

11th Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the African Union

# Remarks by H. E. Ellen Johnson Sirleaf

President of the Republic of Liberia

Sharm El-Sheik, Egypt  
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Mr. Chairperson; Excellencies, Colleagues; Heads of State and Delegations; Ministers; Distinguished Participants:

I would like first to join the others in thanking President Mubarak, the Government and people of the Arab Republic of Egypt for the excellent hospitality which has been extended to us. I thank both of you our chairpersons of the Union and the Commission for the satisfactory manner in which you are guiding the affairs of the Union.

Mr. Chairperson, we have debated the principle and the modus operandi of a United Africa for years. We affirmed this principle in the Accra Declaration and the report of the Committee of Twelve that is before us reiterates this position and identifies the content and process for the achievement of this objective.

Mr. Chairperson, we thank the Committee for this report, but believe that that the content could be more precise and realistic. Similarly, the process of acceleration and benchmarks are numerous, vague, lacking in timeframe and in some points unrealistic. For example, we have talked of the rationalization of the RECS for over fifteen years and we are today nowhere near that goal. We know that it is not possible to achieve full regional integration and its ultimate goal of a full Union government without relinquishing some elements of sovereignty – this was duly recognized by the meeting of the conference of African Ministers in charge of integration, in their meeting in Abidjan, 22-23 May 2008. It is also difficult if not impossible to achieve full economic integration unless we increase intra Africa trade and reduce the huge development disparities among our countries.

So what can we do?

While it is unrealistic to think that we will leave here today with the framework of a Union government in place, I believe that we can reach a consensus on some of the benchmarks outlined in the report. For example, point VII which calls upon the RECS to achieve regional integration through the process of variable geometry. The several measures taken by the various RECs have been covered by the report made to us this morning by the Chairperson of the Meeting of Ministers of Integration.

Thus Chairperson of each of the RECS could be charged with the responsibility to identify the additional practical time bound steps around which a consensus could be reached. This could then be taken to a regular or an extraordinary AU Summit that would deal exclusively with this matter with the view to reaching an agreement among those countries ready to proceed with a full Union Government, leaving the door open for others to follow consistent with the progress and wishes of their populations.

Mr. Chairperson, I thank you.