



**Statement by  
H.E. President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf  
At Commissioning of the  
Cabinet of the Government of Liberia  
C. Cecil Dennis, Jr. Auditorium,**

**Ministry of Foreign Affairs  
Friday, March 16, 2012**

Mr. Vice President;  
Mr. Speaker;  
Mr. President Pro-Tempore;  
Mr. Chief Justice and Associate Justices of the Supreme Court of Liberia;  
The Dean, Members of the Cabinet and Other Officials of Government;  
The Doyen and Members of the Diplomatic Corps;  
Special Guests;  
Political, Business and Religious Leaders;  
Ladies and Gentlemen;  
Fellow Liberians:

Let us begin by thanking the Almighty for making this day possible. This is the first time in the life of the current generation of Liberians 35 years old and younger, that we have the commissioning of a full Cabinet by a re-elected President. These are exciting days in our nation's history. We must be open to all the possibilities, tapping into the vast reservoir that God has bestowed on our country.

We have chosen you, members of the 2012 Cabinet, to share with us the responsibility of fulfilling our national agenda. I congratulate each of you. Your selection by us, and your confirmation by representatives

of the people, is a clear indication of the confidence we have in your professional capacity, your sense of duty and your patriotism. Our greatest challenge, going forward, is to prove that we are worthy of that trust that our people have placed in our leadership.

Some critics look at the Cabinet and say, “All this talk about Cabinet of inclusion, all she did was recycled the same people!” My response is simple: The faces of this new Cabinet reflect the diversity, gender and age demographics of our country. Since 2006, we have endeavored to maintain a geographical and ethnic balance. We have tried to take into account political considerations without succumbing to entitlement. I am satisfied with the Cabinet, and I assure you that they will work for the Liberian people.

To returning Cabinet members, you must keep the stride. To those who are joining our team, you must hit the ground running. We have no time to waste. We have an agenda; we have a responsibility; we have a charge to keep.

Because we started off in 2006 almost at level zero, progress was easily perceptible. However, today, people may take accomplishments for granted, and that makes our task even harder. So we need to move fast. We need to work harder. We need to be relentless because our country was off orbit for almost two decades, and we must catch up with the world.

Building upon the foundation laid during our first term, we have developed a workload with a 150-Day Action Plan. This program will serve as a starting point as we complete long-standing projects and resolve emerging imperatives that cannot be neglected.

As we forge ahead with the work for the Liberian people, let me turn to the one issue that continues to haunt me – something so pervasive that has found its way into every aspect of our lives, like a cancer – the issue of corruption. Corruption exists in all sectors of our society – at high levels, external and internal, beyond government, in the private sector, schools, churches, families, NGOs. Like a bug-a-bug that can undermine and weaken the foundation, corruption affects our ability to build a solid nation.

I urge you, each and every one of you, to join me in the against fight corruption despite its many complexities. To do this, we must strive relentlessly to change old value systems and forge a new culture. We must move this country from a place where every person lives for himself, to a Liberia where we live for each other and where the national interest supersedes the personal.

I share the frustration of those of our compatriots, visitors and partners who comes face-to-face with the ugliness of corruption. Our government must lead this effort, but everyone must play a role. In the end, if nobody offers a bribe, corruption will stop. Fighting corruption will not be done through publicity stunts, newspaper headlines, or prosecution alone. It will be done through patiently building a system of government and a society of trust from the ground up. Given its deep-rooted cultural nature, winning the battle against corruption will take some time, but we must make enough progress to set it on an irreversible course. As we finally move aggressively against those who have violated the public trust, action is already under way against several of the so-called big fish. Although more difficult to do, we must also continue to deal with the thousands of small fishes who also ruin the reputation of our country.

A case in point: A minister who sits at the desk in a position of trust, who participates in negotiations on behalf of government, and then takes a share illegally, unknowingly, in the very company in which he is negotiating for government. We will go after them.

That said, we must also wage legal battle against those who, for personal gains, use the media to wrongfully accuse and maliciously malign others. It has now gone to the point of assassinating the character of those who partner with us in our development effort.

A case in point: The people ruin the long fought and maintained reputation of someone by accusing them wrongfully; by getting people for small sums of money to lie on somebody; something that does damage beyond repair for small sums of money. We are going to go after them too.

All of our appointees, especially you at the Cabinet level, are required, by law, to make a public declaration of assets, liabilities and income in accordance with procedures prescribed by the Anti-Corruption Commission. This declaration is more than a political gimmick; it serves as a reminder, both for the public and for public servants, of where they were when they started, and establishes for each a moral boundary. There is also the need for urgent conclusion of the one-year performance contract to which we have agreed.

Also a case in point: We know some of you, not necessarily any of you – I’m speaking generally – who also participate in paying young people to be able to go and say things on the air, thereby bringing under question those who have worked hard, innocent people. I want you to know that I know who you are. It will not be long I will take action against you.

As we subject Executive officials to stringent measures, we cannot overlook other spheres of society, including the private sector and non-governmental institutions. Their failure to be accountable and their participation or endorsement of corrupt practices has a damaging effect on society in general, but also on the public sector in particular as it concretizes the notion that corruption is a societal norm, thereby making the fight against it in the public sector doubly difficult.

We know that reforms take time to bear fruit and find their way into the culture. However, if sustained, they will transform the nation. This is the challenge facing you, members of the 2012 Cabinet. We must not only sustain the gains, we must seek to surpass every objective we set for ourselves. This we can and must do. We owe it to our people.

Another important issue on our plate is the National Visioning project. I have just returned from the Southeast where, as in the other regions, we discussed Liberia’s Vision for 2030. If we are to build a new nation, we must be able to conceptualize it, and to pinpoint the policies and actions that are needed for transformations. Vision 2030 is different because we are not going around and telling the people how we are going to change their country. Instead, we are going

around and asking them what they want, in the future, for themselves, for their children and for their country. After listening to the many voices, and reaching certain consensus, we will then come up with the policy framework to execute the people's wishes.

To all of you, a big thank you for what we achieved in our first term. You have been relentless in the pursuit of our goals. There is a lot more to do in the few years ahead. I can say with confidence that you are well suited for the task, and I know you will not let your people down.

Thank you and God bless Liberia.