

Statement by H.E. President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf
at the 3rd Africa-Arab Summit
Kuwait City, Kuwait
November 19, 2013

His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al Ahmad Al Jaber Al Sabah, Emir of the State of Kuwait & Chairman of the 3rd Africa-Arab Summit;
Eminent Heads of State and Government;
Madam Chairperson of the African Union Commission;
Mr. Secretary-General of the League of Arab States;
Distinguished Delegates;
Ladies and Gentlemen:

I wish to thank our hosts – the great State of Kuwait and fellow Arab nations – for the opportunity to say a few words not only on behalf of the Government and people of Liberia, but also, in my capacity as Chair of both the African Union’s High-Level Committee on the Post-2015 Development Agenda and the African Development Bank’s High-Level Panel on Fragile States, which seeks to address the special needs of the hundreds of millions who live in fragile states.

We congratulate Your Highness, Sheikh Sabah Al Ahmad Al Jaber Al Sabah, on your assumption of the Chairmanship of this very important Summit; and express our profound appreciation to you, and the people of Kuwait, for the meticulous planning for the Summit and the very generous courtesies showered on all our delegations.

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen:

I wish to speak about Africa’s vision for the future, within the context of a global agenda beyond 2015, while also recognizing that all the Arab nations participating in this Summit have stood as partners in Africa’s development and transformation.

The 2nd Summit, held at Sirte, Libya, in 2010, adopted the Africa-Arab Partnership Strategy and the Afro-Arab Joint Action Plan 2011-2016. The targets set in these policy documents remain very relevant, and we urge that action be taken for their implementation. We welcome the report of the 2nd Meeting of African-Arab

Ministers of Agriculture and Food Security, and hope that follow-up action will be taken for its realization.

The aspirations expressed by these calls to transformative action give validation to Liberia's own long-term vision, which is informed by the experience of long years of conflict that has given way to the celebration of 10 years of unbroken peace and stability.

For the most part African countries, especially many of our neighbors in the West African sub-region, are rich in natural resources. However, these natural riches have yet to make a significant difference in the well-being of our people. This is primarily due to the lack of infrastructure and human capacity, a focus of the new development agenda.

Your Highness;
Excellencies;
Ladies and Gentlemen:

Energy is the most crucial shortcoming that impedes our social and economic development, and we believe that the collaboration we are here to discuss must go beyond traditional arrangements and exchange of goodwill to promote true partnership between our public and private sectors. We must, in our sub-region of West Africa, for example, do more for regional integration.

Thus, in our sub-region, we launched a regional project, the West Africa Power Pool, that would distribute electricity throughout our countries, especially in the remote areas.

Your Royal Highness;
Excellencies:

A year ago, I had the honor to co-chair the High-Level Panel on the Post-2015 Development Agenda, which was appointed by the United Nations Secretary-General. The key findings from the global consultative process, which proposed the post-2015 global development agenda, present an opportunity for Africa to

take stock of our position in the world. Last May, during our 50th Anniversary, the AU Summit created a High-Level Committee of 10 Heads of State and Government, with the view to reaching a common position on our priorities. The questions we ask ourselves, and which this High-Level Committee is seeking to answer, are two-pronged: where do we want Africa to be in the next 15-30 years, and, equally, what world do we want to leave to future generations?

Africa must be part of a world where partnerships among nations are based on reliability, accountability and responsibility. In a new world of true partnership, people will no longer resort to violence to claim their basic human rights or rise up against dehumanizing treatment. By building true bridges of cooperation and partnership, we can build a world of global opportunities and shared responsibilities. It is possible but it will demand a shift.

Africa is very clear about our common aspirations and our vision of “an integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa, driven by its own citizens and representing a dynamic force in the global arena.” The eradication of extreme poverty and the pursuit of sustained economic growth and development constitute our vision for future generations.

As a result, at Rio+20, Africa spoke with one voice, emphasizing that “mainstreaming sustainable development at all levels, integrating economic, social and environmental aspects and recognizing their inter-linkages” will be pivotal to achieving the changes we seek.

Excellencies:

One of the greatest challenges that African economic growth and prosperity faces is the existence of fragile and post-conflict nations. While countries like mine are making steady progress, we continue to confront new conflicts and crises. I am, therefore, working with a seven-member Panel, appointed by President Donald Kaberuka of the African Development Bank, to make this issue a top priority. Conflict and fragility affect all of us in the Arab and African regions; as is often said, “There is nothing African about conflict”.

We refuse to accept that fragile states will continue to lack the capacity or the political will to achieve stability. We need to work together to ensure peace,

security and justice that will clear the way for state-building by supporting the economic aspects of security and justice. This ensures stable and inclusive political settlements that entail not only the building of physical infrastructures, but, more importantly, the disarmament, reintegration and capacity building of ex-combatants.

Working in concert with other nations that find themselves in a state of fragility, we are currently pooling our voices and resources through a New Deal, in concert with the Group of 77, to reach a common strategy not only to strengthen our institutions and stability but also to draw lessons from the past.

We urge all nations to stress youth employment and capacity-building, especially as African cities become more urbanized, and the role of women in peace-building and state-building, are other major concerns of the High-Level Panel.

Liberia is also one of 24 signatories of the New Deal on Fragile States, which calls for stronger Ownership, Harmonization, Results and Mutual Accountability. We are committed to addressing fragility on the continent for a “conflict-free Africa”. The support of Arab institutions to the African Development Bank will ensure that long-term programs provide infrastructure, jobs, and financial and economic stability.

Your Highness;
Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen:

Liberia and the rest of Africa have always enjoyed good and friendly relations with the Arab world, and our policies have always supported Arab causes in international forums. Many countries in Africa share cultural and religious bonds with the Arab world, and at times it is difficult to say where Africa begins and where the Arab world stops. Geography, history and culture have created a commonality of destiny between Africa and the Arab world. We have the responsibility to cultivate strong ties, based on our shared values, to ensure that this part of the world can live in peace, harmony and goodwill. We can and must launch the basis for new partnership.

We, in Liberia, are thankful for the role many Arab nations have played in our recovery process, as well as the many investments in the infrastructural development of Africa in general. There, is however, much room to push forward,

to set in motion a cooperation that would benefit both Africa and the Arab world. Our destinies are intertwined; our economies are interdependent; and our people have much in common. For all these reasons, there is room for much improvement.

As we strive to put together a new development agenda, as we look to build new ties of partnership, we invite Arabs and Africans to come together, to put forward new ideas and concepts and charter a new course, not just for Africa and the Arab world, but for all of humanity. This is possible, it can be done, and we have the means to do it. Not tomorrow, not next year or ten years, but now, today.

I thank you!