

**Statement by H.E. President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf  
At the United States Independence Day Reception  
Held on Monday, July 5, 2010  
Monrovia City Hall**

**Ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield;  
Chairman Price and Members of the U.S. Congressional  
Delegation;  
Vice President Boakai;  
Speaker Tyler, President Pro-Tempore Wortorson, and Members of  
the National Legislature;  
Chief Justice Lewis and Members of the Judiciary;  
The Dean, Members of the Cabinet, and Other Officials of  
Government;  
Mr. Doyen, Excellencies, and Members of the Diplomatic  
Corps;  
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen:**

**Madame Ambassador:**

**It is an honor to greet you and to extend, on behalf of the Government and people of Liberia, our best wishes to the Government and people of the United States of America as you mark your 234<sup>th</sup> Independence Day. We most heartily join you in celebrating this historic event.**

**On that day, 234 years ago, the dream of your Founding Fathers for liberty came true and a proud young nation was born. Who knew then, that the flame they kindled would serve as a beacon**

of freedom and prosperity for the world. Seventy-one years later, strengthened by the same yearning for liberty, the Founders of our nation also declared their independence.

Our two nations are bound by a kinship that can never be broken. We were born of the same dream, the same ideals. We are not only friends with America, we are family.

On behalf of all Liberians, I say thank you to the American Government and the American people for your support in allowing Liberia to emerge from conflict, to have the opportunity to rebuild and to renew our nation, learning from the American experience of unity and reconciliation, putting national interest above personal, political and financial gains.

Madam Ambassador:

Your country has been a strong partner to us in reform of our security sector. A 2000-strong professional and ethnically balanced new Armed Forces of Liberia has been trained. Our National Coast Guard, with an initial strength of 40, was reactivated in January, following training provided by the United States. Facilities at the Barclay Training Center, which houses the Ministry of National Defense, the renovated Kesselly Barracks at Schiefflin, and the Sande Ware Camp in Careysburg have all been renovated with U.S. support.

A draft Act now before our Legislature, which seeks to regulate and rationalize our security architecture, is based upon a study by the Rand Corporation.

We continue to remain hopeful that the very welcome 64 Mentors from the U.S. Marine Africa Command is the beginning of a bigger AFRICOM presence.

U.S. support can be found in several other sectors: Democracy and Governance, Health, Education and Economic Growth, details of which will be discussed in our meeting tomorrow.

Dear Friends:

As you all know, a historic milestone was reached just last week. It was a proud and uplifting moment for Liberia to reach the HIPC completion point in record time. We could not have done this without support from the Administration, the Congress, and the people of the United States. We are also mindful and remain strongly committed to a fiscal discipline regime that will ensure that our country does not go into unsustainable debt again.

During my recent U.S. trip, I met other partners critical to Liberia's economic growth. We held talks with the Chevron Company about oil exploration off our shores. These are early days yet, but the discussions raise exciting possibilities for Liberia. I want to be clear, however, that if oil is found, we will use transparency and fairness to avoid the "resource curse" and will invest the proceeds for future generations.

Another clear area of recent U.S.-Liberia partnership is the commencement, in September, of direct Delta Airlines flights. This is a proud and symbolic step for us, as it shows that our ports can meet international standards, and it also makes travel between our countries easier and less time-consuming. During our visit to Washington, we invited Members of Congress to join

the inaugural flight in September. We hope to see some of you back here at that time.

The United States has been most instrumental, through various projects, in promoting good governance, transparency, accountability and respect for the rule of law. These include support for our National Elections Commission, including the facilities where they will do their work. The 2011 elections will be a defining event for our country, challenging our ability and our resolve to continue on the path of peace, stability and development as a means of consolidating democratic and development gains.

It is timely that this Congressional Delegation is here for tomorrow's signing of the Millennium Challenge Corporation's Threshold Agreement. This grant will go towards improving the policy environment in areas of land rights and access, girls' primary education, and trade policy – all of them crucial for Liberia's peace and socio-economic development.

Madame Ambassador:

As I said in my Annual Message to the National Legislature earlier this year: The weight of rebuilding our country and the destiny of our nation rests primarily with us Liberians. The answers to all our questions do not lie beyond our reach. They exist in our homes, schools, religious and traditional institutions and universities; in our farms and our mines; in the imagination of our business people; in the pride of the people – the most resilient people on earth by virtue of what we have been through as a nation. What is required now is for us to pull together as one, to confront the challenges we face, and take responsibility for our shared future.

Our challenge – and our focus – has been nothing less than removing the economic and social burdens of a generation of misrule. We realize that this is only the beginning, that we have a long way to go. But the foundation is now in place, and we are poised to accelerate our development in the coming years.

I thank you, Madam Ambassador, and, through you, Secretary of State Clinton and Members of Congress who gave the support that allowed us the opportunity to meet with President Obama in May. We used that occasion to brief him on Liberia's progress and the challenges our country still faces. We are grateful for his reassurance of the United States' unswerving commitment to Liberia's future.

## TOAST

And now, Ladies and Gentlemen, I ask that you join me and raise your glasses in toasting the good health, long life and happiness of President Barack Obama; the prosperity and well-being of the American people; and the bonds of friendship and bilateral cooperation that exist between the Republic of Liberia and the great United States of America. May God continue to bless our fraternal nations and peoples.

Happy Independence Day!

I thank you.