

**Key note Address:
BY
H.E. Dr. Jewel Howard Taylor
Vice President of the Republic of Liberia
On the topic –**

**“ WHY AFRICA NEEDS NEW FINANCING VEHICLES FOR
HEALTH, EDUCATION AND RAIN FED AGRICULTURE “**

**Held at the 2019 SDG’s Implementation in Africa meeting in
Kigali, Rwanda from June 12th - 14th
At the Kigali Convention Center
Under the theme:**

“ REFLECTIONS ON A THREE YEAR JOURNEY”

**HIS EXCELLENCY PAUL KAGAME; PRESIDENT OF
RWANDA;
EXCELLENCES;
HONORABLE OFFICIALS OF THE RWANDAN
GOVERNMENT PRESENT;
SPECIAL GUESTS and PANELISTS;
Dr. Belay Begashaw, Director General, SDGs Center for
Africa
Mr. Hiroshi Kato, Sr. Vice President, Japan International
Cooperation Agency (JICA);
DISTINGUISHED LADIES AND GENTLEMEN;
ALL OTHER PROTOCOLS OBSERVED.**

GOOD MORNING TO ALL.

I bring you warm greetings from His Excellency President George Manneh Weah, President of the Republic of Liberia, who is a member of the Board of SDG Africa clothe with the responsibility to open the first West African SDG Center this year. A project that our Government is assiduously working on. Please accept HIS apology for being unable to be here today.

His Excellency has asked me to represent him at this Forum; an assignment that I hope to perform to the best of my ability.

Before I begin my presentation, please allow me to give thanks and appreciation to whom it is due. I am exceedingly grateful , firstly, to the Almighty God for bringing me and the Liberian delegation safely from Liberia to KIGALI; the capital of one of the most amazing African Nations in the World. Which is so, as a result of the vision of ONE MAN and the unwavering commitment of an entire **NATION**. This combination has produced what we see today. We are grateful for this stellar example of the kind of leadership paradigm needed across Africa today. My gratitude also go to Dr.Bergashaw, the SDG AFRICA FAMILY and the organizers of this important forum; for bringing all of us together to discuss an important agenda; and for granting me this rare opportunity to add my voice to these discussions; as we all seek alternative solutions to meeting National and Continental goals of the SDG's.

As a Pan Africanist, my heart skips a beat every time the name **RWANDA** is mentioned.

For it is a glaring reminder, that all African Nations have the same capacity to turn stories of tragedies into successes and muster the political will to transform their Nations for the betterment of All their people. If this can be done there should be no more long or sad stories about the “**WOES OF AFRICA** and **WHETHER OR NOT OUR ABUNDANT NATURAL RESOURCES ARE A BLESSING OR A CURSE**”.

Instead, there should be more and more success stories which show the unlimited possibilities **FIRSTLY** of our **GREAT AFRICAN HERITAGE AND SECONDLY, THE COMMITMENT OF NATIONAL LEADERS TO LEAVE THAT WHICH HAS BEEN GIVEN TO US, BETTER THAN THE WAY IT WAS GIVEN**”. If only each of us can manifest this simple truism, in every sphere of our National lives, the topic for our discussion would indeed be different.

Howbeit, is my honest prayer that those who have been privileged to stand in positions of trust, would begin in earnest to use their **VANTAGE POINTS** , **POLITICAL WILL** and the **UNLIMITED RESOURCES** located in every African Nation for the transformation needed to change the lives of our people for the better. Keeping in mind that they deserve no less than the best. So that sooner, rather than later, each African Nation will be viewed as the **WORLD** views success stories like **RWANDA, GHANA** and **BOTSWANA**; thus making it imperative for those nations who are lagging behind to strive to improve the living condition of their people and fulfill their long awaited hopes and aspirations.

Excellencies, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen; today's topic speaks to very critical matters affecting Africa's growth, development and prosperity as a continent. Since 2000 – Africa has made some progress but it is not enough. Many Nations lag behind in their commitment to working to achieve the MDG's and subsequently the SDG's. As a result, across the Continent there is dire poverty, a sense of hopelessness, despair amongst the youth, huge levels of illiteracy and mortality due to poorly functioning health and education systems; and to make things worse, most African Nations are unable to feed their people. It is this prevailing situation and the urgent need to begin to do something about it, which brings us here.

Thankfully, the passion behind the drive of the SDG's is to see “**THE LEAVE NO ONE BEHIND POLICY** “ become a reality with full-fledged results materializing in the quality of lives of People not just in a few places; but across our Continent . What makes this program a life line and one of the best options for National Governance Systems, is that the SDGs emphasize not just the opportunities to lift people to a better standard of living, but it also provides opportunities for prosperity.

Sadly, at the current pace of development, African Nations remain at a high risk of being unable to realizing these aspirations. Especially when one considers that Africa is a youthful continent – with 40% of the population below the age of 15 years and approximately 33 million babies born every year. Further still, Africa remains the only region without demographic transition and as a result limits social economic transformation on a greater scale. This scenario shows that population growth will continue to undermine Social economic progression as reflected in the stagnation of the SDG results.

One glaring example is that the poverty rate reduction over the past two decades has not translated to a reduction in the number of poor people on the continent. In order to change this trajectory, African leaders must consider which priorities to prioritize.

The matrix contained in the SDG's, gives a laundry list of what is the optimum aspiration. But it is clear, that in order to reach this optimum level, one must begin at areas most important first for survival. As a result, I hope you will consider the perspective of the African SDG program that the survival and prosperity of our people depend, firstly in agreeing that the basic needs which should form our priorities are **HEALTH, EDUCATION AND AGRICULTURE**. Once this decision is taken, then we can begin considering ways to plan, finance and implement programs under these sectors which directly impact and improve the lives of our people. Though all SDGs matter - some have stronger synergies, better tradeoffs and higher correlation with other goals. These areas are most directly related to SDGs 2, 3 and 4 and are identified as “game changing” and “key levers” for the rapid development necessary for SDG achievement and African transformation.

Excellencies, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, the statistics from the Continent show that there exist an enduring trend of a food insecurity paradox, with nearly 1 in 3 Africans at risk of starvation. There is an increased vulnerability to the climatic and weather conditions, which were not previously a regular part of the African weather pattern, but is now becoming a regular phenomenon , such as El Niño related droughts. To make things worse, agriculture production in Africa is centered on exports for foreign consumption and not food security which predominantly depend on rain-fed subsistence farming that is affected by unreliable, unpredictable and erratic rainfall patterns. Thus leaving the continent under a persistent threat of hunger. Thus making it difficult to achieve SDG priority 2 which is to (End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture).

Similarly in the **HEALTH and EDUCATION** sectors there are very low scores , which automatically manifests into low life productivity and low life expectancy . This reflects a very disturbing paradox which if not arrested, will make the next several generations of Africans unable to survive or be adequately prepared to deal with the challenges they will face. This paradox is that most African countries boast of more children being in school, the large numbers look great; but truthfully, a majority of those children unfortunately cannot read and write at expected levels because of the associated very poor quality of the educational system. So while African Nations boast of their enrolment numbers, the quality and completion rates have stagnated or continue a downward trend. The situation is even worse for the girl child – who risks ending up as sex workers, child brides or being denied opportunities to go to school because the parents are unable to afford same.

This negative trend also exists in the health sector, where we have high rates of **HIV/AIDS, MATERNAL MORTALITY, REGULAR INSTANCES OF EBOLA** and **TB**. There are also high rates of death from **MALARIA** and other childhood diseases because most Africans do not seek health services because they simply cannot afford the point of service payments. To further compound this dire situation, most African Nations faced with difficult Per capita spending choices currently show a constant decline in allocations for education, health and agriculture. These facts show that Africa is off track on social inclusion goals, which make it unlikely that they will meet targeted goals by 2030.

As we consider solutions for these issues, let us note that it is no longer a secret that the financing needed for sustainable development goals in Africa remain far below the expected amount necessary to meet 2030 targets. In fact, Africa's current additional financial needs per annum are much lower than it receives collectively from both internal and external sources. There is therefore a financing gap too large to fill, if left to the continent but relatively small when compared to available global resources. If one looks at Official development flows to Africa, they have either grown marginally , remained stagnant and in some instances have drastically declined. Resultantly, there is increased pressure on annual available allocations between funds for infrastructure development and much needed social development initiatives . Resulting in a steep decline in social sector spending and a reversal of the social inclusion progress.

The question then is - **HOW DO WE FINANCE SDG TAILORED INVESTMENT VEHICLES WHICH WILL TAKE INTO ACCOUNT THE URGENCY, MAGNITUDE AND COMPLEXITY OF THE CHALLENGES BEING FACED IN AFRICA?**

Excellencies, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, as we ponder the HOW, it is critical to take a glance at the challenges in National Systems which must be overcome in order to have the space to create the new paradigms for both internal and external resources; some of which are :

1. SECURING THE POLITICAL WILL OF NATIONAL AND LOCAL LEADERS FOR EFFECTIVE REFORM

MANAGEMENT AND LOCALIZED ACHIEVEMENT OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS: In a report from the Independent Journal of Management (09/17), one of the writers (Kpundeh) opines that political will is a critical first starting point for sustainable and effective reform programmes, and that lack of political will is at the root of lack of transparency, accountability, good governance and leadership.

2. ENSURING ADMINISTRATIVE REFORMS -Governments can do little to concretize plans for achieving the SDGs without reforming public administration structures, processes, practices and values. A system with the right combination of reforms can then be used to plan, implement, evaluate and monitor progress as managers consider questions such as:

To which extent are set goals influencing policymaking and government action?

and

How are governments connecting SDG goals to their national development strategies?

AND

What Plans, Programs and Allocations are being made to achieve the SDG's?

3. ENSURING THE INCLUSION OF CSO'S AND WATCH DOG AGENCIES IN THE GOVERNANCE SPACE:

The inclusion of such agencies in this process is imperative, for these actors play crucial roles in society as agents of information dissemination, oversight, accountability, monitoring and evaluation, and in securing service delivery.

4. ENCOURAGING THE BUILDING OF A STRONG DEMOCRATIC PARLIAMENT

- Parliamentarians are the true Representatives of the People and must always have the people's interest in sight. They have a constitutional and social responsibility to play a significant role in supporting and monitoring all programs that have direct benefits for their people, including the SDG program planning, financing and implementation.

5. ENSURING THE ADHERENCE TO THE RULE OF LAW

- A system underpinned by a robust commitment to upholding the rule of law can be used to advance equity and people-centered development; whether in reducing inequalities or fostering social justice and inclusion for peace.

6. ENSURING PUBLIC AWARENESS AND INVOLVEMENT

- Any Government that wishes to **SUCCEED** must carry its people along. Numerous Data show that developing awareness-raising activities is a crucial step towards achieving the SDG's. National associations should be given the space to work hand in hand with central governments in identifying awareness-raising national indicators so that citizens knowledge, participation, acceptance and buy in of Governments plans and programs can be accepted, monitored and evaluated.

7. ELIMINATION OF THE CULTURE OF CORRUPTION AND MISMANAGEMENT OF SCARCE RESOURCES-

sadly, evidence from across Africa confirms that corruption is the engine to an anti-democratic environment, characterized by lack of trust, uncertainty, unpredictability, declining moral values and disrespect for constitutional institutions and authority.

Clearly there is no other way to consider the new paradigms needed to solve these critical issues unless we build the necessary governance platforms , which then forms the basis for the critical evaluation of how to implement the new paradigm shifts needed for the proper combination needed to finance and achieve the SDG's.

Excellencies, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, permit me to recommend for your consideration a two prong approach which harnesses both internal and external sources of funding as the best way to insure local commitment , obtain external assistance and set the basis for sustainability.

INTERNAL OPTIONS:

- **RESTRUCTURE NATIONAL BUDGETS** - to reflect direct financing for SDG priorities; reduce recurrent expenditures and wasteful spending; and increase expenditure in relevant sector areas. Which will also create new funding for social protection measures that target disadvantaged groups ; and creates greater capacity to achieve SDG's benchmarks.
- **STRENGTHEN REVENUE ADMINISTRATION** - thru better enforcement and policy regimes (e.g. revised tax regimes); creating avenues for increasing the revenue base thru ICT opportunities which would provide incentives for new and off grid businesses to come online; Creating avenues for investments in non-traditional business opportunities (ie. Agro-businesses,

Culture and Tourism); Putting in place creative and innovative ways for the industrialization and processing of natural resources, thus diversifying economies, creating wealth and building new tax bases.

- **OPEN UP THE GOVERNANCE SPACE** - for the inclusion of innovative youth driven ideas and capacities, which create new cross cutting innovative solutions, programs and businesses, which provides inclusiveness and further increases the revenue base.
- **SUPPORT INCLUSIVE SOCIAL GROWTH INITIATIVES** - for the creation of small businesses which provide job opportunities targeting the youth and other disadvantaged groups. And providing funds for support to social programs, industrial action plans, promotion of agriculture and rural development, skills and training initiatives and investing in housing and municipal services which are aimed at building prosperity ,equity and broadening economic participation.

AND

- **ENSURE GENDER EQUALITY INITIATIVES FORM A COGENT PART OF THE GOVERNANCE SPACE.**

EXTERNAL OPTIONS:

- Advocate for the creation of a Special Africa Global Fund for education, health and agriculture ;
- Develop a formula for the full participation and contribution from all AFRICAN Nations;
- Create a secretariat whose sole responsibility will be to convince and source contributions from African Philanthropist for this generational initiative;

- Seek additional contribution from Affluent African Nations;

These funds, drawing lessons from other global fund initiatives; will build the impetus for the provision of urgent response, scale resilience and sustainable mechanisms of financing to help Africa achieve the SDG's by 2030.

Excellences, Conference Delegates, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, though I believe that the impetus for the achievement of the SDG's must begin at the internal and National levels; I know that - no one is an Island. For no Nation has the capability to provide all of its needs and wants. Therefore the holistic approach that Governments need to achieve the SGD's is this two prong approach; which firstly include the maximization of available local resources and then a robust advocacy for the creation of a GLOBAL FUND for health, education and rain fed agriculture as a way of attaining the SDG's. The formula being suggested is that by removing constraints, transforming national budgets and programs to reflect priority areas; supporting innovation, diversifying our economies and exploring new financing opportunities, Nations can expand their growth prospects, work assiduously towards achieving the SGD's, broaden participation and inspire confidence in our societies.

As I close, I hope u will agree with me, that the fulfillment of the SDG's across African Nations is possible; but require bold, innovative and committed leaders who can build teams that will create National platforms for a shared vision of a better Africa; with a common purpose of creating an enabling environment of peaceful coexistence, equity, open participation, innovation, development and growth.

For the bottom line vision is simply the improvement and prosperity of people on the African Continent. It is glaring as we look across the African landscape that our people are no longer interested in empty promises of a better day; for they have waited for far too long , are now very impatient and long for the day when their needs, hopes and aspirations will become realities thru sustained national priorities.

And so as we gather together over the next few days to deliberate and consider the way forward in helping African nations achieve the 3 critical areas of the SDG's before 2030; barely 11 years away, it is important that we unite as a team, have a common vision, share our skills and resources, build social solidarity, build and defend the institutions of our democracy, uphold the rule of law, create incentives for achievement and seek out those who have the financial capability to help create a more equitable World for all and not just a few. Keeping in mind that though - our People are resilient, committed and resourceful; they can no longer wait in the shadows of dire poverty and exclusion; while their natural and human resources are plundered for the good of a few .

Please permit me just a few more moments of your time as I ask you to please watch a short inspirational video about - **THE MAN WHO STOPPED THE DESERT**. It will show how, with vision and tenacity, **WE CAN INDEED CREATE A BETTER AFRICA**.

I thank you.