

**Statement by H.E. President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf
At Launch of National Transport Master Plan
Monrovia City Hall
Tuesday, May 29, 2012**

(Delivered extemporaneously and transcribed)

I noticed that our partners are far on one side; our colleagues are on the other side. Minister [Augustine K.] Ngafuan I am glad, perhaps reflecting your portfolio, you decided to sit in the middle.

Over the years of our national evolution, we have had development plans – most times five-year development plans – consisting a century of a shopping list that will be undertaken.

In the last few years, we've tried to move in a different and a more consistent position with that of more development economies, to prepare the policies and the strategies we've embarked upon, long term, for the development of all aspects of our national endeavor.

This National Transport Master Plan fits into that. The Plan covers, as you well know, and have read: roads, bridges, rails, ports – sea and air – and it's taking some time and some good partnership to be able to do that.

Now comes the hard part: implementation! Moving this Plan forward, we've been able to identify the specific road maps, work plans, and our timelines that will enable us to achieve what we have in this Plan and what has already been detailed by the many statements that have been made before me.

There is still more to do because plans are but plans, and one has to continually adjust them to changing circumstances with those things that will evolve as you move towards implementation.

Besides, new efforts to go beyond the plans – to do specific studies, sector studies – and that means accessing the projects, current status, and their potential. We reflect upon the social and economic returns of particular activities to ensure that we get the maximum in establishing priorities which will hopefully impact the lives of all of us, on our citizens. That will be great.

To carry out this Plan, partnership will be important. The private sector that has been mentioned by quite a few will be important if we are to be able to accomplish it.

People talk about a brand new airport, and making sure that we connect the capital city through primary roads to all of our major rural and urban cities. The Government will not have the financial capacity to be able to do this, unless we can promote those partnerships and involve the private sector through public-private partnerships. We will be asking all of you to look into that potential to make sure.

We ask the partners, in implementation, for us timing is of the essence. We can't talk about Caldwell Bridge for three years and it doesn't get done. We can't talk about the road from Red Light to Gbarnga and to Ganta. For two years we've been talking about it. We want to see it started.

So that responsibility is not only with partnership, it is also with us. One of the things we need to do if implementation is going to improve, is to build capacity. Because most times, we ourselves fail to carry out, in time, those things we should do that will enable the partnership to be much more effective. Whatever we do requires the commitment and the work of everybody, working together toward those common goals that have been established.

Honorable Senator [Geraldine Doe-Sheriff, Senator Montserrado County], your House will also be required to be a part of that effort. The budget is coming, and we will look to all of you in your House, with your input of course, to ensure that we have a timely review and passage of the budget so that we are able to move on our projects that have been identified.

Communication [Information Minister Lewis Brown], we've talked about the Robertsfield Road. At some point that road has to be expanded. We have to have a double carriage. We should be telling people now, Mr. Minister, to stop building close to the road because we'll have to break their houses down. We are warning them now.

We can't have a Mesurado River, Mr. Maritime Authority [Hon. Binyah Kesselly], where we should be having small boats going around the river instead of having toilets over there.

So it is good to have a plan, but that's not the end of it. The main thing is to put that plan into action, and I am glad that the Minister has mentioned that he has already established a committee, the National Transport Steering Committee, which has a technical group that will start the work of transforming this Plan into true activity, into operations, to which we all must contribute from wherever we are, with whatever we bring to it to ensure that we can realize those dreams.

And so with that let me thank all of you who have contributed. Mr. Ambassador [H.E. Bodo Schaff of Germany]: Through the GIZ, you've been with the Ministry of Transport over several months, being able to promote this endeavor, and we thank you for that

contribution. All the other partners who have contributed, all of you, colleagues, who have worked on this to make sure that, today, we can say we have a final product that we can all look at.

I said to Minister Lenn Eugene Nagbe, when he presented me this earlier, you expect me to read this thing? I looked to see if there were some pictures there, some pictures of the new road. He told me, don't worry, I have an Executive Summary. Minister Nagbe, thank you for your assistance on this.

Let us consider the National Transport Master Plan of Liberia duly launched today!