

Remarks by H.E President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf
At Dedication of Agricultural Technology Demonstration Center
At Central Agricultural Research Institute (CARI)
Thursday, July 22, 2010

Fellow Liberians;
Partners of Liberia;
Supporters and Friends of Liberia:

Normally, I would just say a few words, but we are in the midst of the celebration of our Independence Day, and everything we say forms a part of the record of history.

Thank you, Ambassador Zhou, and his team of Chinese agronomists, engineers, agriculturalists and contractors, for making it possible for us to return here – on this occasion to dedicate this modern, new Agricultural Technology Demonstration Center.

When we stopped here in March of this year, you assured me that this facility would be ready for dedication during our Independence Day celebration. And so it is. For that we express our profound thanks and appreciation to all of you here who have made this possible.

By introducing advanced and practical Chinese agricultural techniques to Liberia, this Center will help us to increase our crop yields and the income of farmers, which, in turn, will contribute to our poverty reduction goals and thereby make a big difference in the lives of our people.

We thank the Government of the People's Republic of China for its generous support in making this possible. It was among the eight policy measures announced by Chinese President Hu Jintao at the Beijing Summit of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) in November 2006, which I had the privilege to attend. The Longping High Tech Corporation – and I understand that the previous speaker came all the way from China for this occasion. We want to congratulate you and your team, and thank you for coming to participate in this event.

This Center is one of only seven constructed in all of Africa. We, in Liberia, are blessed to have been among the chosen few, and we know that we will benefit immeasurably from this Center as we see what it will do for our farmers. No doubt, it will play a significant role in putting Liberia on the road to sustainable agriculture and food security.

This Center stands as a shining example of the good friendship – the strong friendship – between Liberia and the People's Republic of China.

It is in Bong County, which is in the heart of our country, and it is through this central county that so much of the agricultural products go up and down the highway. It is especially fitting that this agricultural project be situated here in Bong County.

Although seriously affected by the war, our country has shown, our people have shown, a determination – a strong determination – to put the past behind us, and to build the confidence that will attract investment and development for our country. Bong County already hosts the Central Agricultural Research Institute, which is being reactivated and strengthened through the efforts of the Minister of Agriculture and her colleagues.

What this Center seeks to do is to improve the lives of Liberians, the majority of whom – nearly three out of four people – earn their living from agriculture. But because their methods are rudimentary, the result is low yields, sufficient mostly for subsistence and not much extra to sell at the market. We hope that this Center will enable them to produce more, to have higher yields, and to increase their incomes, and thereby enable them to raise their standard of living.

When we complete this work, and the Government does its work on roads, energy and much else, we want to see the transformation of our rural areas in such a way that they can stay at home and have the same quality education, health services, agriculture, housing, and the like.

Thank you for being here, and for participating in this part of the celebration of our Independence Day. God bless the People's Republic of China, and God bless Liberia.