

Remarks by H.E. Joseph N. Boakai, Vice President of Liberia,
At the Official Dedication of the National Elections
Commission Headquarters,
Wednesday, March 24, 2010, Monrovia, Liberia

Her Excellency Madam Linda Thomas-Greenfield, Ambassador
of the United States of America;
Madam Pamela White, USAID Mission Director in Liberia;
Representatives of our International Partners;
The Doyen and Members of the Diplomatic Corps;
Members of the National Legislature here present;
Members of the Cabinet and other Officials of Government;
Chairman James Fromoyan and Commissioners of the National
Elections Commission;
Chairmen, Officers and Members of Political Parties;
Civil Society Representatives;
Members of the Press;
Ladies and Gentlemen:

It is with great delight for me to be here today, in front of this magnificent new edifice, which is no doubt a historic landmark, to formally receive the newly constructed National Elections Commission Building on behalf of the Her Excellency President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, the Government and People of Liberia. Since its creation, the National Elections Commission now boasts of a permanent home which is not only modern, fully equipped and suitable for the conduct of transparent and credible elections, but also a historic landmark.

Let me seize this moment to thank Ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield, USAID Mission Director Pamela White, and through them to the Government and people of the United States of America, for the generous contribution of their taxpayers money and expertise that made this new building possible. Considering the global recession and its debilitating effects on the American economy, to unswervingly and steadfastly honor their commitment to funding this project speaks to the true character of the American people. The belief that long-term stability in Liberia hinges on the free, fair and transparent conduct of elections, which promotes democracy, is what made this investment possible.

What more can we value in our time-tested relationship with the United States of America than an investment in our long-term viability? The summation of what the American people have contributed to our social, political and economic development over the years makes it all too obvious for Liberians to reach the logical conclusion that the United States of America

remains Liberia's premier development partner. America has been there with us and for us, which is the hallmark of a true and steady friendship, and Liberia deeply cherishes its ties with the United States.

I would be remiss if I did not express gratitude to the more than three hundred (300) workers, including laborers, skilled artisans and craftsmen, many of whom worked double shifts to ensure that this building was completed within the duration. The speed with which they worked, alongside our partners, shows not only what our people can achieve together but also just how important this building is in ensuring a cohesive society.

Madam Ambassador;
The Chairman and Family of NEC;
Officials of Government;
Heads of Political Parties;
Other Distinguished Guests;
Fellow Liberians;
Ladies and Gentlemen:

What we inaugurate today is not just a structure but all that it signifies. This building is a "one-stop shop" in this epoch to nurture a sustained democratic culture based on the rule of law, which, I am proud to state, has already taken off on a healthy trajectory.

Moreover, this building is an attestation of the United States Government's assurances to partnering with Liberia in institutionalizing democracy and all its attendant benefits, such as freedom of speech, freedom of the press, freedom of assembly, adherence to the rule of law, etc.

Also, this building symbolizes a stark reminder to my fellow Liberians that the ballots should reign supreme over bullets at all times, while every fiber of our being will be exerted to ensure that free, fair and credible elections are the mantra of our democratic foundation. This we will not budge from nor waver!

Every Liberian should be appreciative that the National Elections Commission has a firm base from which to build on its recent achievements, not least of which was the successful conduct of two senatorial by-elections in 2009, the more complex of which was the Montserrado County Senatorial one. That by-election was faced with enormous challenges of dealing with one-third of the entire registered voting population. Nonetheless, NEC and the Liberian people showed themselves to be equal to the task, with no substantiated claims of fraud or cheating during the entire process. I am optimistic that the Commission will continue to conduct itself professionally and play its pivotal role without fear or favor, in this new democratic dispensation so that it continues to earn the trust of the Liberian people.

Excellencies;
Officials of Government;
Invited Guests;
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen:

In closing, the conduct of free, fair and transparent elections typifies good governance, which this Government has embedded in its four pillars of the national renewal agenda or "Lift Liberia". We will hold you, members of NEC, individually and collectively, responsible to maintain the sanctity of this building, especially the integrity, impartiality and steadfastness required to conform to international best practices, the standard of any democratic country's National Elections Commission. You can all be reassured that this Government will do what is expected of it, within the contours of the law, to maintain a peaceful and democratic future. I salute all of you once again for the faith you have cast in our future by contributing to this splendid edifice.

I thank you.