

Keynote Address
By
H.E. President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf
To
Baptist Women Missionary Unions
Of Africa Conference
Baptist Youth Camp, Schiefflin Highway
Montserrado County, Liberia
Monday, November 15, 2010

Sister Olivia B. Hill, President of the Woman's Missionary Union
of Liberia;

Officers and Members of the Baptist Woman's Union of
Liberia, West Africa and Africa;

Distinguished Delegates;

Visiting Guests;

Sisters of Faith:

In the spirit of genuine Liberian hospitality, I embrace and wholeheartedly welcome our friends and guests, our Sisters in Christ, from all over Africa. I do so, on behalf of the Government and people of Liberia, and in my own name. May God Almighty continue to bless you individually, as well as your organizations, and guide you, as you do His work and deliberate in His name over the coming days.

As the largest protestant mission organization for women in the world – about a million strong – I pray that your mission on earth will be fulfilled as we walk “in step with the Spirit,” the theme of this 6th Annual Conference.

We recognize that the Baptist World Alliance Women’s Department, comprising 229 National Baptist Women’s organizations in 132 countries on all 7 continents, has fulfilled the “great commission” through its women’s development and social ministry around the world, and we are pleased that Africa has played an active role in this regard.

Your devotion to help women grow to their full potential, in order to impact the world around them, recognizes their value and provides them the opportunities to develop and exercise their gifts in building a better world.

Dear Sisters:

I applaud the Baptist Women Unions for the choice of Liberia to host this 6th annual event. This is indicative of the pivotal role Liberia has played in the Baptist World Alliance. It is also proof of the international community’s confidence in the peace and security which Liberia enjoys today.

Although this comes on the heel of my return to the country and my preoccupation in calming some turbulence, I could

not say no to the Baptist Women Unions of Africa because of what you, individually and collectively, have done for Liberia. Throughout our years of civil war and upheaval, you prayed for peace in our troubled country, and your prayers, and ours, have been answered.

Liberia today is a nation at peace, going on seven years. Our first graders do not know guns, and will no longer have to run with their parents to safety. Thank you for your prayers, thank you for your belief in, and unwavering support for, my country. Liberia is indebted to all of you.

Sisters in Christ:

Religion or spirituality is the cornerstone of hope, faith and love for all peoples and races. This was the basis of strength and resolve for Liberians during our civil conflict. As women of substance from all corners of Africa, I encourage you to stand together in unity as you work towards peace, reconciliation, justice and development through prayer, witness and service.

The Apostle Paul, in his Epistle to the Galatians (5:25), said: "If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit." Paul teaches us of the importance for God's children to be led by the Spirit, noting that His Spirit leads and guides the Church into

all truths. We must all be guided by the Spirit if we are to be effective and succeed in our mission.

In planning for the future, let us also cultivate “the fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control; against such there is no law” (Galatians 5: 22-23).

With these fundamental truths of the Faith, may the work we do bear testimony of our stewardship. The Lord Jesus Christ said that a light under a bushel is unproductive. Thus He calls us to let our light so shine that the world may see our good works and glorify our Father in Heaven.

Let us pass the torch given to us by our predecessors to the younger generation as we mentor our girls and boys to be good examples and committed future leaders. Our goal should be to help them grow in their faith and actively share the love of Christ in their communities and their nations.

Dear Sisters:

As I look around this audience, I see not only women of Faith, but women who are leaving their mark on the world in their varied professions. As women of substance, you are employing your God-given talents to also advance the cause of women where you live.

It is not only a pleasure, but a duty, for me to speak to women about our role in society, and what must be done so that we can live in a world where women are treated as equals with our male counterparts.

I returned home two days ago from visits to the United States and Ghana. In Accra, last Friday, I addressed an audience of hundreds of African women – women like yourselves – on the topic of “African Women and Political Participation.” The occasion was the 10th anniversary of the African Women’s Development Fund (AWDF), an organization which promotes leadership and empowerment for African women.

I won’t go into the specifics of that political speech, given that this audience’s focus tends more towards the spiritual, but suffice it to say that I told them, and I say to you as well, that Africa’s future as an engine of global economic growth will be directly linked to the status of women on the continent.

Africa, Dear Friends, will rise when women take roles as educated and equal partners in society. Women are Africa’s future and its leaders must invest in women’s development if our continent is to advance. It is women like you who can, and will, make that happen.

I feel a certain kinship with you, the women of the Baptist Women Unions, knowing how you have prayed for my success as Africa's first female President, and for a peaceful Liberia under my leadership.

When I became President in 2006, I told the women of Africa that I felt their enormous support in all that I was endeavoring to achieve, and that I was keenly sensitive to their needs.

I see myself as representing the aspirations and expectations of women everywhere. My success is your success, as it opens the door wider for other women to step up. As women, there is a commonality in what we go through, because no matter where we come from, there is still a measure of discrimination to overcome because of our gender. It is imperative that we work together, and pull together, and support each other, and, in so doing, to strengthen and uplift women everywhere.

I know that you have a full week of activities ahead of you, so I am keeping my remarks brief. I am just happy to be among you, Dear Sisters in Christ, and to wish you a pleasant stay in Liberia.

May your deliberations be crowned with fruitfulness and success, and may this gathering be the start of a new

beginning for the Baptist Women Missionary Unions of Africa.
Again, I say welcome and may God bless each of you richly.

I thank you.