

Remarks by H.E. President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf
At the 235th Independence Day Reception of the United States
of America
Monrovia City Hall
Monday, July 4, 2011

Madam Ambassador;
Mr. Greenfield;
U.S. Embassy Staff;
U.S. Citizens;
Members of the Judiciary;
Mr. Senate Pro Tempore;
Honorable Members of the Legislature;
Doyen and Members of the Diplomatic Corps;
Ministers;
Political Party Leaders;
Chief Zanzar and Our Other Traditional Leaders;
Religious Leaders;
Business Leaders;
Officials of Government;
Youth Leaders;
Ladies and Gentlemen:

It gives me great pleasure to extend, on behalf of the Government and people of Liberia, warmest greetings to you and the Government and people of the United States of America on the occasion marking the 235th Anniversary Celebration of the independence of your great country.

On this day, 235 years ago, the dream of America's Founding Fathers for liberty came true and a proud young nation was born, becoming a beacon of freedom and prosperity. Seventy-one years later, strengthened by the same yearning for liberty, the Founders of Liberia also declared their independence.

Madam Ambassador;

Dear Friends;

Dear Citizens:

Liberia is now enjoying eight years of peace. This has enabled us to start the processes of economic reconstruction and national renewal. The progress is evident in the laws that have been passed, the policies and strategies that have been formulated, the construction of roads, schools, hospitals, clinics, the restoration of power and water, the rebuilding of institutions, the regaining of our national creditworthiness and dignity. The United States has stood by Liberia in the achievement of all these goals.

At the Stakeholders Forum, on February 13, 2007, former Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice told the world that the United States would cancel Liberia's debt – all of it – she said! The stage was thus set for one of the greatest achievements of this Administration, the cancellation of the bulk of our huge external debt. When Secretary of State Hillary Clinton said, in Monrovia on August 13, 2009, that the United States was pleased with Liberia's progress, the message to the world was loud and clear.

When you and I, with others of our institutional families, on December 29, 2010, Affiliation Day, observed the diversified skills and talent of our new Army, the mutual pride we shared was there for all to see.

Madam Ambassador:

The collaboration between your Drug Enforcement Agency and our National Security Agency resulted in a major international drug bust and the arrest and indictment, in the U. S., of five persons, thereby preventing the trafficking and further infiltration of drugs in our country. This was certainly another contribution to the peace and security of our people, particularly the youth.

Since 2003, there has been sustained U.S. support to Liberia. Much of this has happened on your watch. This has included:

- A \$200 million contribution to Liberia's transition, providing for the stabilization force of the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL);
- Support to the Government Economic Management Assistance Program (GEMAP);
- Funding to support Liberia's democratic elections in 2005;
- Reform of the security sector, with support to Liberia's Special Security Service, the Liberia National Police (LNP), including the armed Emergency Response Unit (ERU);
- Training of a 2,000-strong professional and ethnically balanced new Armed Forces of Liberia; training of the 40-member Liberia National Coast Guard, and donation of two 22-foot Class Defender Boats for use by the Coast Guard;
- Support in the attainment of the Poverty Reduction Strategy by promoting transparency, accountability, health, education, economic growth, and respect for the rule of law in Liberia;
- Construction of the impressive new headquarters for the National Elections Commission, and support to the NEC and the 2011 presidential and legislative elections;
- Return of the Peace Corps, which is focusing on teacher training and manning the Teacher Training Institutes; other Peace Corps volunteers are serving as high school teachers of English, math, and science in eight of our counties;
- Funding of economic opportunities programs that included technical assistance to support the start-up and expansion of self-employment and micro and small enterprises; increased accessibility, availability, relevance, and sustainability of business services, training and extension;

- Assistance to improve service delivery by supporting key ministries, agencies and county administrations with comprehensive capacity building; support to the legislative branch to improve its representational, lawmaking, and oversight duties; strengthening of the pillars of integrity – the Liberia Anti-Corruption Commission, General Auditing Commission; working with the Ministry of Justice and the judiciary to improve the administration of justice;
- The rehabilitation of infrastructure all over the country;
- Under the Emergency Power Program (EPP), the U.S. has been a strong partner in keeping our promise to restore electricity to the country, most recently through the provision of an additional 10 megawatts of power generation, with a commitment to upgrade the distribution network and connect additional customers; and
- Initiated and worked with other partners for the five-year Rebuilding Basic Health Services (RBHS) program to improve access to health services to our people.

Madam Ambassador, very significant for our strong, young government, Liberia has qualified as a country under the Millennium Challenge Account, and as we work towards becoming a Compact Country that will bring significant resources to our development efforts.

- We have also made our first export under the Africa Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA), and we'd like to commend the Liberian Entrepreneur that has made this possible.
- The attraction of private capital and return of confidence to the private marketplace is the truest sign of recovery of a nation. We are very proud that today, major U.S. companies are operating in the country: Delta Airlines has increased its services from one to three flights a week; Chevron, which has recently opened offices in Liberia and will be starting offshore drilling by the end of this year; and, of course, Firestone, the one that has been in Liberia for some 80 years, and is involved in replanting and has completely changed the workplace on

the plantations. In addition, several private foundations support a range of activities in education, health and other services.

Madam Ambassador, the Government of Liberia welcomes with appreciation the policy of President Barack Obama and his Administration toward Africa, and Liberia in particular, which emphasizes the promotion of good governance, transparency, accountability and the rule of law.

As you know, Madam Ambassador, I had a most productive and successful four-day tour to the United States (June 23-28), where I spent two days on Capitol Hill meeting the new leadership of Congress – Republicans and Democrats. I informed the congressional leaders of how well scarce resources have been put to work in Liberia, a country that has risen from the ashes of war and destruction to become an emergent democratic nation with the potential to lift itself out of a dire situation and collaborate with neighboring countries to ensure a safe and developing regional environment.

My main message was to thank congressional leaders, and through them the American people, for playing a leadership role in supporting the agenda that has brought such progress to Liberia. I fought to reinforce the bipartisan support that Liberia has enjoyed over the years, and requested a continuation of that support, even in difficult economic times for the United States.

I told the congressional leaders and Secretary of State Clinton that Liberia is a country no longer looking for handouts, but rather a nation in search of true partnership with the United States and the rest of the world. I said I was not seeking an open-ended commitment, but rather support in the next few years of our transition.

I assured our friends that if that happens, Liberia will sustain its own development and will not need foreign assistance after 10 years. As the country develops a long-term perspective in its development agenda, Liberia is determined to join the ranks of middle-income countries by the year 2030.

It depends on a system which assures the peaceful transfer of power through the exercise of choice – the institutionalization of democracy. That is why this national election is critical to Liberia’s recovery. The national contest will test our democratic principles, our multiparty system, and our independent judiciary. The campaign season commences tomorrow, July 5th, a bit too early in my opinion, but we accept what is said to represent the collective will of the political parties.

Once again, on behalf of all Liberians, I thank the American Government and people for their sacrifices in supporting Liberia thus far in its rebuilding and effort to prosperity. 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.

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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 and Michelle Obama; the prosperity and well-being of the American people; and the strengthening of bonds of friendship.