

**Opening Remarks by H.E. Vice President Joseph N. Boakai
At the Energy Donors and Partners Conference
On “Solidifying Commitments and Synergy for Harnessing the Hydropower Potential of the St. Paul
River Basin”**

Monrovia City Hall, Tuesday, October 19, 2010

Members of the Presidential Task Force;

Members of the West Africa Power Pool Secretariat;

Distinguished Guests;

Ladies and Gentlemen:

It gives me great pleasure to also welcome you to this Energy Donors and Partners Conference.

Thank you for coming to listen to our Government's conceptual framework on the St. Paul River Basin Hydropower Development and the Mount Coffee Hydropower Facility Reconstruction, and to share ideas and deliberate on the roadmap for moving forward.

Energy is a catalyst for development and human progress; the future of any modern society hinges on its ability to harness reliable, affordable and sustainable energy resources.

Our long-term energy security and economic development is linked to the development of the rich endowment of our rivers and other waterways for hydropower.

It is against this background that we have determined the rehabilitation of the Mount Coffee Hydropower Plant and the development of the upstream Via River as one of our national priorities. Success in this endeavor will assure us the full utilization of the potential of the St. Paul River Basin.

This project will meet the constant power demands that mining concessions and businesses operating within our borders require for effective economic activity. It will link these businesses to the outside world and greatly enhance Liberia's connectivity and contribution to the West Africa Power Pool (WAPP) program.

In keeping with our commitment to providing adequate conditions for businesses to thrive, the President set up the Special Presidential Task Force on the St. Paul River Basin Hydropower Development and the Mount Coffee Hydropower Facility Reconstruction, composed of the relevant Ministers of Government together with our best engineers, financiers, and entrepreneurs from the private sector to ensure effective implementation.

Today's conference is a result of the Task Force's efforts. Let me thank the WAPP Secretariat for collaborating with our Government on what is an excellent indication of regional cooperation. We appreciate your interest in developing our hydroelectric facilities, and we hope, and pray, the outcome will be beneficial to all parties.

Liberia has the annual rainfall and four major rivers to support hydroelectric development and assure constant supply of energy. Our rivers – the Mano, the St. Paul, the St. John, and the Cavalla – have substantial potential, and the St. Paul, which has been the subject of many studies, is seen as the river with the greatest potential.

Earlier studies of the St. Paul led to the development of the Mount Coffee Hydroelectric Plant, which served the country well until it was destroyed in 1990 during the civil war.

We are keen to reconstruct Mount Coffee and develop the entire river basin, which would include a much needed reservoir. The project is capital intensive, but the alternative would cost our economy even more in lost productivity due to no power or higher fuel and environment costs for fossil-fueled generation.

If this project can become the source of power for the Liberian iron ore mines and the West African electricity network that is under construction, it can be an attraction for increased investment for both the public and private sectors. Developing the West Africa Power Pool interconnection network is of paramount importance to ECOWAS; with it, Liberia will be able to contribute its quota to our neighbors and improve the environment by reducing the consumption of fossil fuels to produce electricity.

We have what we consider to be an optimum project with over 600 megawatts of hydro potential available at four sites. There is also the possibility to develop a storage reservoir upstream of all four sites. This will allow all the generating plants to benefit from the resulting river regulation as and when it is developed. Although costly, the river regulation is beneficial, and we consider that the St. Paul Basin cannot be developed and operated properly without it.

Liberia has first-hand experience of trying to produce hydroelectric power during the dry season, after having allowed 75 percent of the water coming down the St. Paul to spill into the Atlantic Ocean for six or seven months of the year. To generate power during those four months, we had to operate turbines using gas oil or slow-speed

marine diesel units using heavy fuel oil. When this process started in the 1960s, the price of oil was affordable. Imagine the financial and environmental issues this method would impose today.

For that reason, I hope we find a way to develop this all-important mechanism through some Authority, be it a partnership of the public and private sectors (PPP) or another workable arrangement.

Again, we thank you for your participation, wish you success in your day-long deliberations, and trust that you will help us reach decisions and develop programs for the betterment not only of Liberia but also of the ECOWAS sub-region.

May the Almighty God always bless us, protect our sovereignty, unify us, preserve our dignity and keep us safe.

I thank you.