

**Remarks by H.E. President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf
at the Third Graduation Ceremonies
of the President's Young Professionals Program (PYPP)
C. Cecil Dennis, Jr. Auditorium
Wednesday, March 26, 2014**

(As Delivered)

Salutation:

There is an old adage that “the cream rises to the top!” One only has to look at this impressive graduating class of the President's Young Professionals Program to understand how true is the saying that the best ones will always rise to the top.

Because of you, and the graduates of Class I and II, the PYPP has emerged as one of the pre-eminent career development and leadership training programs for our Civil Service, contributing immensely to the capacity building component of our national development agenda.

Because of you – as trailblazers of the PYPP and what you represent – other bright and talented young Liberians are eager to follow your footsteps. They do so, despite the demanding and rigorous selection process, because they, too, want to succeed, and to be the best that they can be, for themselves and for their country.

Today we celebrate your accomplishments, PYP Class III, for having successfully completed two years of service, mentoring and training. We congratulate and thank you for the discipline demonstrated in completing the course.

You served in so many places and they've already been mentioned. The feedback from those many entities, Ministries, Agencies, State-owned Enterprises where you interned highlighted the exemplary performance of this group – your group – the talent that you demonstrated in carrying out your responsibilities. As you graduate, we expect that you will be absorbed by the Civil Service Agency, [Mr. Werner has already promised you that], and become mentors or supervisors to the PYPs who will succeed you.

We are very pleased that the Government has allocated funding to facilitate the transition of graduating PYPs into the Civil Service, and that the CSA is finalizing the arrangements for this transition.

Many partners contributed to your success – officials of government, educators, trainers, facilitators, mentors, supervisors and some of entities have been mentioned: JSI Research and Training Institute, Inc. (JSI), USAID's Governance and Economic Management Support Program (USAID-GEMS); many of our own institutions: McCall MacBain Foundation, Hess Family Foundation, whose generous contribution will enable the program to be continued over the next five years.

We also recognize that transition is necessary and an advisory committee has already been appointed for this transition to make recommendations in order that management leadership and center of operations will pass through Liberian stakeholders after this period of transition. That in itself is a measure of success that we can have an externally supported and financed program graduate to the place where we can take it over ourselves and carry it on at the same level of quality. So that transition team will be working to make sure that we achieve just that.

We want to say a special word to the person you've recognized Saah N'Tow. He ran this program. He in effect was the one who got it to be what it is today. He served with integrity, dedication, and commitment. All the things he said belongs to me really belong to him. We just told him, you have our full support, go and do it like it should be done and he did just that. This is why we moved him to another responsibility where we know he will bring the same level of innovation, creativity, dynamism, and commitment. So youth of Liberia, Charles N'Tow is there; he's on the way.

Let me take this opportunity to also say a word to Mr. Hh Zaizay, a member of the Inaugural Class, who has assumed the responsibility of Acting Program Director. We want to thank him for his achievement. He too was a PYP and he's graduated to the place where he will now manage the PYP. Isn't that a great achievement? Mr. Zaizay, we want to thank you.

A final word to our Class III graduates: You have come this far. Celebrate your achievements today, but know that tomorrow you must continue on your journey towards excellence, as the cream of the crop, applying your knowledge and your skills for the betterment of yourselves and for peace and prosperity of our nation!

Keep the faith, maintain the discipline and integrity, go out and claim that which you have long for. God bless you.