2024.

- During the audit, the GAC observed that mobile money payments were made to 127 individuals whose names on the GSM registered mobile numbers were different from the names on the payroll. The government is losing \$US\$12,040.14 and LRD\$550,852.75 monthly. In other words, illegitimate individuals or personnel are being paid for services not performed.

In keeping with the Auditor General's recommendation, the CSA has placed a moratorium on all salary payments to the 127 individuals concerned for the month of April 2024, pending a one-month verification. Failure to be verified in April, the CSA will permanently remove the blocked affected individuals from the payroll as of May 2024.

- The GAC also observed that Nine Thousand Two Hundred Eighty-Seven (9,287) employees, representing 13.7% of employees' records 91 Spending Entities, were unavailable for physical verification. Payments are being to ghost employees, leading to fraud, waste, and misappropriation. In other words, illegitimate individuals or personnel paid for services not performed. The Auditor General recommends that individuals not verified within 90 (ninety) days that was in 2021, be permanently removed from the Government of Liberia's payroll. The government is losing US\$3,764,204.92 monthly as a direct result of this gross discrepancy.

Per the Auditor General's recommendation, the CSA has placed a moratorium on all salary payments to the 9,287 individuals concerned for April 2024, pending a one-month verification. If the verification is not completed in April, the CSA will permanently remove the blocked affected individuals from the payroll.

- It was observed by the GAC that Five Hundred Sixty-Four (564) employees across forty-seven (47) ministries and agencies did not have National Identification Numbers (NIN). The National Identification Number is a unique identifier for each government employee on the payroll. In the absence of an NIN, payments are being made to illegitimate or ghost employees. Therefore, the Auditor General Advised that individuals who do not provide a valid NIN within 90 (ninety) days of issuing the audit report should be permanently removed from the Government of Liberia payroll. The government is losing US\$310,714.93 monthly.

Per the Auditor General's recommendation, the CSA has placed a moratorium on all salary payments to the 564 individuals concerned for April 2024, pending a one-month verification. If the verification is not completed in April, the CSA will permanently remove the blocked affected individuals from the payroll as of May 2024.

- During the audit, the GAC observed that 166 persons who turned out for verification from 17 Spending Entities were suspected of impersonating as bona fide government employees. Payments are being made to ghost employees, thereby leading to fraud, waste, and misappropriation of public funds. The Auditor General recommends that suspicious Individuals established as illegitimate persons be removed from the payroll.

Per the Auditor General's recommendation, the CSA has placed a moratorium on all salary payments to the 166 individuals concerned for April 2024, pending a one-month verification. If the verification is not completed in April, we will permanently remove the blocked affected individuals from the payroll as May 2024.

Today, I want to assure everyone that the Government of Liberia, under the distinguished stewardship of His Excellency President Joseph Nyuma Boakai, Sr., is unwavering in its commitment to transparency, accountability, and good governance in public finance management. Therefore, the CSA is fully committed and dedicated to attaining the ARREST Agenda and will take all the necessary steps in accordance with the law to reform and professionalize the Public Service for improved performance and productivity.