

SPECIAL MESSAGE

BY

**HIS EXCELLENCY DR. GEORGE MANNEH WEAH
PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF LIBERIA**

**ON THE OCCASION OF
THE OBSERVANCE OF THE 174th INDEPENDENCE
ANNIVERSARY**

**OF THE
REPUBLIC OF LIBERIA**

THE EXECUTIVE MANSION

MONROVIA, LIBERIA

JULY 26, 2021

**Her Excellency Madam Clar Marie Dekontee Weah,
First Lady of the Republic of Liberia;**

Madam Vice President;

**Mr. Speaker and Honorable Members of the House of
Representatives;**

Mr. President Pro-Tempore and Members of the Senate;

**Mr. Chief Justice, Associate Justices, and Members of the
Judiciary;**

The Dean and Members of the Cabinet;

Officials of Government;

The Doyen and Members of the Diplomatic Corps;

Our Special Guests;

Bishops, Prelates, and Members of the Clergy;

Chiefs and Traditional Leaders;

Our Development Partners;

Superintendents and Local Government Officials;

Political and Business Leaders

Marketers, Students;

Members of the Fourth Estate;

My Fellow Citizens;

Ladies and Gentlemen:

On July 26, 1847, the Founding Fathers of this Nation announced to the world the birth of a new country, to be called “Liberia”, and declared its independence from the rule of any power, to stand on its own among the comity of nations.

Since that momentous day, the Declaration of Independence has been commemorated as an important national milestone in the history of our Country.

Today, through the grace and blessings of the Almighty God, we are proud to celebrate the 174th anniversary of Liberia’s founding as the first and oldest African Republic. On behalf of the Government of Liberia, and in my own name, along with my darling wife, Madam Clar Marie Decontee Weah, I would like to congratulate all Liberians, both at home and abroad, on this auspicious occasion, and to wish you a joyous Independence Day celebration - even as we as a Nation and as a People struggle with the negative impact of the global coronavirus pandemic.

FELLOW CITIZENS, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN:

As we are all aware, since early last year, the entire world has been ravished by this deadly disease, which has infected almost 200 million persons so far, and resulted in the deaths of more than 4 million citizens of our various countries. Liberia has not been spared the scourge of this pestilence, and we have also suffered our share of infections and deaths. However, through strong leadership and effective implementation of health policies and protocols, as well as the sacrifices and dedication of our health workers, these have been kept to a minimum.

Last month, the country experienced an aggressive upsurge of the COVID-19 pandemic as opposed to the situation seen early this year and last year. Over a period of 3 weeks, the daily number of people testing positive for Corona virus increased from less than 10 to almost 100 per day and the proportion of people testing positive was as high as 20% over the same period.

In the same month, new COVID-19 infections expanded to 14 of the 15 counties. There was also high hospitalization at the Star base COVID-19 treatment center with nearly all beds occupied.

I am informed by the Minister of Health that, as of July 24, 2021, Liberia has recorded a cumulative number of 5,433 confirmed cases after 141,077 tests. Nearly 38.5% or 2,094 of these cases were reported last month. The Minister further reports that there have been 226 deaths since the onset of the pandemic in Liberia; with 140 of those deaths occurring since the recent upsurge of the disease.

The number of people vaccinated to date is 95,867; of which 86,288 persons have received the first dose of AstraZeneca vaccines, and 9,579 have been fully vaccinated. Despite the above figures, I am pleased to inform you that the country has seen a significant decline in the number of confirmed cases since the beginning of July, and for the past week the number of confirmed cases has been less than 10.

I ask that you now please join me to observe a moment of silence in memory of all our citizens and residents who have lost their lives as a result of the Covid-19 Pandemic.

MOMENT OF SILENCE

May their souls, and the souls of all the faithful departed, rest in perfect peace. And may light perpetual shine upon them. Amen!

FELLOW CITIZENS, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN:

My Government will continue to strengthen the strategic interventions that will urgently interrupt any chains of COVID-19 infections. As your President, I am determined to continue to exert my best efforts to ensure that we halt the further spread of coronavirus in Liberia.

In this regard, I have asked the National Legislature to allocate an additional \$2 million dollars of our own resources to enable us to obtain critical supplies for our treatment centers and to assist in general case management and infection control. Additionally, an amount of \$8 million dollars was recently approved for Liberia by our development partners to help finance the acquisition of much-needed vaccines and supplies.

I am encouraged to see that many more Liberians are now heeding our advice to wear masks, wash their hands often, and observe social distancing. If we are to be successful in this battle, we will need the collective support and cooperation of all citizens and residents alike, to strictly adhere to the published health protocols.

MY FELLOW CITIZENS, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN:

The theme of this year's celebration is:

“Together, We Are Stronger: Fighting COVID 19 and Achieving Development, Peace, Human Rights, Justice, Health and Prosperity for All”.

This theme reflects our unique values and collective experience as a resilient people who have prevailed through many adversities.

I must now take this opportunity to express my sincere appreciation to the National Orator of the Day, Rev. Prof. Dr. Julius Julukon Sarwolo Nelson, Jr., President of the University of Liberia, for the magnificent way he expounded and expanded on this theme during his excellent Oration. Being the renowned academic and scholar that he is, it came as no surprise to me that the content of his eloquently-delivered speech was carefully researched and historically instructive.

We will all do well to learn the important lessons and adopt the practical solutions that have been prescribed by the learned Professor to guide us in our collective behavior and attitudes, as we together seek to become stronger in fighting the deadly Coronavirus, while at the same time striving to achieve development, peace, human rights, justice, health and prosperity for all.

Thank you, Professor Nelson, for a job well done!

MY FELLOW CITIZENS, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN:

Just before the third wave of the Covid-19 virus began to appear in our country, I embarked on a nationwide tour of the 15 political subdivisions of Liberia. Although this visit, long-delayed by the onset of the first wave of Covid-19, was intended to thank Liberians for our historic 2017 election victory, it also afforded me the opportunity to observe the development challenges that we face as a country, from a closer and more personal perspective.

One of the recurring themes, which remained prominent and consistent throughout my revealing journeys, was the large infrastructural deficit. Liberia cannot boast of being the first independent African nation when, up to today, we lack the proper health, educational, governance and infrastructure systems befitting such a status.

That is why since our incumbency, my Administration has endeavored to tackle roads and other basic infrastructure requirements so as to bring improvement to the lives of our people, as well as ensuring that there is adequate access to services. In spite of many challenges, we have rehabilitated thousands of kilometers of roads across the country, built hundreds of housing units, constructed and rehabilitated many schools, hospitals and several market buildings. We will continue our infrastructure drive, in keeping with the Pro-Poor Agenda, until we can begin to reduce the infrastructural deficit because, the very existence of this deficit at this time in our national development trajectory can be regarded as a major historical failure.

In spite of the negative impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic, we have ensured that the national development agenda is not derailed. With the firm and prudent fiscal and monetary policy measures we have instituted, inflation has return to single digit. There is also greater stability in the monetary sector and marginal GDP growth is projected.

MY FELLOW CITIZENS, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN:

Sustainable development can only be achieved if there is sustainable peace. That is why we must all work collectively to maintain the peace we now enjoy. No matter how polarizing our democratic discourse may become, never again should we resort to violence to resolve our differences. We are all one people, irrespective of our political, ethnic or religious persuasions. Let me call on those religious leaders who are using their platforms to predict religious war, to instead use their influence to preach peace, prosperity and development. Today, Liberia is a nation that is at peace with itself, and with its neighbors. Let us all play our part to ensure that there will be no war again in our beloved country.

My Government will therefore continue to create the conditions necessary for the rights of every Liberian to be fully respected, regardless of political background, religion or ethnicity.

Each and every one of us has a stake in the future of our beloved country. We should therefore play our part in ensuring that we do not engage in acts that could derail the hard-earned peace that we now enjoy. We have reached this far as a Nation through the toil and tears of our forefathers. That is why maintaining peace remains the foundation of the Pro-poor Agenda for Prosperity and Development. It is a responsibility for which we must all be held collectively accountable.

On this day 174 years ago, our forefathers laid the bedrock for what was to become the Lone Star on the African continent. Our rich and shared history is filled with tales of triumphs and tribulations. But despite the many trials we have faced throughout the course of our history, we have remained resilient, realizing that this nation is our common patrimony. My fellow citizens, our unity in diversity and our resilience as a Nation has set the foundation for us to deliver peace and prosperity for generations yet unborn.

Let us be encouraged and inspired by the immortal words of our beloved National Anthem, which I now quote:

In union strong success is sure

We cannot fail!

With God above

Our rights to prove

We will o'er all prevail.

Long live Liberia, happy land!

A home of glorious liberty,

By God's command!

Again, let me use this occasion to wish a happy Independence Day to all citizens at home and abroad. May God bless us all and our beloved Mama Liberia.

I thank you.