

Address

By

His Excellency Joseph N. Boakai

Vice President of the Republic of Liberia

To

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Mr. President,  
Mr. Secretary General,  
Excellencies, Distinguished Heads of State and Government, and Heads of Delegations,  
Ladies and Gentlemen:

I congratulate the delegation, Government, and people of the Republic of Macedonia, on your election to the Presidency of this 62<sup>nd</sup> Session of the United Nations General Assembly. I acknowledge on behalf of my Government, the astute diplomatic skills and wisdom which you bring to this important assignment. Rest assured of my delegation's support in your endeavor.

Similarly, it gives me great pleasure to congratulate our new Secretary General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, of the Republic of South Korea, on his election as Secretary General of our Organization. It is the belief of my Government that the United Nations will greatly benefit from his wealth of experience as a seasoned diplomat and statesman.

Nearly two years ago, Liberia held its first post conflict elections following more than 14 years of costly civil war. We were strongly supported by the United Nations, African Union, ECOWAS, and members of the international community, including the United States, EU and the People's Republic of China and Japan. We commend you for your continued support toward our national reconstruction programs.

### **Sanctions**

My government welcomes and highly appreciates the recent decision of the Security Council to lift sanctions which it saw fit to impose on the timber and diamond sectors in Liberia. We pledge our fullest cooperation with the United Nations as it partners with our Country in her reform which undoubtedly will strengthen its good governance procedures. Although the imposition of sanctions was considered by many as punitive, I am gratified to inform you that the Liberian people viewed the sanctions as prudent and corrective. The sanctions helped to accelerate the adoption of new laws and the institutionalization of appropriate mechanisms to ensure that we would never allow conditions that gave rise to their imposition.

We also thank the international community for its continued support toward peace building and strengthening of instruments of security and stability in Liberia. In spite of the gains of peace, Liberia still remains fragile. The recent decision, therefore, by the Security Council, to extend the mandate of the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL), is timely and relevant. Liberia remains grateful for this and other decisions aimed at sustaining peace and stability in the country.

### **Mr. President,**

Democracy is on an irreversible course in Africa. The values of democratic governance and the rule of law are also on an upward march. My Government notes with great delight the successful holding of relatively peaceful, free, fair, and democratic elections in Sierra Leone, Nigeria, Mauritania, and Mali. From our experience in Liberia, we know that democratic elections in themselves do not provide quick answers to the monumental developmental challenges facing new emerging and post conflict nations. They do however create the environment and potentially unleash opportunities for freedom and individual enterprise to thrive and prosper. Because such democracies are in their infancy, they need the support of bilateral and multilateral partners.

We therefore call on the United Nations, the African Union, bilateral and multilateral partners to support all new democracies and to help us meet the multifaceted needs of our people.

### **Reforming the United Nations**

Liberia reaffirms its belief in the United Nations as the best institution for the promotion and protection of international peace and security and the resolution of crises around our world. Our faith in the United Nations, as, is rooted in our conviction that it represents mankind's best hope and vehicle for the advancement of the common purpose of humanity.

Our generation must avoid the temptation, to use the instruments of our common Organization for narrow agendas that undermine its Charter. In this new millennium, the United Nations must continue to renew its resolve to promote, protect, and sustain the universal virtues of liberty, equality, solidarity, tolerance, non-violence, while simultaneously respecting and protecting our environment, pursuant to the mandate of the Millennium Summit. Liberia commits itself to be a strong partner and advocate for promotion of these shared values of our common humanity.

But as the United Nations pursues these objectives, we must recognize that it cannot expect to succeed on frameworks that are nearly three-quarters of a century old. The United Nations needs to and must be reformed. Liberia and other member states have advanced practical suggestions for this reform agenda. Liberia offers the following proposals: 1 that a timely review and reconfiguration of the Security Council of the United Nations to make it more representative of the world community, to also include the current decision-making machinery and processes of the Organization; 2. that mechanisms are put in place to ensure that its Charter remains inviolate; and 3. that careful consideration be given to the due process in dealing with member states.

Pursuant to our call for reform of the United Nations, we today call on Member States to give meaning and expression to gender equality. We propose that the United Nations recommits itself to ensuring an equitable partnership of women and men in the leadership of our Organization. Reforming the United Nations also means reforming our attitude toward women and other minority groups world-wide. There is no doubt in our mind that women would significantly contribute to the change process in this organization.

### **Sub-regional and Regional Peace and Security**

The Liberian delegation is concerned, and regrets the ongoing political situation and recent violence in Myanmar, and calls for restraint and dialogue leading to a peaceful political resolution by the parties concerned.

Fully cognizant that the dividends of peace and security are always greater than the debilitating effects of conflict, Liberia continues to work within the regional framework of the Mano River Union (MRU), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), and the African Union (AU) to ensure realization and advancement of peace in our sub-region and the African continent. It is said in my country that there is no capitalism without capital. Peace is only sustained with economic empowerment of all people.

In this regard, since its inauguration, our Government has engaged in active sub-regional initiatives to improve and strengthen ties of friendship and economic cooperation with our immediate neighbors in the Mano River Basin and the ECOWAS Community. As a result of our

efforts, the instruments of peace and security and the potential of trade rationalization in our sub-region are stronger today than they were few years ago. Under the Chairmanship of Her Excellency President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, the Mano River Union has assumed a new vibrancy and renewed sense of cohesion and common purpose. Citizens of the Mano River Union Basin are exchanging more frequent visits, and undertaking programs aimed at enhancing integration and peace. This is why we were happy to host President Ernest Bai Koroma few days following his inauguration as President of Sierra Leone.

As events in the Middle East continue to claim our attention as a world community, we must not lose sight of similarly grave situations in Africa. I refer to continuous humanitarian catastrophe in Darfur, Sudan – and crises in Somalia, Guinea-Bissau, Cote d’Ivoire, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Chad, Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo, the Central African Republic, and Uganda, among others.

My Government therefore welcomes Security Council Resolution 1769 (2007) and the consensus reached for the deployment of a hybrid African Union-United Nations force in Darfur following months of painstaking negotiations.

We further urge countries that have pledged logistical and other support to fulfill their promises to ensure the timely deployment of peace-keeping force in Darfur. We applaud the progress made in the resolution of the crisis in our sisterly Republic of Cote d’Ivoire. My delegation calls for strong support of the Ouagadougou Agreement which provides the best possible framework for peace, security and stability in that country. Peace and security in Cote d’Ivoire is peace and security in Liberia, and yea, in the Mano River Union Basin and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).

## **The Environment**

The world has witnessed and continues to witness phenomenal advances in science and technology leading to the transformation of industrialization and the improvement of the human condition. We must work to save our planet because when we save our common earth, we assure the survival of all of its inhabitants.

Liberia supports the efforts of the Commission on Sustainable Development, the Kyoto Protocol, and the decision reached on Agenda 21 during the 1992 Rio Conference and the recent high profile conference hosted here on climate change intended to raise international awareness of the degradation of the environment and the need for collaborative efforts to reverse the negative trend. There could be no theme more appropriate and timely for this year’s general debate than the theme, “Responding to Climate Change”. This debate, we are confident, would accentuate the issues of environment and garner increased international action. Liberia is concerned about the rapid degradation of the climate. We hope that this session will produce a consensus on how to save succeeding generations from the impact of deteriorating climate.

## **HIV/AIDS and Other Infectious Diseases**

In our world today, there is a correlation between war, civil conflict and the spread of HIV/AIDS. The HIV/AIDS pandemic targets and destroys our human capital, the backbone of our socio-economic development.

United Nations and other records show that the prevalence of HIV/AIDS increases in countries affected by war and civil conflicts due to mass movement of populations. Post-conflict countries therefore need special attention if the scourge of HIV/AIDS is to be overcome.

The devastating impact of HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases has contributed significantly in retarding the progress of the developing nations.

African nations must develop the political will to combat the health crisis on our continent. To this end, we call upon our partners in the developed world to treat the issue of anti-retroviral drugs outside of politics as a purely social and humanitarian matter of an emergency nature. Liberia recently setup a National HIV/AIDS Commission to advance practical strategies that will help in the design to halt the spread of this deadly disease. We are hopeful that prudent action including a change of life styles, coupled with antiviral drugs will help address this emerging catastrophe.

### **Debt Waiver**

Liberia continues to be burdened by huge debts owed to bilateral and multilateral creditors. Servicing these debts remains a major priority of the Government of Liberia. However, our capacity to make payment is constrained due to severe resource challenges arising out of more than 14 (fourteen) years of civil war. There is a traditional parable in my country which says, "You cannot dig a hole to fill a hole." We renew our Government's plea for international empathy and consideration of our debt cancellation request.

We reassure all of our bilateral and multilateral creditors of our commitment to continue to work with them to develop the necessary framework toward the actualization of Liberia's debt relief initiatives.

We also thank all our partners, especially the United States, Great Britain, China, Germany, among others, for active steps taken toward debt relief for Liberia.

Mr. President,

I assure you that after learning a costly lesson in violence, the people of Liberia are determined to settle their differences through peaceful means. With your support, we have found a better way to resolve our differences. We have resolved to forgive one another, pick our dignity and pride and move forward in unity and oneness of purpose with strong determination to work for a better and brighter future. Our unity is in fostering the faith of our founding fathers to build a nation dedicated to freedom, liberty and justice for all remain undaunted.

We are confident that our international partners want to see a success story in Liberia. Let me assure you, Mr. President, Excellencies, distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, nobody want that more than Liberians themselves!

May the Almighty God bless us, protect our sovereignties, unify us, and preserve our dignities and keep us safe.

I thank you.