LRA, Lone Star Cell MTN & Partners Launch Mobile Tax Payment Service

Commissioner General Elfrieda Stewart Tamba speaking at the launch of the mobile tax payment service

(Monrovia, June 12, 2018): The Liberia Revenue Authority (LRA) in collaboration with MTN Liberia, the United Bank for Africa (UBA) and the USAID-Liberia /RG3 Project have officially launched the Mobile Money Tax Payment Service via Lone Star Cell MTN.

The service enables easy payment of taxes and fees and reduces the burden on taxpayers who often cover long distances and stand in long queues to pay taxes.

The payment platform covers tax payment covering Business Income Tax (2%, 4%), Corporate Income Tax, Personal Income Tax, Excise Tax, GST, Withholding, Real Estate Tax, as well as non-tax fees including Birth, Marriage, Travel Clearance, Fire Safety, and Business Registration Renewal Certificates.

Speaking at the official launch of the service on Friday, June 8, 2018 at the headquarters of the LRA in Paynesville, Commissioner General Elfrieda Stewart Tamba said the introduction of the service signifies the attainment of a major deliverable of the Authority, consistent with two of the four goals of the LRA's 5-year Corporate Strategic Plan.

She narrated that the launch of the service is directly in line with goals two and four which respectively border on "maximizing voluntary compliance" and "transforming revenue administration by utilizing effective Information Communication Technology."

The CG emphasized that "the use of mobile money is a needed technology in tax administration," and described the inauguration of mobile tax payment service in Liberia as a big boost to maximizing voluntary compliance in enhancing revenue collection.

CG Tamba indicated that the effective collection of government revenue can strengthen the social contract between citizens, companies, and government," Mrs. Tamba said. "And innovation and automation are essential to facilitate the needed improvement in voluntary compliance."

Partial view of partners including LRA, MTN Liberia, the United Bank for Africa (UBA) and the USAID-Liberia /RG3 Project at the occasion

CG Tamba further stressed that there is no way domestic resource mobilization can be improved in the absence of innovation, automation and the application of technology, a roadmap she said the LRA is progressively achieving.

She said there is a need to accomplish a higher level of voluntary compliance if Liberia is to achieve the Pro Poor Agenda as a country.

"The higher voluntary compliance is, the larger the revenue pot will be, the larger the revenue pot, the easier it will be to attain the Pro Poor Agenda and by extension the sustainable development goals (SDGs)," She noted.

She thanked Lone Star Cell MTN and other collaborating partners for supporting the initiative and called for more collaborating efforts with all stakeholders in bettering Liberia's tax administration and system.

For his part, USAID-Liberia /RG3 Project Chief of Party Alexander Kitain praised the LRA for initiating innovative means of tax payment by expanding its payment system.

He said he was impress with the level of progress made thus far by the Authority to improve the tax administration system in Liberia. The RG3 Project is playing a significant role in the LRA transformation and modernization drive, helping to improve domestic resource mobilization.

In remarks, Deputy Minister for Fiscal Affairs at the Ministry of Finance and Development Planning Samora Wolokollie pledged the commitment of the ministry in supporting the work of the LRA.

He commended the LRA and partners for making tax payment easier for the taxpayers.

For more information about LRA Please visit: www.lra.gov.lr

Contact information: D. Kaihenneh Sengbeh, Manager/ Communications, Media & Public Affairs Section E-mail: kaihenneh.sengbeh@lra.gov.lr Phone: +231 0886 586531 or +231 0777 586531

Deputy Minister Wolokollie encouraged the LRA and its collaborating partners to seek other opportunities in designing other easier and innovative ways of tax payment which he believes will strengthen the efforts of revenue collection.

"Today, tax payment is easier than it was yesterday and we think by tomorrow it should be much easier than it is today," Minister Wolokollie stressed.

Lonestar Cell MTN Deputy CEO, Laureine Guilao, who spoke on behalf the company, said the telecommunications giant was very excited to officially launch the Mobile Tax Payment Service, and called on subscribers of the company to be tax compliant.

She said Lonestar Cell MTN has a belief that every single Liberian should have a benefit of modern-connected life. She said the company is continuously working towards that goal by taking everyone on board a new digital world. "So, this is a major step in that direction and we hope to continue to find ways to better the lives of Liberians," Ms. Guilao said.

The United Bank for Africa (UBA) managing director, Olalekan Balogun said it was a great opportunity for the bank to be selected to partner in the mobile tax payment initiative. The platform, he indicated, will enhance compliance as it will reduce stress and challenges people face in paying their taxes.

"We are delighted to be partnering with Lonestar Cell MTN, LRA and the USAID Revenue Generation for Governance and Growth Project (RG3) to launch such a laudable project that will put Liberia on par with others," Balogun averred.

Mr. Balogun also promised the government through the LRA that the bank stands ready to support any project that will bring efficiency and encourage people to make payment without distress.

The mobile money tax payment service which is a usurer friendly platform is accessible 24 hours a day throughout the week.

The launch of the LoneStar Cell MTN Mobile Tax Payment Service forms part of the first private-to-government payment mode in Liberia and is the second in a series for the launch of the service in Liberia.

In April this year, President George M. Weah launched the first Mobile Tax Payment Service via Orange Money and challenged Liberians to use the platform for tax payment.

President Weah became the first taxpayer to use the service when he paid his real property taxes during an open testing of the service.

For more information about LRA Please visit: www.lra.gov.lr

Contact information: D. Kaihenneh Sengbeh, Manager/ Communications, Media & Public Affairs Section E-mail: kaihenneh.sengbeh@lra.gov.lr Phone: +231 0886 586531 or +231 0777 586531