

**Statement by H.E. President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf
at the Opening Plenary of European Development Days
“A Vision for the Post-2015 Agenda”
Brussels, Belgium, November 26, 2013**

Excellencies, Presidents and Prime Ministers;
Excellency, President of the African Union;
Distinguished Guests;
Ministers;
Ladies and Gentlemen:

I am delighted once again to participate in the European Development Days, an important event to reflect on the experience and the future of European partnership, and, in particular, to discuss how we forge consensus on a new 2015 global development agenda.

In September 2000, more than 180 countries endorsed the Millennium Declaration at the UN Millennium Summit. In 2002, the Declaration was translated into quantifiable and time-bound Goals to end human suffering from poverty, hunger and disease; to ensure environmental sustainability; and to form a new global partnership. The Millennium Development Goals have been successful in galvanizing the world’s attention on what we all have in common as one humanity and in focusing global development efforts toward resolving critical issues confronting all nations. Despite this common agenda, many countries fell short of the Goals, requiring, with only two years remaining, the need to forge a successor framework for post-2015.

In response, last year UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon set up a High-Level Panel of 24 Eminent Persons, including Commissioner [Andris] Piebalgs, and tasked it to provide a bold, compelling but realistic vision for the post-2015 agenda. He said it would need a new and responsive

vision which recognizes that there have been considerable changes in the global political economy since the MDGs were formulated.

The Panel held three meetings and carried out consultations around the globe. The final report, titled “A New Global Partnership,” was the product of a year of intense discussions between people from various backgrounds. Through the diversity of our membership and consultation, we managed to craft an ambitious vision for the world in 2030 – one without extreme poverty, hunger and acute deprivation; a sustainable world which will generate prosperity and well-being for all people through economic and social transformation. In conclusion, we emerged with a clear vision of an interdependent world in which problems in one place affect us all. We negotiated not as North-South, East-West, poor or rich, but as members of one humanity, with a common destiny.

At the African Golden Jubilee, marking the 50th anniversary of our continental organization, the African Union Summit created a High-Level Committee of 10 African Heads of State and Government to finalize a Common Position on the Post-2015 Agenda. Our primary mandate is to carry out consultations and reach a consensus on African priorities that could feed into the global Post-2015 Development Agenda.

Where Africa Stands Today

Two years from the 2015 deadline, Africa’s progress remains uneven. Remarkable advances have been made in some areas, such as net primary school enrollment, gender parity in primary education, the representation of women in decision making, some reduction in poverty, immunization coverage, and stemming the spread of HIV/AIDS.

Notwithstanding this progress, there is ample room for more good news. Some areas have been neglected where they should have been put upfront, an example being malaria, the number one killer of children in sub-Saharan Africa and many places in the world. Additionally, the goal

for school enrollment did not take into account the need for quality education.

We also realize that 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. We are therefore working with a seven-member Panel, appointed by President Donald Kaberuka of the African Development Bank, to make this issue also a top priority. Conflict and fragility affect us all. It's a phenomenon that can appear in many places and forms, including countries not currently seen as fragile.

The Bank's response is to develop policy responses to the underlying drivers of conflict that can be delivered through strengthened institutions that are vigilant in identifying and resilient in managing pressures. Working with other fragile states and in concert with the Group of 77, the Bank endorses the New Deal and its emphasis on country-led, country-owned transitions out of fragility.

Dear Colleagues:

The next two years must not be solely devoted to crafting a Post-2015 Development Agenda. We must harness our energies and make headway on those areas of the MDGs where progress was slow or hampered by circumstances. With less than 1,000 days remaining, it is not too late to tackle these issues. Concerted action, additional finance and renewed political will can make a huge difference.

The new global development agenda presents an opportunity for Africa to take stock of our position in the world. We, in the High-Level Committee, and our colleagues at the African Union, often ask ourselves where does Africa want to be 30 years from now, and where do we want the world to be 30 years hence?

Africa wants to be a 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 establishing new bases of partnership, we can build a world of global opportunities and shared responsibilities. It is possible, but it will demand a shift in traditional approaches.

It will demand the fulfillment of common aspirations that follow a path that is in consonance with the African Union's vision of "an integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa, driven by its own citizens and representing a dynamic force in the global arena."

At Rio+20, Africa spoke with one voice and said 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.

Economic transformation is not a priority for Africa alone. The recent economic meltdown that plunged the world into recession, the widening gap between rich and poor with its attending inequalities that fuel social unrest and the rising scourge of youth unemployment, as well as global environmental threats created by negative economic policies, clearly show that transformation is needed everywhere, not just in Africa.

When the UN High-Level Panel met in Monrovia last January, under the general theme of "economic transformation," we identified six key areas which we believed must form part of a transformative agenda: the pursuit of inclusive growth that reduces inequalities; the promotion of economic diversification and value addition; the creation of a stable, enabling environment for the private sector and free enterprise to flourish; the necessity to change our production and consumption patterns to protect our ecosystems; the creation and strengthening of fair

and transparent institutions; and, finally, the necessity to create equal opportunities for all.

There are opportunities today that can make the transformation not only plausible but very affordable. We live in an era where rapid technological change, especially empowered by the information revolution, is deepening the integration of the world economy, changing the structure of jobs, offering new economic opportunities for all the countries, facilitating green growth and enabling many low-income countries to leapfrog through economic transformation. Africa, for example, today has more than 700 million mobile subscribers – a remarkable figure given that there were nearly zero subscribers 20 years ago.

These innovations give us confidence in what Africa can achieve in the near future. As highlighted by the Economic Commission for Africa, the years since decolonization have reinforced some of the historical trends, introduced new influences, and thrown up exciting new possibilities. Africa is thus poised to seize the opportunity to rally our people and empower our cultural heritage to be “interactive and evolving.” The endurance and resilience of African culture, coupled with its economic might and its demographic dividends, bode well for what we say in Addis as an Age of Renaissance in Africa.

Conclusion

As 2013 comes to a close, and we embark on a course of negotiations to reach consensus on a new global development framework, Africa emphasizes and recommits to an unwavering commitment to work with global partners to find convergence and agreement. Africa is determined, in the coming years, to transform into the land of opportunity and promise – a continent with a burgeoning, productive youth population; with rapidly expanding technologies; and with greater regional integration and continental trade.

Africa is prepared to work on these issues, to develop a world where no one is left behind, where all have equal opportunity to prosper, a world where we show respect for our environment. Achieving this transformation will require collaboration – new partnerships, global and grounded in equality and mutual respect. We are confident that Africa and Europe, with historical ties, will be in the forefront to show that there truly is the beginning of a new era.

I thank you.