

**Closing Remarks by H.E. President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf**

**At Conclusion of Cabinet Retreat to Review**

**The Poverty Reduction Strategy (2008-2011)**

**Buchanan City, Grand Bassa County**

**Saturday, October 23, 2010**

As we bring this Retreat to a close, let me first say a big thank you to the Chief Justice [His Honor Johnnie N. Lewis], who has been exceptional in staying with us for these two days, and participating in this Retreat.

We also want to thank the Legislature. Yesterday we had one member; today we have Representative Kettehkumehn Murray, who has come to represent the Speaker and the Legislative Branch, generally. They've been with us, and we want to thank him for staying throughout the session.

To our partners – they were with us yesterday, and many are still here – we say thanks for being a part of this, for interacting with us, for working in the break-out groups and bringing their experiences to bear, and helping us as we try together to formulate the way forward in achieving our overall national development objectives.

We are very pleased that some of our traditional leaders came yesterday and joined us. They were able to also listen in, and appreciate some of the things that we are going on across the country to bring development to them and to their people.

To our Superintendents and other local government officials that could come, this is the next, the moving steps toward our decentralization goal. Integrating what we are doing with what they are doing, into one overall development plan in which all participate, particularly those affected by the plans, is part of our

decentralization plan. As we move to the next step, it is expected that they will have to assume more and more of those responsibilities, not only to determine priorities, but to take under their own management the implementation of the programs that are identified under those priorities. Our obligation is to work with them, to build that local capacity whereby they can take unto themselves this function.

For me, it is just exciting to work with so many of the people in this room. So many of the young people who have done so much to bring us to where we are; who work day and night trying to make these things happen. They take the plans and study them, to look at the implementation, to be able to assess where we are, and identify the challenges of where we really could be if we all put more effort.

This is a very, very talented group of people; their ideas are bubbling, which reinvigorates and re-energizes me. So, when people ask, where do you get your strength? I get it from them, because when they do these things, they just enlighten me and get me moving and all our emotions working. So, I want to say a big thank you to those who have led the Pillars; they've worked on this, and today I think we see the results of all of this work.

A final word to the Minister of Planning and Economic Affairs and his colleagues: they have been the ICT gurus that produced all these charts. We know what they've done.

And to Minister Amara Konneh, I want him to know that we appreciate him. I continue to have the greatest confidence in his commitment, in his capacity and in his integrity. I want that message to be sent out to everybody.

I thank everybody for being a part of this meeting, for contributing so much to it. Let's now go forth, re-energized to take the next step as we take it upon ourselves to make sure that we achieve those objectives, so that when we come back here less than one year from now, we will be able to say: From Buchanan, we walked that long road, but we have reached where we wanted to reach.