

**WELCOME REMARKS
BY H.E. ELLEN JOHNSON SIRLEAF
PRESIDENT OF LIBERIA
TO THE NATIONAL LEGISLATURE
UPON ITS RETURN FROM AGRICULTURE BREAK
CAPITOL BUILDING
MONDAY, JANUARY 11, 2010**

Mr. Vice President, Mr. Speaker, Mr. President Pro-Tempore,
Honorable Members of the Legislature:

Welcome back. I am honored to be a part of this unprecedented occasion of a Joint Session on your return to duty.

We have continued, during your absence, to steer the ship of State, to meet the challenges of a budgetary crisis, to proclaim the triumph of freedom and democracy, to remain steadfast in the midst of disappointments, to expand infrastructure services to places historically neglected.

We applaud our security forces, and our citizens in general, for the peaceful environment which pertained throughout the holiday season. We welcomed the hundreds of our citizens from the diaspora, loved ones and others, who returned home -- some for the first time in many years -- to participate once again in activities of a nation at peace, and to observe, first hand, the progress we have gained and the problems which we collectively face.

In two weeks, I will be back to report to you, in Joint Session, on the state of the nation, the successes and the shortcomings, and to outline the tasks and responsibilities that lie on the road ahead.

It will not be easy. No process of transformation is. But together, we can walk the many miles on that rugged road, building a collective legacy of which we can be proud.

Together, we can transcend the barriers, proudly proclaiming that despite our differences, despite our institutional independence, there is one common denominator that binds us: to leave our country a better place than we found it.

Welcome back to a work-filled session that is bound to be busy and interesting.