

**Remarks by Her Excellency Madame Ellen Johnson Sirleaf
at Groundbreaking Ceremony for Construction of New MVTC Campus Financed
by the People’s Republic of China
Montserrado County
Tuesday, May 21, 2013**

Fellow Liberians;
Friends of Liberia:

I have, in recent times, said that I would not attend anymore groundbreaking ceremonies – only dedications of the proposed infrastructure. The reason is I want to attend the one when everything is finished; but there are times when one must break their rules and so I’m breaking the rule this time because of the importance of this particular project, the Monrovia Vocational Training Center (MVTC). This Center will help us achieve our transformative goals.

It was in June 2011 that our bilateral partner, the People’s Republic of China, and our Government signed an Exchange of Letters on developing employable skills for our young people – people like you, all of you here – and that we would build a modern training center that will equip you with the skills to be able to go out and become a professional to be able to reclaim your dignity. The grant assistance for this project falls under China’s Eight New Measures for pragmatic cooperation with African countries, which that Government announced at the 4th Ministerial Conference of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC), held in Egypt.

Today, we see a clear manifestation of the understanding which China has had with the countries of Africa. I am delighted to break the grounds for the construction of this modern campus, intended to help our people, particularly our young people, helping them to acquire the employable skills that will enable them to take an even more active role in the reconstruction and development of our country.

When completed, this MVTC extension will help provide the skills needed for private sector jobs which, in turn, will enhance and promote economic growth and development.

With approximately 60 percent of our population under age 35, and over half under age 20, this is a generation to which we must pay attention. We must ensure that they have access to education, to vocational training so that they can be able to earn an income and be able to carry on their own development ambition. People sometimes call our young people the “lost” generation; we think they are the “opportunity” generation.

Let me thank you, Ambassador – you and your team. You and your associates to the Mission have been so dedicated and committed. You’ve had hurdles, you’ve had

difficulties in getting this project started, but you have remained determined to make sure that this project takes off, and today we see the result of that.

Now let me digress a bit and leave this paper. I came today. I just arrived from Robertsfield and came on the road. My vehicles decided that they were going to take the SKD Boulevard. Today is a sunny day, and the construction crew is trying to pave that road using the opportunity of the sun, and everybody is on that road, in and out, crossing it, moving about, blocking... No. Mr. Public Works Minister, **BLOCK THE ROAD** so you can get the job done.

You can't be trying to pave the road while all the cars are going in and between the crew; people walking across it; the coal tar... oh, come on. You want development, you've got to make some sacrifice for it. You want development, you've got to be disciplined. You want development, you've got to be prepared to work for it. Thank you.

Now, let me say one last word. I want to thank these workers – our Liberian workers who have decided to be a positive force for change. They decided to go to work to earn their living; but not only to earn their living, but to be able to support their country in its development, and they deserve something. I will take care of you.

Wait one minute, let me speak to the students: Because you, too, have made the right decision to learn a trade, to be a positive contributor to your country's development, I will take care of you, too.