

**Remarks by**

**Her Excellency Ellen Johnson Sirleaf**

**President of the Republic of Liberia  
At the Official Launching of the  
2008 National Population and Housing Census  
10:00 a.m., Monrovia City Hall  
June 28, 2007**

Representatives of the United Nations System;  
European Commission and other Partners;  
Officials and Members of the Government;  
The Doyen and Members of the Diplomatic Corps;  
Heads of NGOs and civil organizations;  
Distinguished citizens,  
Ladies and Gentlemen:

The pace of development in any nation is contingent upon informed decision making, which is indispensably a function of factual data collected, analyzed and propagated for the sustainability and viability of the nation. As we come at this historic juncture to induct the Commissioners of the 2008 National Population and Housing Census (NPHC), we embrace this occasion with utmost optimism that socio-economic planning geared towards poverty reduction and the elevation of the social status of our people would be based on data representing the accurate and realistic conditions of our human population.

The launch of the 2008 NPHC marks a significant beginning in Liberia's post war reconstruction process by providing the means for a comprehensive empirical assessment of the country's demographic features and its reconstruction and development needs. Data generated from this complex and expensive nationwide exercise will give the Government and its development partners an objective and reliable picture of the population and housing of Liberia.

The last census in Liberia was conducted in 1984. The censuses planned for 1994 and 2004 did not take place because of the protracted civil war and volatile political and social situation in the country. What this means is that for more than 23 years, there

has been no accurate data on the demographic variables of the country. All projections that have been made on the nation's demographic particulars are based on educated guesses and rough estimates from ad hoc surveys that do not represent the authentic picture of the population and housing figures of the country.

After conducting the last census in 1984, there have been considerable population shifts engendered by political and economic factors. Political events in 1985 were also attended by a similar pattern of population movements. Residents of several counties were compelled by the turnout of political events to venture into other parts of the country and provided the impetus for the movement of a significant number of previously permanent residents of Liberia to seek asylum into nearby countries.

The outbreak of the civil war at the close of 1989 that engulfed the country for the better part of fourteen years contributed immensely to large population shifts within and outside the country and precipitated the emigration of a little over 500,000 persons from Liberia. The war also led to the massive destruction of economic infrastructure in the country in both urban and rural areas, thus creating reasons for those who would not have otherwise moved away from their usual reasons habitats to relocate to other parts of the country.

Another round of civil unrest that broke out between 1999 and 2003 also occasioned massive internal displacement of people from various communities in the country and other waves of refugee movements across Liberia's borders with Guinea, Cote d'Ivoire and Sierra Leone. Huge numbers of Liberians fled to several other countries by air and

sea, while thousands of people are believed to have died. Since the end of the civil war, the UNHCR has facilitated the return of thousands of exiled Liberians; a lot of children have been born, and people have been moving in and out of the country.

A national population and housing census is an undertaken meant to provide information to policymakers, researchers and such other persons to help them develop programs and activities aimed at meeting the vital needs of the people and improve upon present delivery systems.

Let us be clear. The census has nothing to do with any plans to impose taxes on the people. The census will help Government and its development partners to know exactly how many person lives in each village/town, city, clan/township, district, or county. The exercise will also provide information on the number of persons that are of voting age so as to help electoral authorities to clearly demarcate constituencies within the country. That information helps government to carry out a fair representation of our people in decision making processes and structures within government. The results of the census will not be used to punish people for belonging to any political party or ethnic group.

The results of the census will not be used to discriminate against any group of people in the country because of the characteristics that make them different from other Liberians. Rather, they will be used to help government determine where it would be appropriate to build schools, hospitals, new roads, new markets and other infrastructure that will improve the quality of the lives of the people of Liberia. The census will help provide

true and factual information about those who are working and those who are not, so that jobs will be created for the unemployed; so that we can substantiate or discredit the 86 percent unemployment rate. The census will also provide information on the human resource capacities of the various parts of the country. This information is necessary in determining the number of trained people in the various professional and occupational fields at the various parts of the country.

The census will help Government to determine the number of houses in the country and their various conditions so that Government will know which strategies to adopt to improve the living conditions of the people.

The census indicators would be centered on several socio-economic and demographic issues such as the fertility and mortality rates, migration trends and patterns, economic activity, education, housing and household amenities, and agriculture. Other issues that the census would seek to capture are levels of disability and orphan hood. All these counts and measures give this government a workable tool to foster the development and transformation of our country.

Ladies and Gentlemen, as we convoke hear today, we are emboldened with further determination that this nation, in her nationalistic effort to lift her people from poverty and every form of human misery, would make further giant strides with the full implementation of the 2008 Census exercise. This census exercise, inter alia, would not only afford the opportunity our country to be a part of the 2010 round of National Population and Housing Censuses but would also provide up to date information on

demographic, economic and social amenities needed by the masses as deliverables from their government effort at ameliorating poverty.

Moreover, it is hoped that the census would provide benchmarks on which monitoring and evaluation of various national and international goals such as the Millennium Development Goals, (MDGs) and the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) could be based. The Census would distribution among the various geographical stratifications of the country as well as per gender. We consider the census another milestone of this government undertaken by the many patriotic and professional Liberians who rather than make wild unsubstantiated utterances prefer to contribute to work positively to address the many wrongs and structural deficiencies that have characterized our country for too long.

For the good of our people and our common patrimony, and while invoking the support of the Liberian people, foreign residents and our friends in the international community, I wish to officially launch the 2008 National Population and Housing Census.

May God bless you and bless the Republic of Liberia!