

KEYNOTE ADDRESS

BY

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

AT

THE 14TH MEDAYS INTERNATIONAL FORUM

UNDER THE SPONSORSHIP OF THE AMADEUS INSTITUTE
TANGIER, KINGDOM OF MOROCCO

NOVEMBER 2, 2022

Excellencies, Heads of State and Government;

Ministers;

Officials of the Government of the Kingdom of Morocco, here present;

The President and Officials of the Amadeus Institute;

Representatives of Trade and Investment Organizations;

Representatives of Business Establishments;

Members of the Diplomatic and Consular Corps;

Representatives of International Organizations and Partners;

Distinguished Delegates and Guests;

Ladies and Gentlemen:

I have the pleasing honor to join you in this 14th Edition of the MEDAYS INTERNATIONAL FORUM, And to bring you very warm greetings from the friendly and loving People of the Republic of Liberia. I extend our warmest greetings and appreciation to my brother, His Majesty King Mohammed VI, King of the Kingdom of Morocco, and the Government and Great People of this Kingdom, for the very warm reception extended my delegation and me, and for the excellent arrangements made for our comfort and security since our arrival in this historic city of Tangier. This warm reception underlines the cordial and friendly relations subsisting between our two brotherly nation-states.

I would also like to thank His Excellency Mr. Nasser Bourita, Minister of Foreign Affairs, African Cooperation and Moroccan Expatriates of the Kingdom of Morocco, and Mr. Brahim Fassi Fihri, President of the Amadeus Institute, for the vision to host this all important gathering, where we are expected to do soul-searching about our existing conditions in a world that is clearly in turmoil.

It is my hope, and I am sure that it is also the hope of all participants here, that we will come out of these deliberations with strong and applicable action points that will take us on a guaranteed path to a more peaceful, secure, and stable world.

EXCELLENCIES, DISTINGUISHED LADIES AND GENTLEMEN:

The basis of what we shall strive to achieve out of the 14th edition of this Forum was laid out during the 1st Edition, which was held in Tangier in 2008. At that maiden edition, MEDAYS laid the foundation of mutual cooperation and trust amongst peoples in the African, Mediterranean and North American spheres. This foundation, I am convinced, remains solid and unbreakable, and it is a solid foundation on which we should build our future plans for mutual cooperation, integration and peaceful co-existence.

DISTINGUISHED LADIES AND GENTLEMEN:

We live in a world today that is beset by seemingly unending chaos and insurmountable crises, which have threatened the very core of the international order. These range from pandemics, such as HIV/AIDS, Ebola, Zika, and COVID-19, to Monkey Pox and still unknown others that are yet to come; to natural disasters caused by climate change; and to wars and rumors of war, with now even the added threat of nuclear war.

These various crises are creating political instabilities and uncertainties across the world, and sometimes, the search for lasting solutions seems hopeless and futile.

But the advantage we have as humans is our possession of the power of rationality, and our resilience to face adversity, no matter how insurmountable they may be or seem.

It is on this basis that the theme of this 14th edition, "From Crises to Crises: Towards A New Global Order", is relevant, topical, and truly meaningful, because this is the reality that we now face. The harsh fact is that we have not had time to recover from these various crises, because they keep coming at us in rapid succession, hitting us like repeated waves from an endless tsunami.

Our assembling here today is intended to reverse these crises that continue to plague us. For example, global health has been threatened to its very foundation by pandemics which have even violated our fundamental rights to freedom of movement. The global economy has been thrown into chaos as a combined result of the direct impact of pandemics and the war in Ukraine. In West Africa, democratic governance is facing its worst challenge with the twin threats of terrorism and a resurgence of military coups d'état.

These crises have led to our people fleeing their countries for greener pastures and safe havens abroad; only to endure not only hardship and suffering, but also inhumane treatment on their journeys, as well as upon arrival at the destinations where they had hoped to find welcome and refuge. Many have lost their lives along the way, and have perished without graves in the harsh conditions of the Mediterranean Sea.

EXCELLENCIES, DISTINGUISHED LADIES AND GENTLEMEN:

No country is an island. We live in an interdependent world driven by enormous gains in science and technology. We should understand each other; and act in concert to overcome our challenges, in order

to make the world a more peaceful and happier place. We have an obligation and duty to save our planet from disasters.

Our collective experience of living in a world of crises should therefore drive our collective resolve to close ranks in cooperation and collaboration, in order to confront together the daunting challenges facing us. In such times of adversity, we should draw closer to each other, and use our collective strength to overcome the challenges we face. It is therefore my plea to us all, that we should combine our knowledge, resources and strength to end these crises, in order to restore order, peace and stability to our One World.

DISTINGUISHED LADIES AND GENTLEMEN:

The situation of Africa in these global crises is a cause for grave concern. We in Africa remain challenged in so many ways, which include, but are not limited to, the threats of international terrorism, which are now being concentrated in our various regions.

Currently, the Sahel, which contains the largest portion of West Africa, has become a playground of international terrorists, with a line of terrorist operations that runs from the western borders of Mali all the way down to Cameroun. In addition to the terroristic activities, there are many armed conflicts that are beginning to be seen between various African countries. The conflict between Ethiopia and Eritrea; the conflict between the Democratic Republic of Congo, Somalia, and Rwanda; the conflict in Mozambique, as well as some parts of the Central African Republic, are some of the examples that come to mind. We are therefore constrained to ask the question: Why are we fighting each other? Are we not brothers and sisters? So why are brothers killing brothers. Should we not be our brothers' keepers?

As if the scourge of terrorism is not enough, we are beginning to experience waves of military coups d'état and other forms of unconventional and unconstitutional means of assuming state power; which is totally against the spirit, core values and principles of democratic culture.

The advancement of desertification and coastal degradation, which is influenced by climate change, is equally taking a heavy toll on Africa. The recent unprecedented flooding in Nigeria, Chad, and Sudan, among others, are clear indications that we are beginning to lose the climate change battle.

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on our economies is also a cause for concern. The pandemic occasioned a slowdown in the pace of growth for many of our African economies, as potential investors folded up their businesses and left, and companies shut down, which lead to unprecedented increases in unemployment.

We cannot pretend to be contented with these negatives, and still believe that we are secure and stable.

With the theme of this Forum in mind, Liberia calls for more sustained and concerted collaboration among nation-states to address these major crises around the world.

On the war between Russia and Ukraine, I would like to call on the members of the international community to use every means of diplomacy to bring this unfortunate conflict to an early end. The global disruptions occasioned by this war have far-reaching consequences for all of our economies and all our people, including food insecurity, supply-chain delays, and rising inflation, to mention a few.

I once served as a Peace Ambassador for UNICEF, and later in my career I was appointed and served as Peace Ambassador by the Liberian Government even while I was in opposition. These roles were of pivotal importance in bringing about disarmament, demobilization, and rehabilitation of young ex-combatants in the Liberian civil wars.

I am convinced that peace can prevail in Ukraine if the parties give it an impartial chance. I feel the pains of the women and children, the young and the elderly, and all the defenseless civilians who are ongoing casualties of the war. The war in Ukraine should not be allowed to go on, while the rest of the world sits and watch. Let us give peace a chance.

DISTINGUISHED LADIES AND GENTLEMEN:

Africa looks forward to sustained investments in the health sector, principally in building pharmaceutical plants, where quality and affordable drugs can be produced for the African market. We also seek partnerships for investment in the energy and infrastructural sectors.

Liberia specifically would like to encourage investors to utilize the virgin nature of our investment climate to engage in profitable business ventures of mutual benefit to our economy. Our fertile soils are ready for mechanized agriculture that could enhance food security. The technology sector also remains untouched in most African countries, including Liberia. We seek investment in fiber-optic backbones that could strengthen the communication sector and give a further boost to our economy.

Liberia is endowed with enormous potential to transform itself into a strong economic giant for all of its citizens and the world at large. Such potential, which includes maritime transport, air services, port development and expansion, development and exploration of the offshore minerals to include oil and gas, as well as solid minerals amongst others, could be realized through strong cooperation and joint venture initiatives with prospective investors. We encourage value-addition in all investment portfolios; as this will result into more sustainable job creation for our ever-growing youthful population.

Liberia is also a member of various sub-regional bodies on the African continent, such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Community of Sahel-Saharan States (CENSAD), the West African Economic and Monetary Union (UEMOA), the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), the Economic and Monetary Community of Central Africa (CEMAC) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC). Accordingly, prospective investors in the Liberia economy will enjoy all of the benefits of Liberia's membership in these organizations.

We also want to encourage investment in a particular project, the Nigeria-Morocco Gas Pipeline, which will connect Nigerian gas to every coastal country in West Africa, up to the Mediterranean shore. We are convinced that this large-scale energy project will immensely boost the region's economic integration, and benefit all the nations involved by unlocking their industrial potential and curbing their energy deficit.

DISTINGUISHED LADIES AND GENTLEMEN:

Liberia wishes to emphasize that this new, more operational and more mutually beneficial North-South cooperation; started by the Amadeus Institute more than a decade ago, will be the key to meeting our known challenges; as well as building greater autonomy and self-sufficiency to strengthen our resilience to external shocks.

I am most confident that this forum will continue to work together, to ensure that the points being discussed and the conclusions reached at the end of this Forum, will be transformed in to concrete actions of implementation, for the continued development of Africa, and for the betterment of the World.

I wish you well in your deliberations.

I thank you for your kind attention. Merci !!