

**Remarks by H.E. President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf
At the 20th Extraordinary Summit of the Mano River
Union
Monrovia City Hall
Sunday, July 17, 2011**

President Ouattara, President Condé, President Koroma:

Before we begin, I would like for us to pay homage the late Mano River Union Secretary-General, Ambassador Elhadj Thiemo Habib Diallo. Ambassador Diallo was beginning to implement much-needed reforms within the MRU, and his passing is a great loss to the Union. But that does not compare to the loss suffered by his family, to whom I send my heartfelt condolence. Please join me in a moment of silent prayer.

While we mourn the loss of Ambassador Diallo, we must continue his work and ensure that the Union is reformed and begins to play a greater role within the sub-region. It is therefore an honor for Liberia to serve as host of the 20th Ordinary Summit of the Mano River Union.

This occasion marks the first time that Presidents Condé and Ouattara have visited Liberia in their capacity as Heads of State. We welcome you and hope that, like President Koroma, you will make many visits in the coming years. Visits such as these also provide an opportunity for us to meet face-to-face on issues that affect our sub-region.

We are one people, separated only by political boundaries. We share common tribal makeups, common food, common dialects and local traditions. We also share common challenges. Today we meet to discuss three of these challenges: regional security, infrastructure, and MRU governance.

On the security front, we have porous borders that need to be monitored; the need to coordinate our response to refugee crises; and the need to ensure peaceful and fair elections within our individual States. The failure of one of us to have a strong security network affects us all.

Concerning infrastructure, we particularly need to improve our electricity supplies through the West African Power Pool project and road networks. Without a good electricity network our investment potential is limited, particularly with regard to manufacturing and employment opportunities for our citizens. Moreover, the lack of an all-weather regional road network constrains trade across our borders. We have the capacity to supply one another with vital goods and services, especially in agriculture, but the lack of cross-border roads prevents us from reaching our full economic potential.

The MRU is the perfect venue for us to engage on these issues. But for us to be successful, we must address the leadership and governance of the Mano River Union. Besides finding a successor to the last Secretary General, we must also discuss governance issues within the Union, its strategic plan and financing. Without strong

plans and implementation on these issues, the Union will not be a key player in ensuring sub-regional security and economic development.

I look forward to today's activities – the briefing from our international partners, the reports from the Union Ministerial meetings and the discussions amongst ourselves. At its conclusion, I look forward to renewed engagement on trade, security and humanitarian concerns that will ultimately lead to greater stability and economic growth in Liberia, Guinea, Sierra Leone and Côte d'Ivoire.

Again, I thank you for taking time from busy schedules to be here. I am confident that today's Summit will mark a sea change in how we interact on security and infrastructure concerns.

Now, let's get down to business.