

# NEWS

## National Ports Authority and Georgia Ports Authority Roundtable Discussion

The management of the National Ports Authority of Liberia on Monday, December 12, 2016 played host to a visiting delegation from the Georgia Ports Authority (USA) at its corporate head quarters on Bushrod Island, Monrovia.

At an exhaustive forum tagged the "National Ports Authority and Georgia Ports Authority Sister Port Agreement Roundtable Discussion", appraisal issues on development and challenges within both entities were highlighted.

The Managing Director of the National Ports Authority, Mr. David Williams threw open the all important parley with a brief welcome remark followed by the introduction of guests and participating executives of the NPA.

The Georgia Ports Authority delegation was led by Madam Cynthia Blandford, Honorary



Mrs. David Williams

Counsel General, Republic of Liberia, State of Georgia and Mr. Bart Gobell, Director of Statewide Development and Governmental Affairs, while the executives of the NPA present at the interactive session were the Managing Director, Mr. David Williams, Mr. Barnabas Kasor, Executive Director, Ports and Harbors, Mr. Sekou Korleh, Executive Director, Government and International Affairs and Mrs. Ceceilia Cuffy Brown, Executive Director, Technical Services among others.

The Liberian media was not left out as several media houses were invited to cover the event. The discussions were seemingly segmented to pave way for incisiveness on a wide range of topical issues.

The first segment brought on Bart Gobell of the GPA and Barnabas Kasor of the NPA. The precursor to the Monday roundtable discussion was a working agreement signed in 2010 between both the Georgia Ports Authority (GPA) and the National Ports Authority (NPA) which culminated into a result driven synergy.

That agreement was revisited in 2012 and fine tuned for mutual benefits, followed by high level visits to Georgia by the NPA delegates.

Gobell in a captivating expose, spoke on the unique and advantageous position of the Georgia Ports Authority, particularly the Savannah Port, one of its many ports and how it could impact on the infrastructural and human resource development of the National Ports Authority.

According to the GPA executive, the Savannah Port specializes in the handling of containers, break-bulk, reefer, heavy lift and project cargoes. He noted that the GPA has invested in 3,200 dedicated refrigerated container spaces nearly 900,000 sq.ft. of cold storage near terminal and 40 percent of all U.S. containerized poultry exports move through the Port of Savannah. The Savannah Port was among the ten top U.S. container ports in 2015 and Gobell believes the NPA could leverage on the technical expertise of his entity.

Barnabas Kasor, the Executive Director of Ports and Harbors at the NPA presented a brilliant overview of the Liberian Authority with historical details, facts and figures. The NPA Executive brought to the fore, the numerous challenges militating against optimal capacity utilization in all the ports in Liberia.

The NPA Executive informed the visiting GPA team and the media that there are four concessionaires at the Freeport of Monrovia, namely: APM Terminal, Firestone, Western Cluster and the China Union, with the latter reducing its activities at the port due to internal consideration.

Kasor noted that the management of the NPA has made some note worthy strides in its attempt to restore the pre-war status of the Authority.

He specifically referred to the installation of navigational aids, construction of a modern oil jetty, reconstruction of internal roads and on-going land reclamation efforts.

Director Kasor threw light on the pier structure at the Freeport of Monrovia which includes the LMC pier, NIOC pier and the BMC pier. He also took time to reel out the cargo throughput figures from 2013 to mid 2016, which have fluctuated due to post-war realities.

He emphasized that several key projects are ongoing in the ports. At the Freeport of Monrovia, concentration is now on the extension of the marginal wharf by 200M. According to the ports and Harbors Boss, the current marginal wharf is 600M, which can only handle three main line vessels and has the propensity to slow down trade and commerce.

Another project underway at the Freeport is the construction of a bunkering station, which is geared towards providing more storage for fuel.

The Buchanan Port is also alive with projects. Attention is being given the waste Reception Facility and the extension of the fish quay. Kasor intimated that the NPA requires between three to four billion dollars to address its infrastructural inadequacies to enable the authority cope with competitive challenges.

After the first session of the discussion, the NPA boss, Mr. Williams and his executives took the visiting team and the media on a guided tour to catch a glimpse of some developments at the Port, which was followed by a sumptuous lunch sponsored by the NPA.

The synergy between the GPA and the NPA is expected to stimulate numerous opportunities for the two entities which would tap into the expertise of the GPA in the management of ports.

The benefits certainly will trickle down to the economy of Liberia as the working relationship between the two port authorities is seeking to develop a strategy to increase trade between Liberia and the United States with emphasis on improving the lot of the cocoa industry, paper products, rubber and food industries in Liberia.

The synergy is also looking at the possibility of joint funding opportunities that would strengthen the collaboration and spur the envisaged trade and commerce between Liberia and the United States.

The issue of future training program between the NPA/GPA is also being looked at, while an international port and trade steering committee is to be set up.



Cynthia Blandford

In a brief interaction with the media, Mr. Williams lauded the efforts of Cynthia Blandford in pushing the collaboration between the NPA and GPA and described the relationship as unique and timely. Madam Blandford for her part poured encomium on Mr. Williams and his team for taking the National Ports Authority to new heights in a very short time noting that when she paid a visit to the Freeport of Monrovia, a few years back, the Port was in a forlorn state.