

Remarks by
Her Excellency Madam Ellen Johnson Sirleaf
President, Republic of Liberia
At the
Presidential Forum Marking the 50th Anniversary of the
African Development Bank

Abidjan, La Cote d'Ivoire

May 26, 2015

Excellencies Heads of State

**Board of Governors, Mr. President and Former Presidents, Officers,
Staff of the African Development Bank**

Distinguished Guests and Participants

Ladies and Gentlemen:

**I stand today proud of the role Liberia played in the establishment of
the African Development Bank.**

**A role of shuttle diplomacy by Dr. Romeo Horton, a Liberian, in
bringing together the Casablanca and Monrovia groups, the architects
on the establishment of the Organization of African Unity to write
African economically;**

- A role as a member of the Committee of Nine to start the work
on the Bank charter;**
- A role as a member of those who convinced President Houphouët
Boigny to accept the establishment of the headquarters of the
bank in Abidjan; and in compromise, General Abdou to name
the first President of the Bank.**

**I recall as one who attend my first annual meeting in 1972 as an
official in the Ministry of Finance, the long hours spent at that and
subsequent meetings debating passionately and sometimes angrily on
opening the Banks capital to non-regionals. For some the Bank
required more capital than US\$200 million. Others sought to protect
what was the African character of the Bank.**

Today, at 50, our Institution has stood the test of time and has truly earned its reputation as the premier development finance institution on the African continent.

Our Bank represents many things and has done so many good things to promote development all over the continent.

The Bank has brought together African professionals of the highest caliber. They work in a multi-cultural environment with an African accent and with the supreme interest of Africa.

The Bank allows for creative thinking. That is why over the years it has initiative and fostered the development institutions critical to economic development for the region several. Examples of regional international organizations established or co-established stand out Shelter Afrique, Africa Re-insurance, Afri-Exim, and the African Legal Support Facility.

The Bank has been innovative and progressive in new endeavors among others the Fragile States Facility and the Infrastructure Consortium for Africa. It developed a private sector window in practical support of the belief that the private sector is the catalyst for development.

The Bank staff have consistently been called to important national duties including in the political, economic and financial sectors.

It collaborates with the other DFIs and with donors, the Bank brings important additionality in financial and technical assistance to the operations.

We commend the manner in which the Bank conducts elections, as it will do this week, that allows even the smallest RMCs to be heard and to rise as high as the presidency.

It maintains high marks in the capital markets and is thus able to mobilize capital.

The spirit of the Bank's staff makes a difference and change African lives for the better.

To you President Kaberuka, we owe a debt of gratitude for the dynamism, efficiency and commitment which you brought to the task. You have encouraged our effort to tackle the long standing structural deficiencies in our economies, to emphasize infrastructure as a means of expanding diversely and promoting regional cooperation.

You have supported the development of our young population through programs of skills training and employment.

You stood by Liberia in visits and in financial and technical support during our most difficult days of the fight against the Ebola virus.

Mr. President, you may recall when I visited with you and the deputies in Tunis in 2012, to discuss the Fragile States Facility, I was asked why should the African Development Bank be the one to champion this initiative. My answer was simple, "Because we trust you."

Mr. President in building trust and confidence in our institution, in inspiring us to pursue our national and continental vision, in giving our young generation hope in the future, I salute you.