

**Statement Delivered By
Cllr. Neto Zarzar Lighe, Sr.
Commissioner/CEO
Liberia Maritime Authority
At the 8th Annual Conference of the Association of African Maritime
Administrations (AAMA)**

The Acting Minister of State for Presidential Affairs and Chief of Office Staff of the President of Liberia, Hon. Samuel Stevquoah;

Honorable Members of the Committees on Maritime of the House of Representatives and Senate of the Legislature of Liberia;

Your Excellency Chairperson of the Association of African Maritime Administrations (AAMA);

Members of the Executive Council of AAMA;

Representatives of the International Maritime Organization (IMO);

Our guests of Honors: the Honorable Director General and CEO of the Nigeria Maritime Administration and Safety Agency (NIMASA), Dr. Dayo Mobereola and

Distinguished representatives of other international and subregional organizations present;

Members of the Diplomatic corps;

Officials of the government of Liberia present;

Distinguished Delegates;

Members of the Fourth Estate;

Ladies and gentlemen;

On behalf of the Liberia Maritime Authority and the government and people of the Republic of Liberia, it is my utmost pleasure to welcome you all to the Republic of Liberia. We are sincerely delighted to have you all in Liberia attending the 8th Annual Conference of the Association of African Maritime Administrations (AAMA). Despite our longstanding history in shipping and global maritime governance and leadership, this is the first time Liberia is hosting the annual meeting of a major regional or continental maritime organization or association. This speaks to how proud we are to have you visiting us in Liberia, and we are confident that your expertise and experience will greatly enrich the discussions and deliberations over the coming days.

We are gathering at a time when Africa's maritime sector is confronted with many challenges. These challenges include but not limited to piracy, geopolitical tensions, infrastructure deficits, environmental degradation and regulatory gaps. While these challenges are not insurmountable, what is clear is that they transcend national boundaries and no country can solitarily address them within its institutional and jurisdictional limits. They are shared challenges and addressing them requires us to pool together our resources, expertise and knowledge. AAMA provides the institutional framework for collaboration and cooperation in tackling our shared challenges as a continent and establishing Africa as an enviable maritime powerhouse.

Distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen, we are also gathered at a time when the roles of maritime administrations are increasingly evolving. In addition to their traditional functions of regulating the maritime sector by ensuring maritime safety, security and the protection of the marine environment, maritime administrations are now expected to be involved into other commercial and economic

sectors of the state. These include facilitating trade, fostering economic growth and partnering with the private sector to explore opportunities in many maritime business areas. At the Liberia Maritime Authority, we are graciously embracing the evolving trend and positioning ourself to meaningfully drive economic growth in Liberia.

The Liberia Maritime Authority is currently implementing a 5-year strategic plan that seeks to position the maritime sector of Liberia as a pathway to sustainable growth and development. The plan provides the roadmap for developing new business streams such as ship demolition and recycling, seafaring, bunkering, ecotourism, and expanding the domestic maritime sector. This plan also seeks to ensure a vibrant maritime sector by prioritizing the safety and security of our seaports, the jurisdictional waters of Liberia and other critical maritime infrastructures. For our private sector partners here present, we are looking forward to working with you in some of these new maritime investments through private-public partnerships and other mechanisms.

Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen; all this fits into the broader blue economy concept. Africa's blue economy holds immense potential for marine transport, trade, sustainable development, food security, job creation, renewable energy, marine transport, tourism, and climate resilience. To maximize the potentials of the blue economy, we must first address some of the challenges confronting the sector such as Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing, limited investment and limited capacity. The African Union has set the roadmap for exploiting the potential of Africa's blue economy sector through the Africa Blue Economy Strategy that aims to harness the continent's aquatic resources for sustainable development, addressing challenges while promoting socio-economic growth for Africa and its people. Because the blue economy is a relatively new concept that is still evolving, many African countries

are still determining the appropriate institutional structure for exploring its opportunities. While some countries have chosen to create separate ministries and departments for the blue economy, others, including Liberia, have chosen to incorporate it under existing ministries and agencies. These differences in approach highlight, in part, the need for a continental collaboration and coordination if Africa is to adequately harness its blue economy potential.

I believe AAMA, the Maritime Organization of West and Central Africa (MOWCA) and other continental and regional organizations should collaborate more with the AU on the maritime transport component of the blue economy. This is crucial and needs urgent attention.

Distinguished delegates and esteemed visitors, it is a privilege to host this meeting and to have you visiting us. I hope you will enjoy the hospitality of the people and culture of Liberia. Thank you for accepting to come to Liberia. I wish you a productive and enjoyable stay.

Once again, you are all welcome.

Thank You.