

Remarks by Her Excellency Ellen Johnson Sirleaf,  
President of the Republic of Liberia  
At Programs Marking the  
First Anniversary Celebration of Her  
Inauguration as President of the Republic of Liberia  
Antoinette Tubman Stadium (ATS)  
Tuesday, January 16, 2007

My Fellow Liberians:

Today is a great day. It is a great day for the women of Liberia. It is a great day for African women and for many women around the world. Today is a great day for all Liberians young and old, men and women, boys and girls. We should be glad and grateful to our Almighty.

Let me again use this opportunity to thank you all for the decision you made in November 2005 during the elections. You did not go wrong!

One year ago, I raised my hand and swore to the Constitutional Oath of Office as President of our beloved Republic. In my inaugural address, I pledged change, a break with the past and with business as usual. I pledged to restore hope in our nation and in

our peoples. I pledged to heal our national wounds and reunite our people. I pledged to revive and improve our economy and create job opportunities. I pledged a new birth of freedom and democracy and the rule of law in our land. I pledged an agenda of renewal and progress. On that historic day, I pledged accountability and transparency in the management of the affairs and resources of our country.

It was high noon that day. The air surrounding the inaugural grounds and throughout our country was euphoric and expectant. Our nation and people were and remain hopeful.

Today, we have come a full 365-day circle and it is only fair to take stock of our progress, our challenges and of the work that lies ahead of us individually and collectively.

But, before we do so, let me ask each of you in this place as well as those who are under my voice by radio, to stand and together observe three minutes of silence in thanksgiving to Almighty God whose mighty and wise Hands guided and steered us and the affairs of this Republic during these difficult, but rewarding twelve months.

Thank you!

My Fellow Liberians:

### **Peace, Security and Stability**

At the end of our first year, I am proud to say that, albeit still fragile, our country is at peace. Our country is secure, and it is stable poised to begin anew. This is one major achievement for which each and every Liberian should be grateful and proud. It is one achievement for which we should all be thankful to our security forces, old and new. We are thankful also to our sub-regional, regional and global partners and friendly Governments. They have stood by and with us. They have sent their young men and women and contributed enormous resources to create and maintain the peace which we enjoy today. We also thank the Vice President, Ambassador Joseph N. Boakai and his able office staff for all the support we received during the past year.

Equally important, we are grateful to the Liberian people for their understanding and contribution to the peace and stability we are experiencing today. Only a year ago, some thought that our country could never know peace. Only a year ago, not too many of people believed that the national rebirth we spoke of and witness today was possible and within our grasp. And I know that there

are still some out there who believe that peace and stability are only here with us for a short while.

But together, we can and will defy and prove that they are wrong.

Together, we will ensure that our peace, our security, our stability, and our democracy remain irreversible-and strong. The challenge that we do not go back into conflict is ours. Let us face it together with all the resolve within us.

My Fellow Liberians;

### **National Reconstruction and Rebuilding**

I am proud to say today that our reconstruction and rebuilding efforts have taken on greater dimension. We are beginning to see fruits from these efforts. Hard choices had to be made and difficult decisions taken. We are proud because if we consider what our government inherited a year ago, and see where we are today as a nation and as a people; there is cause for all of us to be proud.

- ◆ A year ago, the Security Sector Reform and famous G-Map Programs were started by the then National Transitional Government of Liberia. Today, we have given the meaning.
- ◆ A year ago, open corruption was largely the order of the day. To be honest in government was seen as being stupid. Today, we all know the story. If you misuse the public trust, you will be brought to justice. Today, we are setting the standards not only for the past, but for the current and for future governments.
- ◆ A year ago wastage in our economy was felt or seen in various sectors and areas. Today, more than 17,000 ghosts have been discovered and removed from public payrolls. Total leakages in our state owned enterprises revenue baskets have been reduced considerably.
- ◆ A year ago, thousands of our children languished at home or on the streets in petty trading because of the lack of means to pursue an education. Consequently, we have enforced compulsory primary education which has led to

80% increase in the enrollment at the primary level, the majority of which are girls who have been traditionally neglected.

- ◆ 365 days ago, there was not a place where one could switch on public lights in our country. Opening public water taps did not exist a year ago. Today, in a small but modest way, some of our institutions and some residents in some parts of our capital city and a few other cities can turn on public lights and water.
- ◆ A year ago we inherited a nation with a largely non functional road system. Today, we are fast at work trying to repair our primary roads, reopening secondary roads and repairing bridges in both urban and rural areas.
- ◆ A year ago, our villages and towns were dead with very little economic and social activities going on, while their people were in refugee and displaced camps. Traveling in the country side brought dismay and a sense of helplessness. Today, men and women, young and old, and nearly all displaced have returned and many are gearing up to return to start their farms, to reconstruct their

villages, to improve the social and economic conditions of the counties.

- ◆ For the first six months of the fiscal year, reported public revenue inflow stood at US\$31million. In six months of our first fiscal year, public revenue at US\$74million almost doubled comparing calendar years 2006 and 2005, we can boast of a 40% revenue increase.
- ◆ A year ago when we took the oath of office, the government was indebted to various persons who had rendered services; civil servants, the security services, foreign diplomatic missions, former legislators, suppliers, pensioners. These obligations, many of them bogus totaled over US\$900million. Many of these with legitimate claims had not taken pay for a long period of time. Today, some of those outstanding obligations have been met, pensions have been increased and we are current in payroll to just about everyone for the period of our stewardship.
- ◆ A year ago, concession rights for our forest and mining resources were tilted against our national interest. Today,

we have in place a new forest law and a model framework for concessions that is compliant with international standards and protective of our national interest. With this the sanctions on our forest operations have been lifted.

- ◆ A year ago we took the position that many of the concession agreements and contracts, some ratified by our National Legislature, did not meet the national interest test. We have reviewed some 100 of these, many of which will be cancelled and others renegotiated to ensure appropriate benefits to government. The most important of these, Mittal Steel, has been concluded which will bring an over US\$900million impetus to our economy.
  
- ◆ A year ago, our national budget was a hidden secret. How much money government mobilized and how it was spent were all done in secret and out of public view. 365 days later, regular fiscal reports are published for public consumption, and the national budget an open book. We have also made public audit reports and UN Panel Reports, taking the risk of a misunderstanding of the assessment and findings.

- ◆ A year ago, our government functionaries lacked the requisite capacities to do the job. Today, we can boast of an inclusive and competent government comprising professionals who have demonstrated leadership and ability and vast experience. We were convinced that in order to deliver on our promises, we must have a government that is efficient, honest, and accountable. I am glad to say that by and large the cadre of managers currently serving in our Administration brings these qualities to governance.
  
- ◆ In this regard, we are proud to report that the 21 person Cabinet is composed of 5 Unity Party 6 from the several opposition parties and 10 who have no avowed political association. More importantly, 5 of our Cabinet members are women in strategic positions, representing 25% and at the Deputy and Assistant level we have reached an average of 40%. Moreover, 5 of our 15 Superintendents are women representing 33% and 2 of the 5 Associate Justices after confirmation of the recently nominated will be women. I dare say our record on women role in government is good.

- ◆ A year ago, we could hardly talk of support beyond government and its few partners. Today, we have mobilized over US\$5million from private individuals and Institutions to support education of our girls, improvement of our market place and support for Liberian businesses.
  
- ◆ A year ago our national image abroad was more of shame and disgrace with Liberians concealing their identities in international circles. Today, we have regained our lost image and have begun improving the confidence level of our partners. Today, we walk once more with pride and dignity, as our country is visited by eminent leaders and we are invited to participate in important international events.
  
- ◆ A year ago we were declared a non performer by the IMF and other international financial intermediaries. Today we have successfully concluded a program under these requirements and are now receiving pre arrears clearance grants with their representation in place in country.

My Fellow Liberians;

## Challenges

The first year of our Administration has been a year of great challenges. We have not flinched from confronting the challenge of leadership and governance, making some very difficult decisions along the way. Many challenges still remain. These include:

- ◆ The need to reorder the mindset and attitude of our post-conflict society – managing the anxiety about change and the raised expectations fueled by more than 14 years of deprivation and unmitigated sufferings. This is a huge undertaking, given the rumblings associated with lost power, privilege, influence, and access to resources. But, as in most instances, such rumblings are ephemeral. Our obligation is to continue the job we have started, build upon the progress and adhere in all our spheres of activities, continue to demonstrate and assure our citizenry that our Administration is committed to creating a democratic society that guarantees individual liberties and opportunities for all.

- ◆ The need to develop a coherent and holistic economic agenda and policies that respond to our vision for renewing Liberia and building a prosperous and vibrant nation.
- ◆ The need to stimulate activities in our productive sectors – mining, agriculture, by creating the conditions to attract private sector investment and capital.
- ◆ The need to be more innovative in the creation of jobs for the thousands of our youths who remain idle.
- ◆ The need to continue and enhance the implementation our reform agenda to bring the structural change and transformation which our country needs.
- ◆ The need to provide the means to strengthen the pillars of integrity, including the judiciary and the General Auditing Commission.
- ◆ The need to do more to enhance the processes of reconstruction by greater support to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the Independent Human Rights Commission and by bringing leaders of political parties within a cooperative framework for the socio-economic development and progress of our nation. As we begin the second year of our Presidency, we will give priority to our effort to reach out more. We will

encourage leaders of other political parties to reach out, as well.

- ◆ The need to continue and accelerate the rehabilitation of infrastructure which includes schools, roads, health facilities with our limited resources and national capacities.

My Fellow Liberians:

### **Conclusion**

As we bring down the curtain on our first year, it is sad to note the unfortunate state of affair in the Honorable First Branch of Government. This comes at a time when we should all be collectively assessing and commending our collaboration and our progress even as we recommit to do more in the future. While respecting their independence and authority, I can only call upon them, all of them, to consider the harmful indications to our national endeavors as a result of that which is being played in the local and foreign press.

Finally, I sincerely thank each and every one of our citizens and partners for their trust and for choosing the path of peace and security and stability.

I thank my colleagues who lead and managed the other two branches of our Government for their cooperation and collaboration.

I thank members of my Cabinet and all others who served in the Executive Branch of our Government for their sacrifice and contributions.

We should all be glad for the progress but mindful that much work lies ahead of us. Many difficult challenges have confronted us and many more will confront us. We must resolve to meet each with the same resolve and valor with which we have met and dealt with the challenges of the first year of our Presidency.

As we begin the journey of our second year, I renew to each of you, our citizens, at home and abroad, the same commitment and dedication and zeal that have characterized our first year as President. We shall continue to work to further nurture and

consolidate our peace to ensure that your Government is more responsive to your concerns and needs.

We shall continue to do more to create jobs and to give living expression to our pledge to make “*Papa Na Come*” meaningful in each of your and our lives.

It has been a good year but a tough first year. It has been a fruitful but a challenging first year. But through it all, each and every one of us remained blessed.

May God continue to Bless and Prosper Our Nation!

I thank you!