

REMARKS

BY

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

AT THE

OPENING CEREMONY

OF THE

2019 SECOND EXTRAORDINARY SESSION

OF THE

ECOWAS PARLIAMENT

THE MINISTERIAL COMPLEX
TUBMAN BOULEVARD
MONROVIA, LIBERIA

16 SEPTEMBER 2019

Her Excellency Madam Jewel Howard Taylor, Vice President of the Republic of Liberia;

The Honorable Speaker and Members of the House of Representatives of Liberia;

The Honorable President Pro-Tempore and Members of the Liberian Senate;

The Honorable Moustapha Cissé Lo, Rt. Honorable Speaker of ECOWAS Parliament; and Members of the ECOWAS Parliament;

The Dean and Members of the Cabinet;

The Doyen and Members of the Diplomatic Corps;

The Special Representative of the President of ECOWAS Commission in Liberia;

Honorable Edwin Melvin Snowe Jr., Head of the Liberian
Delegation to the ECOWAS Parliament;

Our International and Development Partners;

Members of the Fourth Estate;

Special Guests,

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen:

It gives me great pleasure to extend to you all a very warm welcome on behalf of the People of the Republic of Liberia, and to say how grateful we are for the selection of Liberia as the venue for the hosting of your Second Extraordinary Session of 2019.

Personally, it is a very important day for me, full of wonderful memories and positive reflections, having served this Parliament as one of its Members.

I still recall my days at the ECOWAS Parliament and the warm reception I received when I was inaugurated as a Member of Parliament. I was received not only as a colleague, but as a brother and a friend. The relationships built and the bonds shared remain active even up to this moment.

I remember when Members of this Parliament celebrated and autographed a shirt for my 50th birthday. I remember those days when I worked from behind the scenes to resolve disagreements between Members, on the one hand, and my good friend, Speaker Moustapha "Manneh" Cisse Lo, on the other.

Let me at this point make a special reference to the Former Speaker of the Parliament, Senator Ike Ekweremadu of Nigeria, who received my oath of office as a Member of the ECOWAS Parliament, and worked so hard to provide the space in which we were able to begin our service to the Parliament.

I also remember so well the transition that brought Speaker Moustapha "Manneh" Cisse Lo to the Speakership and the role we played to secure a smooth democratic transition.

Recalling my service at committee level, I was a member of the Committee of Labour, Employment, Youth, Sports and Culture under the distinguished Chairmanship of Hon. Alpha Souleymane Bah of the Republic of Guinea, who is here today. Together, we deliberated on policy direction to address employment in our Community particularly, youth employment and promote peace and unity through sports.

It is gratifying to recall the many meetings we held in different Member States, and the various sessions we attended together, exchanging ideas and tackling the challenges we face as a Community; for we are indeed resembling a Community of People and not of States.

MR. SPEAKER AND HONORABLE MEMBERS:

At this juncture, I wish to share with you my vivid recollections of serving on the Ad hoc Committee charged with the fundamental responsibility of ensuring the enhancement of the powers of Parliament.

A key mandate of the Ad hoc Committee was to work with the Authority of Heads of State and Government, of which I am now a Member, to ensure that the ECOWAS Parliament attained enhanced powers in order to be able to discharge its traditional roles regarding representation.

Your presence here today, holding an extraordinary session out of Abuja, is the expected outcome of consolidated efforts by the Parliament in achieving its vested interest, and I am indeed very proud to be counted amongst those who contributed to achieving this feat.

Interestingly, our own Former President of Liberia, Madame Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, was the Chairperson of the ECOWAS Authority of Heads of State and Government at the time of the signing of the Supplementary Act on Enhancement Powers.

It is based upon this providence and in accordance with the Supplementary Act relating to the enhancement of the Powers of the ECOWAS Parliament that you have gathered here today to deliberate on the issues that beset our Community of Peoples, the first of its kind in Liberia and the third country to host the Parliament for its extraordinary session.

We are aware of the tremendous challenges we face and the efforts being exerted by every Member State and ECOWAS institution to tackle those challenges. I am, however, confident that the discussions held during this session will lead us to important conclusions on the subjects being discussed.

Remember, no matter how much we can do by ourselves on the national level, it is never enough. In the spirit of true cooperation, we in this region must join in an action-oriented effort to tackle and solve our problems together.

I cannot close without extending special thanks to Members of the Liberian delegation for keeping the flag of Liberia high at this regional Body.

As for you my dear brother Hon. Moustapha Manneh Cisse Lo, for whom I have so much respect and admiration, I thank you for the visibility, respect and credibility you have given this Parliament.

As you conclude your tenure in February of next year, please remember that we remain grateful for your service to our sub-region. Be assured that Liberia will always be your home.

I also applaud the committed staffers at the Parliament; from the protocol officers, to drivers, translators and interpreters, committees clerks, the conference officers, Directors, all under the leadership of the Secretary General, who runs the day-to-day affairs of the Parliament, and all others, for your commitment and high degree of professionalism.

We appreciate all that you do to make working at the Parliament conducive and pleasant.

Before I close, I would like to extend my personal congratulations to the new members of Parliament that have been sworn in this morning. I wish, for each of you, much success, as you take up your new responsibilities. And to the outgoing members, we wish to thank you for your service.

Mr. Speaker and Distinguished Members, I wish you every success in your deliberations. I also hope you enjoy the hospitality of the People of Liberia and have a very pleasant stay in Monrovia.

AND NOW, DISTINGUISHED LADIES AND GENTLEMEN:

It gives me great pleasure to now formally declare the Second Extraordinary Session of 2019 of the ECOWAS Parliament, which is being held here in Monrovia, Liberia, opened for transaction of business.

Thank you. Merci. Obrigado.