

REMARKS

BY

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

AT THE

OPENING SESSION

OF THE

**TOKYO INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE FOR AFRICA
DEVELOPMENT
(TICAD 7)**

YOKOHAMA, JAPAN

WEDNESDAY

28 AUGUST 2019

His Excellency Shinzo Abe, Prime Minister of Japan;

Co-organizers of TICAD-7

Your Excellences, the Heads of State of African Nations here present;

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen:

I bring you greetings from the People of Liberia.

Let me begin by extending sincere thanks and appreciation to His Excellency Shinzo Abe, Prime Minister of Japan, and the Government and people of Japan, for the warm hospitality accorded me and my delegation since our arrival in this beautiful country. It is indeed my pleasure to be a part of this unique gathering.

Liberia is most honored to partake in this global forum, which is a manifestation of the excellent relationship existing between African nations and Japan. Liberia appreciates the ongoing development cooperation with Japan, and remains committed to further strengthening bilateral ties, for the benefit of both countries and peoples.

Let me also take this opportunity to express my appreciation for Japan's contribution to Africa's development through the TICAD process, and for Japan's meaningful role in global peacekeeping, noted as an important factor in our developmental process.

TICAD-7 provides yet another opportunity to compare notes with our fellow African leaders and our global development partners, from Japan and other parts of the world, on the common good of mankind, particularly the fate of the African people.

It would be remiss of us if, on this occasion, we did not reflect on some critical development and capacity-building programs that Japan has implemented, or is currently implementing, in Liberia through grant arrangements. To name a few:

- Grant for the reconstruction and expansion of the Somalia Drive road in Monrovia; now referred to as the “Japan Freeway”.
- Food aid to Liberia;
- Grant for the procurement and installation of a 10 megawatt generator to support the expansion of electricity in Monrovia and its environs;
- Grant for construction of the Liberia-Japanese Friendship Maternity Hospital at the John F. Kennedy Medical Center;
- Training opportunities granted to more than two hundred Liberians to pursue specialized studies at various Japanese colleges and universities.

- Deployment of more than 170 young Japanese volunteers to Liberia under the Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteer program, to provide technical assistance in the areas of Science, Math, Agriculture, Auto Maintenance and Maternal Health Care.

Prime Minister Abe, the people of Liberia are very grateful for the generosity and support that we have received, and are continuing to receive, from your country.

DISTINGUISHED LADIES AND GENTLEMEN:

Considering Africa's current place in the global community, and taking into account the evolving realities on the African continent, Liberia could not be more excited about the theme of TICAD7:

“Advancing Africa's Development through People, Technology and Innovation”.

Liberia is currently behind on the application of technology to impact its national development goals. This reality compels us to now pursue a strategy which will fast-track the integration of technology in all facets of our national life.

We are fully aware that technological innovation and its proper application can go a long way in solving many of our socio-economic problems, and can even contribute to mitigating some of our political challenges. We have therefore decided to

accelerate our efforts in this area in order to achieve our development goals in the shortest possible time.

Additionally, energy capacity in Liberia is very low, and tends to impede all efforts to stimulate the Liberian economy. Currently, we do not have the level of power generation, transmission and distribution infrastructure to attract industries that can significantly impact the unemployment rate. To compound this problem, our road networks are poor and inadequate.

It is on account of these realities that we have come to this forum. Your theme: ***“Advancing Africa's Development through People, Technology and Innovation”***, is a powerful proposition that renews our hope for a brighter future for our people.

My Government has determined that there are a number of categories of physical assets that are critical and essential to the success of our Pro-Poor Agenda – ranging from roads, bridges and rail; to telecommunication and high speed broadband internet connectivity; electricity for domestic and commercial consumption; machinery for mechanized food production; and institutions for vocational training and human skill development.

It is very clear to me, that the combined functionality of these assets will determine the quality of life for every citizen and every resident of our country – from physical safety; to movement by road, sea and air; to production and supply of food; to healthcare, education, human skills development, job creation; and, ultimately, to the attainment of prosperity and happiness.

In order to realize these goals, we have developed the Pro-Poor Agenda for Prosperity and Development (PAPD) as our flagship development strategy.

The ultimate objectives of the PAPD are two-fold: firstly, to build more capable and trusted state institutions that will lead to a stable, resilient, and inclusive nation embracing its heritage and its unique African identity.

The second objective is to provide greater income security to an additional one million Liberians, and reduce absolute poverty by 23 percent across five out of six regions--through sustained and inclusive economic growth which is driven by scaled-up investments in agriculture, in infrastructure, in human resource development, and in social protection

For the purpose of TICAD-7 we have circulated the details of a number of priority projects that we believe are crucial for the realization of our development objectives. We invite all of you, as our development partners, to avail yourselves to the sideline meetings and technical discussions that are scheduled over the next few days and beyond, so that we might consult on the details of these programs and projects.

To you, our gracious host, His Excellency Shinzō Abe, Prime Minister of the Republic of Japan, we extol the generosity of your great country and its people.

By establishing the Tokyo International Conference on Africa Development forum, your country has demonstrated its passion and capacity to share its knowledge and wealth, thereby giving all mankind the opportunity to enjoy the blessings of creation.

Your Excellency, Liberia is here to take advantage of this opportunity.

We thank you!