

Speech by Vice President Joseph N. Boakai
At A Program Marking the Launch of
The Education Support Program for Female
Candidates for Service in the
Liberia National Police
Saturday, 20 January, 2007

United Nations Secretary-General's Special Representative to Liberia, Ambassador Alan Doss;
Dr. Joseph Z. Korto, Minister of Education;
Counselor Frances Johnson Morris, Minister of Justice;
Honorable Varbah Gayflor, Minister of Gender and Development
Mrs. Beatrice Munah Sieh, Inspector General, Liberia National Police;
Mr. Mohamed Al Hassan, Commissioner, United National Civilian Police;
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen:

Let me first of all thank the Almighty God for making it possible for us to gather here to discuss issues of interest to our society.

I felt some relief when I was informed that the reason we are gathered here is to the launch a program to assist in the recruitment of females in the restructured Liberia National Police. I am also informed that under this program, the UN Mission in Liberia in collaboration with the Liberian Government has developed and is implementing an education support program for interested females under the age of thirty-five. The aim of this program, I am also told, is to increase female representation of at least 20 per cent in the force.

Achieving this goal which was part of the master plan for the restructured police, has been challenging, as many females have been reluctant to apply, compounded by the high number of females in Liberia that lack the basic educational requirements for recruitment into the national police.

The goal of the program which is to bring the educational level of interested females up to the high school is laudable. The project, designed by the UN police and the Liberia National Police with the cooperation of the Ministries of Gender, Education and Justice as well as the West African Examinations Council and the Stella Maris Polytechnic, and which is geared towards empowering our females, is undoubtedly one that deserves commendation.

The response of females to the drive to recruit a new national police is discouraging, as less than ten per cent of the more than two thousand police recruited so far, are females. We can attribute this reluctance to several factors, the most important of which is the bad record accumulated by police in the past. Policing before the war was respected, but due to the war, police lost their dignity, and were considered no better than riff-raffs who spend the whole day begging for five dollar notes.

The second factor is the tendency for Liberian girls not want to be exposed, or thirdly, simply lack of qualification.

I would like to extend sincere thanks and appreciation to the UN Mission, the Stella Maris Polytechnic and the West African Examinations Council who have cooperated with the Liberian Government in the designing and implementation of this worthwhile project.

The Unity Party-led Government places premium on not only in empowering our youth, but also ensuring that all Liberians are gainfully employed. Liberia as a founding member of the United Nations subscribed to all conventions and resolutions promulgated by this august body, and therefore fully supports the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women, and Security Council Resolution 1325.

I would like to use this forum to call on all girls o consider a career in the police force. The police, like all other careers ca be respectable, depending on how one practices it, and should therefore not be shunned.

What you saw happening to the police in the past will definitely change after the restructuring exercise is completed. Our aim is to establish a police force that will match other police forces in Africa. We intend to provide everything our police need to perform their duties with pride, dignity and professionalism. WE want to do this because we do not want to see our post-war police engaging in habits that brought disrepute to the police in the past.