

**Opening Remarks by Her Excellency President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf
At 16th Mid-Term Review Meeting
of the International Development Association - World Bank Group
Abidjan, CÔ te d'Ivoire
Tuesday, November13, 2012**

Mr. Yayi Boni, Current Chair of the African Union;
Mr. Alassane Ouattara, President of the Republic of CÔ te d'Ivoire;
Officials and Members of Government of the Republic of la CÔ te d'Ivoire;
Officials and Members of the World Bank;
Distinguished Participants:

I am pleased to be able to join my colleagues, Presidents Yayi Boni and Ouattara at this important meeting.

Since its formation in 1960, IDA has provided concessional funding and grants on the order of US\$238 billion to 108 eligible less developed countries throughout the world. Nearly half of IDA borrowing countries are located in sub-Saharan Africa. It is also noteworthy that annual commitments have steadily increased, enabling our countries to support the development process and to undertake reforms that make our region, today, one of the fastest growing in terms of GDP.

IDA has also provided technical assistance and advice to enhance our national capacities. As a result, we are better positioned to take control of our destiny and to own our development agenda as we formulate the policies and strategies that will require that growth results in development through better use and value added to our national resources.

This meeting, representing the IDA's 16th Mid-Term Review, comes on the heels of the global financial crisis, continuing weakness in the Euro zone, and slowing growth in China and India. The financial crisis resulted in a credit crunch that delayed investment programs, reduced remittances and affected the cost of exports. IDA 16 is also very significant since it brings us to the deadline for achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

Less than three years remain until the 2015 deadline to achieve the MDGs. We can count successes, including the reduction of poverty, but there are important failures – in maternal mortality, improved livelihoods, women's equality and

environmental sustainability. Moreover, although significant progress has been made in many countries, and several are likely to achieve most of the Goals, our countries in sub-Saharan Africa rank far behind the other regions. This is why this Review is of utmost importance, and I am glad that Abidjan has been chosen as the venue. It is here, in our sub-region, that we face the greatest challenges that have been covered by your Progress Report.

Although West and Central Africa possess a high percentage of the world's biodiversity, we are seriously challenged to find effective responses to rising sea levels and changing agriculture production cycles. Although I represent the highest potential of women's empowerment, the majority of our women in the informal sector, while feeding the nation through farming and marketing, remain largely illiterate, caught in the poverty trap.

Youth across the continent and young graduates face the stark realization of being unable to find jobs, exposing their vulnerabilities to crime and violence. Perhaps the more relevant aspects of your Review to our unfulfilled expectations are the response to crisis and promotion of regional integration. Peace and stability, a *sine qua non* for sustained growth and development, still elude too many of our countries. Our hopes to achieve the potential for regional integration have been long delayed due to long-standing trading relationships and lack of effective international support.

We applaud the recent progress supported by multilateral programs that have led to the West Africa Gas Pipeline and the West Africa Power Pool. But in Liberia, for example, although we have significant commitments that will help reconstruct roads and build new bridges and bring electricity to some of our communities, it has taken almost four years from commitment to commencement, and I still can't travel on a decent road from Monrovia to Abidjan or to Freetown or Conakry.

But individual countries must do our part. By formulating regional promotion interventions and pooling our resources, we can share the high cost of infrastructure that overcomes some of the hurdles to regional integration. We can promote public/private partnership to lower the burden on public resources.

I am pleased that I have been appointed by the UN Secretary-General as one of the three co-Chairs of the High-Level Panel on the Post-MDG Framework. The themes of IDA16 are in consonance with the emerging framework of what the post-MDG development agenda should include. We continue to emphasize, however, that

there are still three years left before the deadline, and all stakeholders – governments, multilateral institutions and private sector partners – must accelerate our efforts to accomplish that which can be achieved in the remaining years. In our consultations toward the development of a successor framework, one cannot overemphasize the role of reassessing how IDA credits in the next three years can be deployed to enhance and advance countries' development agendas.

The themes of this Review highlight sustainable development, equitable growth, crisis response and regional integration. We know that the changing climate will have varying effects on different regions. As we plan and implement our development agendas, we must now intentionally account for climate change. Growth must be equitable. Women's participation in our economic, social and political life must become an integral part of our development agenda. Unless we act intentionally to reduce inequity within and between our societies, we will not be able to eradicate poverty. We must therefore work to increase the pace at which gender-related MDGs form the integral core of our development agenda.

This will provide the basis for the formulations of a successor regime that is people-centered, with a focus on poverty to finish the job started by the MDGs – a successor regime that calls for inclusive growth and development as drivers of sustainable poverty reduction and one in which global partnerships are based on mutual responsibility in a supportive global enabling environment. The successor regime must also involve a new deal for fragile States trying to cope in an effort to maintain stability for transformation.

Distinguished Participants:

The record is clear. Over the past few years, IDA Replenishment Reviews have set a clear trend, a trend in increasing commitments. IDA16 replenishment set a record commitment, on the order of US\$40 billion – a clear indication of the world's commitment to, and appreciation of, the programs supported by IDA credits. In the last decade, IDA funding financed the training of 3 million teachers; provided over \$700 million in loans to small and medium enterprises; built and restored almost 120,000 km of roads; immunized 300 million children; and improved access to water for over 100 million people.

This Review, while aiming at finding new approaches to meet new challenges, must also give recognition to the significant progress in development throughout the poor countries of this world. Thirty-six of IDA's borrowing countries have

graduated from eligibility for concessional lending, and we are confident that the trend will continue. This is a record of success.

Today, in this increasingly interdependent world in which we are all in each other's supply chain, the continuing success of IDA expands the global economic pie and increases the purchasing power for expanded global trade.

I thank you!