

**STATEMENT
BY
HER EXCELLENCY MADAM ELLEN JOHNSON SIRLEAF
PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF LIBERIA
TO THE
70TH SESSION
OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

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(As Delivered)

Mr. President;
Excellencies, Heads of State and Government and Heads of Delegations
Distinguished delegates
Ladies and Gentlemen:

On this auspicious occasion, the seventieth anniversary of the United Nations, I am honored to address this august assembly on behalf of the Government and people of Liberia. I congratulate you on your election as President of the Assembly and appreciate the stewardship of your predecessor, H.E. Mr. Sam Kutesa who ably conducted the affairs of the 69th session.

Mr. President,

This year has registered ground breaking developments. After 50 years, the United States and Cuba have decided to resolve differences by establishing diplomatic relations.

Another milestone was the adoption here a few days ago of the Post 2015 Development Agenda: Transforming the world: 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development by which we committed to implement measures to transform the lives of our peoples - to lift them from poverty to prosperity and to preserve the planet. It was this same vision, which, seventy years ago, motivated the founding of this global organization to promote peaceful coexistence, economic and social advancement of all peoples, respect for human dignity and equal rights of men and women, and nations large and small. I am proud to say that Liberia was among the founding members of the United Nations.

The creation of the United Nations was a realization that only a global organization, through the support and cooperation of the comity of nations, would be suitable to grapple with the many challenges faced by humanity.

Today, a reduction in interstate conflict, cooperation in the protection and promotion of human rights, and in alleviating global poverty, disease and hunger have been the hallmark of this body.

On the other hand, increased intra-state conflicts and international terrorism are seeking to undermine the gains made in reducing human suffering. Protracted and intense conflicts in various parts of the world pose serious threat to global peace and security.

Mr. President,

The United Nations is thus called to action by new and emerging challenges. Despite commendable efforts, Africa, the Middle East, Asia and Europe still have vortexes of conflict. Migrants and people seeking refuge from conflicts and economic hardships are swirling across Europe.

We are haunted by the growing threats of destabilizing forces such as Boko Haram and ISIS as well as attempts to reverse democratic initiatives such as in Burkina Faso which invoked an immediate and decisive ECOWAS response.

Climate conditions are changing and so must we. In many countries of the world, women are still being treated as second-class citizens. And as Liberia bears painful witness, weak public health systems in individual countries threaten global health and wellbeing. It is not beyond this body to find answers and to respond as we know that we must.

At seventy, we feel compelled to ask: Is our world organization hindered today by inflexible structures and overburdened by bureaucracies? Is the current structure of the UN fit for purpose - to play its role in the global transformation proceses over the next 15 years? We are encouraged by the introspection which is taking place at the UN around these questions.

We commend the foresight of the Secretary-General in directing a comprehensive review of peace operations, which is complemented by a review of the organization's peace building architecture and a global study on the implementation of Resolution 1325 on women participation in peace processes.

After the completion of these reviews, we expect implementation to bring further improvements. Liberia can attest, with gratitude, to the critical and indispensable nature of the UN's peacekeeping and peace building functions for post-conflict countries.

Mr. President,

This year we marked the twentieth anniversary of the historic Beijing Conference and its Plan of Action for Women's empowerment and gender equality. We are also marking the 15th anniversary of resolution 1325 on women's participation in peace processes. And while improvements have been made in the status of women, much more is still to be done. We must therefore all "step-up" and take further measures beyond moralizing gender equality to tangible actions. At seventy, only three women have served as President of the General Assembly, one of them being our compatriot many years ago, Mrs. Angie Brooks Randolph. Only a few women continue to serve as special representative of the Secretary General and not a single woman has ever served as Secretary-General.

Excellencies,

As we ponder, in Liberia, Guinea and Sierra Leone, three countries worst-hit by the deadly Ebola virus disease, we bear witness to the foundational creed of the United Nations - that we can always find it within our humanity to respond even to unknown enemies to our collective progress. Accordingly, we remain grateful to all of you for the outpouring of support and assistance as we faced down the deadly disease, the greatest modern threat to global public health.

We thank Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon who, in partnership with our countries and support from the African Development Bank, the African Union, the European Union and the World Bank hosted the International Conference on Ebola Recovery to focus attention on and seek support for our post-Ebola Recovery Programs.

Undoubtedly, the Ebola scourge leaves indelible marks of grief, sorrow and unimaginable affliction. But it has also caused us to celebrate heartwarming tales of extraordinary courage and leadership across governments and communities as well as exceptional regional and international responses.

We are now proceeding with implementation of our Post Ebola Economic Stabilization and Recovery Plan with expectation of support from our bilateral and multilateral partners to a regionally approved Post Ebola Recovery Strategy which the three affected countries of the Mano River Union, have formulated.

Mr. President,

We are determined to address the development losses including rebuilding better and more resilient health and education systems. The Addis Ababa Action Agenda, which we adopted in April, offers pathways to various forms of financing, capacity building and technological exchanges to support the pursuit of our development objectives. We must now forge genuine partnerships in order to move ahead together on the road to strengthening peace and security, human rights, socio-economic development and environmental sustainability.

We stand firm in the political will to meet any challenge in our commitment to leave no one behind.

I thank you.