

**Opening Remarks By
H.E. Madam Ellen Johnson Sirleaf
President of the Republic of Liberia &
Chairman of the High Level Panel on Fragile States
At the Launch of the Report: “Ending conflict & building peace in Africa: A call to action”
Martin’s Brussels EU Hotel, Boulevard Charlemagne 80-1000
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(As Delivered)

Thank you:

Let me join her in welcoming all of you who have come to be a part of, what I like to call, an interactive session. We will be making few comments but we will be looking to you for some of your ideas and for some of your responses.

A particular welcome to President (John) Mahama - thank you for coming to be with us - and of course, Commissioner [Andris] Piebalgs, who has worked with us before on these matters.

I was privileged, as mentioned by Synita, to have been designated by President Kaberuka to work with a truly great panel; a couple of them are here, and the rest of them and their names can be found in the report.

Our mandate was to determine the approaches which would build on the African Development Bank’s (AfDB) record of response to fragility; fragility experienced by states when internal or external pressures become too great for national institutions and political processes to manage, thereby creating a risk for violence.

Needless to say, the most vulnerable of such states are post-conflict countries like my own, Liberia, which lack robust functioning institutions that lack diversified economies; many times lack inclusive political systems to be able to manage those risks.

The work of the panel, very consultative in its nature, by engaging civil society, academia, government, private sector, to get all their views on how we respond to the vulnerabilities of states thereby experiencing fragility.

It culminated in this good report, I think it’s a great report. I think everyone will have a chance to read it: “*Ending conflict and building peace in Africa;*” more importantly, a call to action.

The panel members are here. They wrote it. They experienced the views of many of our African colleagues and partnership institutions that produced it and they will be talking to you about the details of that.

It's important that all of our friends and supporters, all of those who have invested so much in African development, join in the call of this Report for adequate policy responses to disruptive social, economic and environmental changes by building resilience in our states and in our societies. We need stronger links of institutions and partnership among the private sector, among civil society, all of the institutions that are part of this collective political arena involved in managing the processes of development.

That's how we get sustainable peace, sustainable development; regionalism is very important in this regard. The African Development Bank has singled out a few countries in this respect. I know my own region, the Mano River Union countries, comprising Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea and Cote d'Ivoire have been singled out because we were all involved in a conflict that crossed borders. We all have these strong vulnerabilities because of large number of unemployed youth; in some cases, not all of the them, the lack of diversified economy depending upon one model crop, dysfunctional institutions.

The African Development Bank has been trying to ensure that we respond in such a way to expand the interconnectivity, interaction, the linkages between our institutions as a means of ensuring that stability in one will in effect be stability for all and economic empowerment in one will spill over the borders and be economic empowerment for all.

The report also endorses, importantly, the principles of the New Deal for the empowerment of fragile states. The New Deal as you know calls for stronger ownership – something very consistent with Africa's own priorities whether we look at long term perspective (Africa 2063) or we look at the Common Position in the Post-2015 Agenda - ownership is said to be a key. Africa must take charge of its own destiny; must be the one that determine its priorities and its future. It calls for harmonization, mutual accountability.

The New Deal, as you know, is co-chaired by Timor Leste. The champion in that has been the Minister of Finance. She's been the real champion. It co-chaired by Finland. Liberia is trying to get the support of Sweden and the United States to get our own program, advocating the New Deal, going.

We have so many countries, many of them post-conflict countries, that exhibit intense levels of fragility. But the New Deal cuts across just post-conflict countries; in effect it's calling for taking charge so to speak - Africa taking charge. That's very much a common tune throughout all of our countries individually and collectively.

This report, I like its content and its coverage, and I like the fact that if you're English speaking or French speaking, you don't need to have two reports. You can just flip it. If you are really good at it, you're very low in French like me, you use that as a practice means of trying to improve your own language skills.

Let me say once again, thank you for being here. We're all looking forward to a great session of sharing ideas, experiences, and guidance on the future to ensure that we get stability and sustainability in all of our countries.