

Special Remarks

by

Her Excellency President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf

At Europe Day Reception Hosted by the European Union

Kendeja Hotel and Resorts

Monrovia, Liberia

May 10, 2010

Head of the European Union Delegation to Liberia;

Ambassador Attilio Pacifici;

Representatives of EU Member States present;

Members of the Diplomatic Corps;

Liberian Government Officials;

**Representatives of international, non-governmental and civil
society organizations;**

Fellow Liberians:

Thank you for inviting me to be the Guest of Honor at this celebration of Europe Day (observed on May 9th); a day set aside each year to celebrate the EU's achievements and to reflect on its aims of peace, freedom, prosperity and collaboration.

Much has happened since the historic moment on 23 June 2000 when the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) Countries–EU Partnership Agreement was signed, marking the beginning of a new era in the relationship between the ACP States and the European Union.

As you may all recall, in 2006, after the inception of this Government, the European Commission proposed to the European Council of Ministers to resume normal cooperation with Liberia under the Cotonou Agreement, which was partially suspended in March 2002 due to the failure of Liberia's leaders to respect human rights, the rule of law and democracy. This decision was taken in view of our Government's commitment to promoting development and building a well governed and democratic country.

We are grateful to our European partners for the strong partnership demonstrated so well and the notable success scored during the year 2009. Since your arrival, Ambassador Pacifici, in November 2009, we

have witnessed remarkable progress and enhanced flexibility in our relationship.

In 2009 alone, more than 44 million Euros was disbursed to support our development agenda and humanitarian needs.

- 60.2 million Euros has been committed to the Liberia Reconstruction Trust Fund;
- 20.2 million Euros for General Budget Support;
- 20.2 million Euros to support our National Health Plan;
- 14.2 million Euros for Food Security.

We would also want to commend the European Union for the support to Food Facility Projects, the launch of the Gola Forest Cross-Border Peace Park, and the Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade (FLEGT)–Voluntary Partnership Agreement, which has greatly helped us to regulate our forest industry against illegal timber trade.

The Government of Liberia also welcomes the increased attention given to Liberia as a fragile State, which was long overdue, and the availability of additional resources (to those in the European Development Fund) under the Vulnerability FLEX (V-FLEX) budgetlines. Liberia has applied for this funding, and we look forward to a favorable consideration of our application, as it will help close the country's residual financial gap for FY 2009/10 and FY 2010/11 in order to maintain public priority expenditure and particularly social expenditure, near to or at the level prior to the crisis.

We remember with appreciation the support given for the successful hosting of the International Women's Colloquium in March 2009, and the presence there of the Vice President of the Commission, Madam Margot Wallström.

Mr. Ambassador, Distinguished Guests: the global economic crisis translated into job losses and slowed output growth while rendering budgetary management and the fight against poverty more difficult. However, Liberia has been shielded from the worst of the downturn by limited external financial linkages and strong support from donors. The medium-term outlook is positive, and robust growth rates are expected to increase shortly. The Government remains committed to

maintaining a cash-based balanced budget as an anchor of macroeconomic stability through sound economic governance.

Finally, before I close, I wish to remind you of our request for the speedy restitution of National Authorizing Powers to Liberia. The Office of the National Authorizing Officer has been established at the Ministry of Planning and Economic Affairs and a robust team has been put in place to perform the required duties. We are ready, we are set, and we look forward to recovering very soon from the European Union the National Authorizing Powers.

Thank you.

Toast!

Excellencies, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, please raise your glasses and join me in drinking a toast to the European Union, its leaders and peoples, for their continued cohesion and prosperity and for international peace and security and the betterment of our one world.