

**Statement by H.E. President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf
at Symposium on Human Security
5th Tokyo International Conference for African Development
Yokohama, Japan
Sunday, June 2, 2013**

Excellency, Mr. Prime Minister;
Excellency, Mr. African Union Chairman;
Colleagues;
Fellow Panelists;
Ministers;
Heads of International Organizations;
Distinguished Participants;
Ladies and Gentlemen:

Human security is first and foremost about people feeling safe, secure and able to live to their full potential. Freedom from fear, a life without fear from violence or any sort of threat, is the cardinal condition for human development second only to the right to live.

In Liberia, we have learned, in the hardest way, that without a sense of security, everything else is remote. In August of this year, we will celebrate ten consecutive years of peace. This has enabled us to put our economic and financial house in order, build a new army, restore a limited level of basic services, and start building the institutions which provide justice, accountability and freedoms in an open society.

Yet, we cannot claim to be fully at peace, for we continue to be in a state of fragility, recognizing that peace is more than the absence of war. As we strive to meet raised expectations in a society where 60 percent of the population is under 35 years of age, we must face the global reality that progress in achieving externally driven reforms is a necessary but insufficient requirement for sustained peace.

Countries, particularly those with conditions like my own, must continue to stress that human security is about freedom from want, through empowerment and equity. It is about ensuring that all people have access to a full range of basic services; that they can find a livelihood and have a voice in determining the way they live; that their concerns are addressed and their priorities respected.

As suggested by the United Nations Secretary-General High-Level Panel on the Post-2015 Development Agenda, human security is about reducing the level of poverty, poverty defined not just about income but the several access to basic healthcare and quality education, about adequate housing, employment and a safe environment. It is the vision to “end extreme poverty in all its forms in the context of sustainable development and put in place all building blocks of sustained prosperity for all.”

Human security also implies the several interventions proposed by you, Honorable Prime Minister, in your opening address on yesterday. We applaud you for the ABI initiative, and particularly, the Hubs for Human Resource Development.

Let us leave this symposium concluding that human security is not just a moral issue for our times; it is also a political imperative, the cornerstone of social stability and human development.

I thank you for your attention.