

Remarks By

**Her Excellency Madam Ellen Johnson Sirleaf
President of the Republic of Liberia at the National Women's Conference
and
Launch of the Inter-Ministerial Committee for Promoting and Advancing
Women's Right of Access to Information on**

**Wednesday, July 13, 2016
Monrovia, Liberia**

Let me thank all of you women who have worked over the years for transforming the status of women. As are aware, several initiatives have led the way - the Federation of Liberian Women, which was further strengthened by the Liberian Women Initiative, the Liberian Women Political Forum and the first Post-war National Women Colloquium held in May, 2004. We all recall the historic 2009 International Women Conference which brought together women leaders from all over the world. The ongoing institutional follow up to that conference, the Angie Books International Center, is also making history through the Situation room and brings women together in an unprecedented approach of peace promotion during elections.

Although, traditionally, women face various forms of discriminations, Liberian women have asserted themselves to become relevant and have contributed immensely to the nation at large.

We applaud particularly our women in the informal sector whose economic vibrancy in agriculture, marketing, and domestic labor have kept the country aloft in normal and difficult times.

Today, we meet to participate in this National Women's Conference under the ***Theme: "Step It up: Mobilizing to Bridge the Gap for the Equality"***; we join the global effort to institutionalize women's interests in all areas of national endeavors.

As the world moves towards implementation of the SDGs, Liberia has a duty to ensure that appropriate strategies and mechanisms are put in place to foster the attainment of Planet 2030 especially those goals, which are crucial and relevant to achieving Gender Equality. At the same time, this conference is also critical in our history that as women of Liberia, we must ensure that laws,

policies and strategies are made to enable women to gain and assume strategic positions.

I urge all women here present, to fully utilize the various organizations, structures and institutions to ensure that peace is maintained in the wake of UNMIL's drawdown as we take full responsibility for our country's peace and security.

Finally, as part of this conference, we will launch the *Inter-Ministerial Committee on Women's Access to Information, which seek to ensure:*

1. The right to information as a fundamental human right and a foundational right incorporated in our constitution.

2. That information as the currency of democracy through a free flow of information, government can be more effective and efficient.
3. Today, we are proud to launch this committee and I have charged the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection and the Ministry of Information to lead the Committee to develop appropriate policy framework and reforms that address any constraints and guarantees women's access to information.
4. We signed the Freedom of Information Act almost six years ago to assure that all persons, particularly women, could benefit from the myriad benefits that information provides. Today, I recommit my government to advancing the right to information in Liberia for men and women and look forward to sharing with you the work and successes of the new Inter-Ministerial Committee for women's access to information.

Thank you.