

**Statement by H.E. President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf
At Video-Conference Meeting
On the Country-Specific Configuration on Liberia
UNMIL Headquarters, Monrovia
Monday, November 15, 2010**

Ambassador Peter Wittig, Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission;
Assistant Secretary-General for Peacebuilding, Judy Cheng-Hopkins, who happens to be here with us;
HRH Prince Zeid Ra'ad Zeid Al Hussein, Chairperson of the Liberia Configuration;
UN Special Representative, Ambassador Ellen Løj;
Excellencies;
Members of the Liberia Configuration in New York;
Ambassador [Marjon] Kamara, our Permanent Representative to the United Nations;
Officials of Government;
Ladies and Gentlemen:

Allow me to express my profound gratitude to all of you for the overwhelming enthusiasm and support you have exhibited since my Government applied to be placed on the Agenda of the United Nations Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) in May of this year. The speed with which the activities leading to Liberia's engagement with the PBC has been undertaken is unprecedented.

In this regard, I want to thank Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon. Thank you, Prince Zeid – everyone says you're already being considered as a Liberian. We welcome you in the country, and we just appreciate all that you've done to visit the different places and to meet with so many of our officials.

Our heartfelt felicitations to all of you, the members of the Liberia Configuration in New York, for the passion you have shown and your commitment to work with our Government and people to ensure lasting and durable peace in Liberia.

The Liberian people will always remain grateful to my dear friend, Ambassador Ellen Løj, and the entire United Nations Country Team for all the support Liberia continues to receive in moving forward our peace and development goals. Let me also extend my appreciation to Ambassador Rick Barton, Mr. Eloho Otobo, and the entire delegation that undertook the PBC Joint Mission to Liberia from August 15-27th.

Since 2006, when our Government came into office, we have worked to ensure a secure, peaceful and democratic nation. We introduced policies that have helped to foster peace, accelerate reconstruction and development, and build a strong

governance system. These policies have also provided opportunities for reflection on the root causes of our conflict; the need to promote national reconciliation through dialogue across geographic and ethnic divides; the need to create institutions, legal frameworks and processes; as well as the need to adopt measures to improve the security and socio-economic well-being of the Liberians.

Throughout these years, my Government and people have remained cognizant that “durable and lasting peace is the *sine qua non* of Liberia’s transformation and development.” Our development road map, the Poverty Reduction Strategy (2008-2011) identified six key conflict factors – weak and dysfunctional justice systems; land conflicts; management of natural resources; the conditions of youths, especially with regard to employment; political polarization; and the relationship between the state and its citizens. We have initiated practical steps to address them.

As you know, in 2008 Liberia received \$15 million under the Immediate Response Facility (IRF) of the Peacebuilding Fund, after submitting a Priority Plan to help address critical peacebuilding gaps. Three areas were identified, and funding was allocated for:

- Fostering National Reconciliation and Conflict Management;
- Critical Interventions to Promote Peace and Resolve Conflict; and
- Strengthening State Capacity for Peace Consolidation.

An additional \$1.7 million was allocated for two emergency projects.

With these funds, we were able to set up institutions to begin to address some of the root causes and potential areas of conflicts. For example, some funding was allocated for the setting up and initial functioning of our Land and Anti-Corruption Commissions, among other initiatives. An independent mid-term evaluation of the peacebuilding funds in Liberia, conducted in March, showed that the funds have made significant gains in helping to address the pervasive conflict issues that run across Liberian society. It also recommended that Liberia receives a second tranche of PBF funding.

In this regard, allow me also to express thanks and appreciation to the Co-chairs of the PBF Joint Steering Committee, Deputy Special Representative Moustapha Soumare, who is here with us, and Hon. Harrison S. Karnwea, and to the entire membership of the JSC and the PBF Secretariat at the Ministry of Internal Affairs for their excellent work. We also acknowledge the efforts of two former Co-chairs of the PBF, Mr. Jordan Ryan and Mr. Ambulai Johnson.

Excellencies;

Members of the Liberia Configuration:

We are gathered today – via technology that links Monrovia and New York through video-conferencing – to examine yet another critical milestone in our journey towards long-term peace, stability and development.

We have come to jointly endorse the Statement of Mutual Commitments on Peacebuilding in Liberia. This is an understanding between our Government and the Peacebuilding Commission. The Statement captures and articulates the key priorities identified by Government: strengthening the rule of law; supporting security sector reform; and promoting national reconciliation. Moreover, the priority actions to be undertaken under each of the three priorities are comprehensive.

I want to assure all of you that we will fulfill our obligations and commitments as a Government and as a people, as set out in the document, and I have no doubt that the Peacebuilding Commission will do likewise. I am also convinced that the international community, including the African Union, ECOWAS and the Mano River Union countries will continue to stand by us and give us support.

Last Saturday, the Peacebuilding Commission represented by you, Prince Zeid, Assistant Secretary-General Cheng-Hopkins, and our Government broke ground for the first of five regional hubs that will be constructed in Liberia under the PBC facility. The construction of these regional hubs will fulfill a dream of our Government. Not only will they provide modern and equipped infrastructure and accommodations for the Liberia National Police, the Bureau of Immigration and Naturalization and other security institutions, they will also provide the much-needed access to justice and security for our rural population. Our Government is aware that, once constructed, these hubs will have to be sustained far beyond PBF funding. We must therefore take the necessary steps in making budgetary allocations to keep the hubs functional.

The Liberia Priority Plan II is being completed, and we thank all involved for the technical support which has made this possible. The Priority Plan is crucial because it sets the framework for making operational the priority actions set out in the Commitments Statement, and also because it puts into place a monitoring and evaluation framework to measure progress over time. As we complete the Priority Plan, we must ensure that it builds upon ongoing programs aimed at strengthening institutional and human capacities to manage and address conflicts and enhance local initiatives for peace.

Lasting peace is irreversible in Liberia. My optimism is based on the determination of the Liberian people to forget the past, to reconcile and to build a vibrant nation. Peacebuilding in the context of Liberia, while addressing the root causes, and building institutions to manage and prevent conflict, is also about meeting basic human needs. This, together with the creation of jobs and other livelihood opportunities for our young people, remains a major challenge to our Administration.

I am, nevertheless, convinced that with concerted effort, with commitment and dedication, the tasks ahead are surmountable.

Let me again say how pleased I am that we are a part of this initiative; to say how pleased we are that all of you – those in the Liberia Configuration in New York, in Monrovia, the UN System and our own officials – for all that you have done to be a part of this and to show your strong and active support for peace, reconciliation and development in Liberia.

Thank you.