

**Statement by H.E. President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf
Following Preliminary Announcement of Presidential Run-off Results
Friday, November 11, 2011**

Fellow Liberians:

It is with the deepest humility and much gratitude to the Almighty who has kept us safe and has made this day possible that I want to thank every one of you who stood up with courage and went out to exercise your democratic franchise.

Future generations of Liberians will look upon this day as a defining moment in our nation's history. We have taken a big step forward, towards a nation of peace and dialogue.

Yesterday, the National Elections Commission announced preliminary results of Tuesday's Presidential Run-off election. The results indicate a victory for our national vision. The Liberian people have renewed their confidence in us, and we proudly accept the challenges ahead. For those who did not win, we call on them to remain committed to the principles of democracy and continue to work for our people.

I commend the National Elections Commission for carrying out a process described as free, fair and transparent, notwithstanding the distractions. As we look forward to the final tally, we hail the professional conduct of the Commission.

On behalf of the people of Liberia, I commend the United Nations Mission in Liberia, and our own security forces, for maintaining peace and creating an environment where our people were safe to go out and vote. Our appreciation also goes to international and regional partners for their participation in our electoral process. We note the many judgments rendered over the past few days, most notably by ECOWAS, the African Union and the Carter Center, that the elections of October 11 and November 8 were free, fair and transparent.

Regrettably, incidents on Monday, November 7, marred the atmosphere of Tuesday's vote and resulted in a tragic loss of life and injury. I extend my deepest condolence and offer government's assistance to those so affected. To ensure that we know the facts that will facilitate appropriate action, we have established a Special Independent Commission of Inquiry, headed by Sister Mary Laurene Browne. We cannot be clearer: All those found to have broken the law will be brought to justice.

One of the most important aspects of my duty is to protect civil liberties, individual freedoms and the unhindered expression of truths and beliefs. This is a duty I cherish and carry out with pride. This Administration will continue to do everything in our power to ensure that every Liberian's fundamental civil and human rights are protected.

The right to publicly disagree, without fear of reprisal or intimidation, is a value that we must continue to uphold. It is one of the cornerstones of democracy. That right cannot and will never be threatened or endangered by this Administration. However, in this fragile post-conflict environment, we must exercise these rights with a great sense of responsibility. We paid a high price to get to where we are.

In order to protect our civil peace, freedom of movement and life and property, the decision to close three media institutions was taken carefully and within the due process of the law, with the aim to prevent the incitement of further violence and to protect lives. The court process is now under way. We call on all our citizens to allow the legal process to run its course.

My fellow Liberians, as the dust settles on the electoral season, it is time for us to move our country forward in a spirit of unity and reconciliation.

Today, I extend a hand of cooperation to all Liberians. I invite everyone to be part of a national dialogue that would bring us together. I want to especially call upon my fellow political leaders to join me in a conversation

on the future of our country. Political leaders have a special and a greater responsibility to bring our people together, to cement the false divides.

I have decided to set up a national peace and reconciliation initiative to start the dialogue. I asked and am pleased to announce that our Nobel Peace Prize Laureate, Leymah Gbowee, has accepted to lead the effort. Together, we have a mission to fulfill. We must work in harmony as one people, one destiny, one Liberia.

Today, I urge all of us to move on and look to the future with courage and hope. There is so much work ahead. Together, we can lift Liberia to meet the needs and aspirations of all its citizens.

We must get back to the task of building our basic infrastructure, creating jobs, and bringing electricity and clean water to more and more homes. We must get back to the task of educating our children, providing health services and teaching our young people the skills they need to rebuild our country. We must get back to the great task of development and progress.

At home and across the Diaspora, Liberian citizens must take pride in what we have accomplished together. We have taken a giant leap towards peace, security and national reconciliation. To every Liberian out there: This is your election, your country, your future. Together, we have written the first page of a new chapter in Liberia.

May God Almighty bless our country and safeguard our democracy.