

New Year's Message
By Her Excellency Ellen Johnson Sirleaf
President of the Republic of Liberia

Season's Greetings, My Fellow Liberians:

As we enter the final year of this administration, let me, on behalf of our Government, and in my own capacity, extend to Liberians everywhere the warmest holiday greetings. I sincerely hope that everyone had a joyous and peaceful Christmas, and I wish for our people a Happy and Prosperous New Year in 2011.

In looking back over the past five years, we are proud of the significant progress we have made. We promised peace and security for our bruised and battered nation. Today, seven years since the Peace Accord, Liberia is a nation at peace; a place where children entering the first grade do not know the gun and do not have to run; a place where our children can smile again; a place where our people have turned their backs on war and have said yes to peace and reconciliation and development.

We promised to change the image of Liberia. Under our administration, Liberia is once again counted among the governments that have demonstrated a commitment to good governance, the rule of law, and respect for human rights.

We promised to revitalize our economy by encouraging investment in our natural resources, and have concluded agreements totaling over US\$16 billion, which will create jobs in mining, agriculture, forestry, and other sectors.

When we came into office, Liberia was saddled with a staggering US\$4.9 billion debt. Through our sacrifice, resilience and determination, we succeeded in getting international financial institutions, as well as bilateral institutions, to forgive that external debt, and today our country is debt free.

We promised that there would be no more years of darkness and that we would bring light to the country. Today, Monrovia and its environs have generation capacity of 9.64 megawatts, we have another 10 megawatts to go on stream, and there are at least eight projects under way to restore or expand electricity capacity throughout the country.

We promised to rebuild the physical and social infrastructure that was totally destroyed – to fix the roads, provide quality education and more schools, better healthcare and access to health services. We have done much in all of these areas, but we are also mindful of the challenges that we have more to do.

As we enter a New Year, I want to appeal to everyone, in a spirit of upholding all that we have worked for, that this be a year of true patriotism and reconciliation; that we

accentuate the positive things that unite us as a people, rather than focus on what divides us.

2011 will be a defining year for us Liberians, as we go into another round of the democratic process of holding free and fair elections. In the lead-up to October, every Liberian has an important role to play. I call on each and every eligible Liberian to register to vote starting in January, to support your favorite candidates, and to go to the polls and cast your vote on Election Day, in the general and presidential elections. Every vote counts, Ladies and Gentlemen, and I urge you to exercise your right to vote in a manner that will be beneficial to the future of this nation.

As we enter the New Year, Fellow Liberians, let us also remember our neighbors, the citizens of La Côte d'Ivoire, and pray that God will help them to find peace. We know, only too well, that what affects them also affects us, and that their peace is also our peace.

At the same time, we congratulate our other neighbors, our brothers and sisters in Guinea, on successfully making the transition to democratic rule. We will continue to support them as, together, we endeavor to strengthen democracy in our sub-region.

2011 is upon us, Fellow Citizens, and to all of you I say a Happy, Happy New Year. May God bless us all.