

Remarks by H. E. Joseph N. Boakai, Vice President, Republic of Liberia
At Program Marking One-Year Anniversary of the Launch of the Angie Brooks
International Center for Women's Empowerment, Leadership Development,
International Peace and Security
University of Liberia Campus at Fendell, Sunday, March 7, 2010

Excellencies;

Workshop Facilitators and Participants;

Distinguished Guests;

Ladies and Gentlemen:

As we did last year, and have done since the United Nations set aside this day more than thirty years ago, we join the world in commemorating International Women's Day, being celebrated tomorrow, March 8th. The international community set aside this day in recognition of women's contributions to international peace and development. Women have made important strides, but much remains to be done to ensure that the female 50 percent of the population can reach their fullest potential and make the world better through their contributions.

How time flies, Ladies and Gentlemen! It was an extraordinary happening that took place in Liberia exactly a year ago, when our country co-convoked, with Finland, the International Colloquium on Women's Empowerment, Leadership Development, International Peace and Security.

The Colloquium witnessed one of the largest gatherings of women ever held in Africa. Over a thousand women – and a few men – convened near Monrovia to discuss and strategize on how to empower women to be more effective leaders by linking them with their peers from around the world, and sharing and implementing best practices on economic empowerment, influencing climate change and sustaining development. The outcomes were: The Monrovia Declaration and The Call for Action.

Colloquium participants also launched, and broke ground for, the Angie Brooks International Center on Women's Empowerment, Leadership Development, International Peace and Security (ABIC). The Center was envisaged as the entity that would ensure that the goals and objectives of the Colloquium, enshrined in the

Monrovia Declaration and The Call for Action, would be implemented, by providing research, training, documentation and advocacy.

One year on, we have come together, here in the temporary home of the Angie Brooks International Center, to mark its first anniversary, and to take stock of how far we've progressed on our journey to empower women and develop their leadership skills. Here are the highlights:

- With funding from the African Union, the Center's Secretariat was able to renovate the temporary facilities that you see around you. Better yet, the staff has now moved in. Our thanks to the AU for this crucial support.
- The emphasis of the Center is training women in leadership development, empowerment, and to be part of the peace process, with women at the peace table, in keeping with United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security.
- More specifically, the program getting under way today focuses on the training and capacitation aspect, with workshops on mediation and conflict resolution; inheritance law; leadership; and women in coffee. The Center is engaged in capacitating African women in the areas of leadership development, empowerment, and to have a role around peace table.
- The Center is not waiting for the construction of new premises to start work; it is using what's available, as you can see.
- Assistance to operationalize the Center has come from the Government of Denmark, the African Women's Development Fund (AWDF), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and UNIFEM.
- There have been several major follow-up meetings since the Colloquium – in Paris and two in New York in September 2009.
- Since the Colloquium, the two Co-Conveners – Presidents Ellen Johnson Sirleaf and Tarja Halonen of Finland – have brought its outcomes to the attention of the United Nations General Assembly in New York in last September.
- In 2011, the second anniversary of the Colloquium will be observed in Finland, with the organizing of the first lecture series as a follow-up to the Colloquium. Thus, the positive collaboration between Liberia and Finland continues.
- A Resources Mobilizing Committee has been constituted, which the Government of Finland is supporting.
- The ABIC Secretariat is seeking an endowment for the construction of the Angie Brooks Center and its operation. We call on our partners to continue to work with us for the full operationalization of the Angie Brooks Center. That it serves as a model in a post-conflict country like Liberia is unique.

- UNDP has expressed an interest in linking with the Center in preparations for the 2011 elections.
- At the launch of the Angie Brooks International Center, President Sirleaf promised to set up a center for the empowerment of rural women in honor of Chief Suah Koko, who assisted the Government of Liberia's expansion drive into areas in Bong, Lofa, Nimba and Grand Gedeh Counties. The Angie Brooks Center has thus far raised US\$25,000 for the Chief Suah Koko Center in Bong County.

The accomplishments of the Center in just a short period are striking. A year ago, we were participants in a whirlwind of activities. So much happened in those few days of the International Colloquium (March 7-8), followed by the National Event (March 9-10), that were it not for the chronicling and documentation conducted by the Secretariat, first of the Colloquium, and then by the Angie Brooks Center's Secretariat, much of the flurry of activities would today be only a memory. The Secretariat, through its meticulous documentation of all that transpired, has made follow-up action feasible, and its records are a gift for posterity. In that connection, let me commend the ABIC's Secretariat's Retrospective of the Colloquium.

My task today is easy: simply to declare open this series of activities that includes training workshops, and an exhibition of the Colloquium in pictures. I do this, and wish you a success in your various activities.

Thank you.