

**Opening Remarks by H.E. President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf
At Workshop between the Government and the United Nations Mission
in Liberia (UNMIL) on Liberia's Security Transition
Monrovia, Liberia
Wednesday, August 1, 2012**

Mr. Speaker;
Ambassador Tillander;
Special Representative Karin Landgren, Mr. O'Neill and UNMIL Officials;
Security Sector Officials;
Ministers and Officials of Government present;
Workshop Participants;
Ladies and Gentlemen:

Welcome, and thank you for the invitation to join you, as you convene this most important workshop to plan Liberia's security transition. Our Government is keenly aware of the challenges we face over the next three years, as United Nations peacekeeping forces are gradually withdrawn from Liberia. This workshop is a measure of the importance that all of us, Government and partners alike, attach to this eventuality.

As I understand it, the objectives for this three-day session include the much-anticipated formulation of the roadmap for implementing transition activities and identifying funding for the capability and capacity gaps of our security agencies.

Since 2010, we have been discussing the transition planning process. The Joint Transition Working Group completed capacity and resource gaps analyses, providing a detailed list of all UN tasks. Security agencies were identified to take over specific tasks, as were the financial resources necessary to carry out these tasks. The overall financial gap was assessed at US\$72 million.

In all of our discussions with various UN teams coming to Liberia – the Technical Assessment Mission (TAM) in March, and the Security Council delegation in May – we have emphasized:

- The need for a responsible transition, through a gradual process, occurring over a period of 3-5 years;
- The alignment of transitional activities with the budget cycle and Government priorities within the reform process;
- A turn-over process that takes into consideration the agreed three-tier levels of threats.

During the progress assessment visit of the Security Council delegation, we recognized the progress and identified the challenges in the country's security, economic, governance and infrastructure sectors. This led to agreement on a gradual drawdown of UNMIL's security component, consistent with national and regional security dynamics.

Our aim is to have a transition that is reasonable, one which ensures harmony between foreign troops' withdrawal, and national capacity enhancement. In this regard, we have emphasized that a capacitated and well-equipped police force will be the key to a successful UNMIL drawdown.

Although we are investing more in our security sector than ever before, with a projected investment of around \$60 million in the next budget cycle, based on the concerns that have been expressed about the level of budgetary support, we have begun the exercise of re-examining the budget to determine where there are deficiencies and where additional support will be necessary to ensure that we carry out this transition successfully. We know that the majority of that support needs to be directed at the police, to help them recruit new officers, officers with college degrees ready for training and for deployment in our five regional justice and security hubs.

In our national five-year development plan, under the Agenda for Transformation, we intend to make major investment to prepare our security sector for the upcoming UNMIL transition and drawdown. It is also important

for us to invest in strengthening our judicial system and promoting national reconciliation.

We wish to express appreciation to UNMIL, which has been a very committed and effective partner, not only generally in its peacekeeping operations, but its support of the work for the transition. To them we owe a lot for the peace that we've enjoyed for these past few years. We also want to thank our partners who have given the support to UNMIL that has enabled us to make this much progress; and to our Security Team – the Ministers of Justice and Defense – who have been our focal points in the way in which this transition has evolved.

Now let me speak off the record. I took time last night to read the Security Transition, Planning Process, and came out of it with several issues.

First, **ownership**. The discussion centered around executive policing modality or a donor-led modality. I took into account what was said about Sierra Leone, using the executive model, and what is appropriate for Liberia, and the fact that UNMIL endorsed the donor-led modality. We accept that endorsement, but I hope what it means is very clear, that we will have a lead coordinator, whether it is UNMIL or some other bilateral partner, who will be a lead coordinator working with us, with the clear understanding that the ownership and the responsibility of ownership and leadership belongs to Liberia.

Second, **political will**. Under that political will, we should examine the chain of command and leadership quality in the police. We accept those points, and we ask that a Committee is formed to look at this chain of command for the police; to examine carefully the qualification, the capacity of those who have leadership roles in the police, so that the changes which need to be made, can be made quickly, so that the transition moves unhindered. We may have to come back to an earlier decision about civilian oversight or civilian coordination of police expertise.

We think one issue is **finance**. As I mentioned, we will begin to re-examine the post-budgetary allocation because, as you know, the budget is now under the discussion and review of our National Legislature. We will therefore have to

work with our Legislature to identify where we think possible reforms can be made, and try to convince them that those reforms are necessary and require additional financial support.

Let me also say that increase in financial appropriations must go hand-in-hand with accountability and transparency in policing operations. We cannot hide behind security, covertness, and all of that which short-change accountability. In the transition, we want to make sure that financial systems are built into the programs that will ensure us that monies appropriated, and monies made available, will be used for the purpose intended.

Finally, **community participation**. This is something that we also need some vigorous discussion on, because of the lack of confidence by the communities in the police. We recognize the effort made by our police to fight crimes; we recognize that some of them go beyond the call of duty in their performance. But yet there's this gap in confidence, and that is because we need a more effective program of interaction, support and participation in our communities.

Those particular points that I drew out of this program are things that I will be focusing on and in which I will get involved personally as we try to work with our transition leadership team to make sure that we address all of these.

Let me thank you, SRSG, for telling us that you (UNMIL) will be here beyond three years. We understand that the decision that you said in September will be final, and we take it that that final decision will say exactly what you have said.

Let me commit to all of you our Government's fullest cooperation and our intent to make this transition a success. We have long talked about Liberia being a post-conflict success story. This is an important element of ensuring that that success story remains true.

I thank all of the legislators; I did not recognize some of them before because I did not know they were around the table, but let me extend to all of you legislators – our Pro-Temp, our Senators, our Representatives – I already

recognized the Speaker – for their participation, their cooperation. Their support will be vital if we are to implement this transition successfully.

Thank you.