

**Special Address by H.E. President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf  
At Swearing-in Ceremony of Peace Corps Volunteers  
& Celebration of 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the U.S. Peace Corps  
C. Cecil Dennis Auditorium  
11 a.m., Friday, 19 August 2010**

I'm always pleased when Ambassador [Emmett] Kennedy is doing the introduction because he makes sure he covers everybody.

Let me join Linda [U.S. Ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield] in saying how pleased we are to see how dressed up you are. And I've been trying to figure out whether you learned the different head ties of the different counties. (Laughter) I want to know because I do visit the counties, and if there's a different style for each county, I want to know so I can have the same style when I go there. (Laughter)

This year's Swearing-in Ceremony for this class of Peace Corps and Peace Corps Response Volunteers is special, as you all know, because it is taking place as the United States Peace Corps celebrates 50 years of America's service to the world – one of the enduring legacies of a visionary President John F. Kennedy.

In the words of America's current President, Barack Obama, the Peace Corps remains an enduring symbol of U.S. "commitment to encouraging progress, creating opportunity, and fostering mutual respect and understanding throughout the world."

After 28 years of service and partnership with Liberia, the Peace Corps was compelled to suspend operations in 1990 because of our conflict. I'm glad, delighted that you're back, and that the U.S. Government responded to my appeal, three years ago, for the return of this noble service. Ambassador Thomas-Greenfield, thank you for your support of that appeal.

**I understand that that this class of Peace Corps and Response Volunteers hails from 21 of the 50 States that make up the United States – from New Hampshire and Maine and Massachusetts in New England; all along the East Coast, with New York, Pennsylvania, Maryland, Virginia, South Carolina and Florida represented; the Midwest States of Ohio, Indiana, Michigan, Wisconsin, Missouri, Iowa and Montana; the Southwest States of Arizona, New Mexico and Texas; and the Pacific States of California and Oregon.**

**We also have just noted, from my colleagues, that now that you've blazed the path, ECOWAS has also established a Peace Corps Volunteer Service, and 40 of them are coming to Liberia – 20 in the medical field, and 20 in the education field.**

**Now, Mr. Minister [Education Minister Dr. Othello Gongar], it's under the new Education Reform Act. If we can make the Liberian Voluntary Service become activated, then truly, we will say that Liberia is now part of this world service of volunteerism, service to humanity, service to the Liberian people.**

**What a powerful message this sends to the rest of the world: that all of you, from all over the United States, and now from ECOWAS, care enough to have come and have volunteered to serve, giving up your comfort, your family, your friends and associates, supporting Liberia as we try to lift ourselves up. Your gesture sends a special message to all that we, too, share in the confidence that, as you are back, that Liberia is also back! We owe that renaissance, in part, to your effort on behalf of the Liberian people. Indeed, we are a blessed nation.**

**The impact of the presence of Peace Corps Volunteers cannot be overemphasized. Thanks to you, our teachers are better trained; thanks to you, our students are performing better in English, Math and the Sciences.**

**Your service will address one of the major deficiencies in the capacity of our students to pass successfully the West African Examination Council (WAEC) Exams and be able to compete with their peers in neighboring countries. We hope to make your task easier, as the Minister has said, by putting in the laboratories and other equipment that improve the quality of your instruction.**

**We also appreciate the fact that those of you being sworn in today, together with your colleagues who joined a year ago, will have a longer time with us. Liberia will thus benefit from your skills and your experience, and we hope that you, too, will benefit from sharing our culture, our traditions, our values and our practices.**

**Your service constitutes a precious gift to the people of Liberia. We thank all of those who have come, and those who have left, for this invaluable contribution, and welcome you most heartily as you carry out carry out your assignment.**

**Let me also thank the host families of our Peace Corps – those of you who have so gladly opened your homes, giving them a special place in your heart. That is the spirit of what the Peace Corps stands for.**

**Your presence sends a special and strong signal of the partnership and friendship that is shared by the Liberian people and the American people.**

**As I close, let one of you come forward and let's do the handshake.**