**Press Statement for Immediate Release**

**Wednesday, August 10, 2022**

**‘Minister McGill’s Defense of Corruption Is Quite Revealing’, CENTAL Says**

 Distinguished ladies and gentlemen of the press, fellow Liberians, and development partners.

The attention of the Center for Transparency and Accountability in Liberia has been drawn to a video circulating on social media, in which the Minister of State for Presidential Affairs, Mr. Nathaniel McGill is seen defending acts of corruption. Why on a political engagement at a well-attended meeting with citizens in Bong County, the Minister justifies corrupt dealings of officials who steal public resources and invest same in Liberia. For him, stealing from the people does not matter, once the money is not transferred abroad, but invested in the local economy. According to him, these projects beautify local communities and are in the interest of the people since they cannot be taken away, but remain grounded as tangible development.

CENTAL views these utterances of the Minister as being extremely troubling, given his position of influence in the Liberian Government and that what he says or does could shape the decisions of many persons in society, especially those he supervises or manages in government. That a person so close to the Office of the Liberian Presidency will make such comments is extremely worrisome, in the wake of increasing allegations of corruption against the CDC-led government officials and limited actions from the Presidency (the office Minister McGill manages) to act against those concerned. Given his proximity to President George Manneh Weah, could he be giving the official position of the Liberian Presidency on how it views corruption, something that might be responsible for the very limited actions of the President against his officials accused and investigated for corruption? Indeed, Minister McGill’s defense of corruption is quite revealing.

We are deeply concerned and disappointed, especially so that these statements from the Minister are coming at a time when the Power of the Liberia Anti-Corruption Commission to freeze the assets of individuals being investigated and prosecuted for acts of Corruption has be removed in the amended and restated new LACC Law, in violation of Article 31 of the United Nations Convention Against Corruption (UNCAC), which requires States Parties to institute laws to freeze illicitly/illegally obtained assets/wealth. Also, it is coming at a time when many questions linger about the questionable spending and donation spree of the Minister, which have seen him making multiple donations in different parts of the country, since he was appointed to manage the office and activities of the Liberian Presidency. Additionally, these comments are coming at time when it is reported that majority of public officials are yet re-declare their assets, incomes and liabilities three years after doing so in 2018,

in line with the 2014 Code of Conduct for Public Officials.

 Such anti-accountability comments have the ability to further undermine citizens and development partners’ confidence in the Liberian Government, which may have implications for their budgetary and other support to the country. We like to remind the Minister that there is and should be no place for Corruption in Liberia. Corruption is forbidden in Liberia and around the world and that there is no justification, whatsoever, for perpetrating it. His comments grossly undermine government’s stance and fight against corruption and reveal why President Weah and his government have shown limited willpower to decisively and impartially address it.

Liberians and development partners whose taxes and financial and non-financial contributions are integral parts of public resources and assets being referenced by the Minister will be deeply concerned and further apprehensive about proper utilization of their resources, which are not meant to be corrupted by public officials in the name of investing same in the country. Public resources are meant to be used for the intended purposes and fully audited and accounted for by the requisite state institutions and not otherwise.

In conclusion, we call on well-meaning Liberian, including the President, to join CENTAL in condemning the statement made by the Minister. Additionally, we encourage all citizens to criticize and reject such manipulations and mind-corrupting utterances intended to sway public officials and the larger public in a direction which can only keep Liberia in the throes of poverty, underdevelopment, and injustice.



Signed: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

 Anderson D. Miamen

 Executive Director