

Statement by H.E President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf
At Dedication of the University of Liberia Fendall Campus
Tuesday, July 20, 2010

Ambassador Zhou Yuxiao and the Delegation of the People's Republic of China;
The Chairman and Members of the University of Liberia Board of Trustees;
Dr. Emmet Dennis, President, and Faculty, Staff and Students of the University of Liberia;
Honorable Members of the Legislature and of the Judiciary present;
Members of the Cabinet and Other Government Officials;
Mr. Doyen, Excellencies and Members of the Diplomatic Corps;
Her Excellency the Special Representative of the Secretary General,
Officers and Staff of the United Nations Mission in Liberia;
Our Development Partners;
The Commissioner and Former Commissioner of the Township of Louisiana;
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen:

I am delighted to join in celebrating the completion of this magnificent new campus, just 26 months after construction began in April 2008.

When the People's Republic of China offered a US\$21.8 million grant to Liberia, I did not hesitate in directing that those funds be used for the construction of a new campus at Fendall, for the undergraduates at the University of Liberia. This gift to the people of Liberia resulted in the largest project built with help from the

Chinese Government since our two nations resumed diplomatic relations in 2003. On behalf of all Liberians, and especially the students, I want to acknowledge China's efforts and generosity.

We built this campus to be able to enroll more students and to have space to expand our academic programs.

In the 1970s, when the Government planned to relocate the University to a more suitable location, Fendall, here in the Township of Louisiana, was selected.

Initially, the campus housed the William R. Tolbert, Jr. College of Agriculture and Forestry. Two years later, The T. J. R. Faulkner College of Science of Technology was relocated here. By the end of the 1980s, all the undergraduate colleges, with the exception of the College of Business and Public Administration, had relocated to Fendall. During the 14-year civil war, the campus was completely destroyed.

Along with it went the hopes of a generation of students, whose potential and ambition was put on hold. To turn that page forever, we have built a modern campus that matches the fresh ambition of Liberia. The newly designed buildings create an environment more conducive to learning. There are larger classrooms, with more space as the student body has grown far too large for UL's Capitol Hill campus. University students currently commute by buses between the two campuses. Fendall will bring all UL undergraduates to one location, creating a greater sense of community.

This new four-storey building has vital new facilities. These include:

- an academic exchange center for 360 attendees, where conferences and forums can happen;
- 29 classrooms, so that students can learn in the right surroundings;
- 1 five-roomed library, to safely store the knowledge they need to learn;
- 4 computer rooms so that they can do their work properly.

I congratulate China Guandong Xinguan International Group for a great job completing the project. The Chinese Government has further agreed to provide furniture to the Campus as an additional program of aid to the University of Liberia, for which we are grateful.

I want to also thank the United States for a US\$1.2 million grant to renovate the Engineering building at the TJR College of Science and Technology opened earlier this year. This has been a clear example of the spirit of partnership which we have promoted in Liberia, and we commend our two partners – the U.S. and China – for the collaborative effort which has brought these results.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

This is a great day for the students. But this is about more than newer buildings and more space. As we dedicate this new campus, we open a better breeding ground for the talent and ideas of our youth. An astonishing 44 percent of Liberia's population is under the age of 15.

They represent a huge resource, more valuable than any natural material. Their energy and skill will power our country in the future. This campus is where we refine young minds. For every cent of investment sown here, Liberia will reap the rewards many times over.

We all know what education means for people: It opens a young person's horizons, building their confidence and expectations of life. It gives them prospects and ambition and the chance to realize them. It is a ladder out of poverty for millions of potential achievers. This campus should make that possible for anyone that wants to learn, young and old.

I owe my life to education. It taught me the value of learning and hard work, and that life is full of chances.

A university education gave me the chance to think differently, to realize my own destiny and eventually tear down age-old barriers. Let this be a place of possibility. Let it cherish openness and free thinking. Let it help a new generation shatter their own barriers and write their own life stories. Let this be a place where young Liberians find their hopes and ambitions lifted, so that they can lift their nation.

God bless us and God bless Liberia.
I thank you.