

HIS EXCELLENCY DR. GEORGE MANNEH WEAH
PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF LIBERIA
AT THE
NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON THE ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE
MINISTERIAL COMPLEX
OLDEST CONGO TOWN

JUNE 2, 2021

Her Excellency Madame Clar Marie Decontee Weah

First Lady of the Republic of Liberia;

Mr. Speaker, Mr. President Pro-Tempore and Members of the 54th Legislature here present;

The Dean and Members of the Cabinet;

The Doyen and Members of the Diplomatic Corps;

Other Officials of Government here present;

Heads of International Organizations;

Environmentalists;

Youths and Students;

Members of the Fourth Estate;

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen:

I am indeed happy to be here today to participate in the official opening of this National Conference on Environment and Climate Change, which is being organized by the Environmental Protection Agency of Liberia under the theme:

“ECOSYSTEM RESTORATION: A PATHWAY TOWARDS A GREENER AND SUSTAINABLE ENVIRONMENT”

Liberia signed the Paris Agreement since 2015, but had not ratified it up to the time that I assumed Office in 2018.

Considering the critical importance of climate change and the role Liberia has always played in forging international collaboration and cooperation, I gave this matter my fullest support under my Legislative program, and ensured that the Paris Accord was ratified by the Legislature of the Republic of Liberia in my first year in Office. Let me congratulate the 54th Legislature for their strong support in this regard.

The speedy ratification of the Agreement demonstrates the seriousness and urgency which my Government attaches to the issues of climate change and the environment. Let me assure you that Liberia will continue to meet its obligations and responsibilities to the Paris Agreement as well as other conventions and protocols on climate change and the environment.

For example, despite the disruption of human activities by COVID 19, we have continued to revise our Nationally Determined Contributions, which we anticipate to submit to the United Nations Climate Change Secretariat before the end of this year. Liberia’s revised NDC’s take into consideration all the key sectors across the entire spectrum of climate change and the environment, namely: Agriculture,

Energy, Fisheries, Forestry, Green Corridor, Health, Short-Lived Climate Pollutants, Transport, Waste, Gender and Youth, amongst others.

Building climate-resilient infrastructure and environmentally-smart projects must be the centerpiece of our national development program, the Pro-Poor Agenda for Prosperity and Development (PAPD). This is why Government is working to align the PAPD with initiatives that are sensitive to issues of environment and climate change.

In this regard, my Administration is currently making critical interventions in land reclamation and coastal defense projects. The D. Tweah High School and the Redemption Hospital, both in the Borough of New Kru Town in Monrovia, were recently saved from sea erosion.

Additionally, we are now embarking on a similar project for West Point, called The Monrovia Metropolitan Climate Resilient Project. The total cost of the project is US\$25 Million, and US\$17.2 Million is being funded by a grant from the Green Climate Fund, while another grant of US\$10 Million has been approved for a similar project in Greenville, Sinoe County.

DISTINGUISHED LADIES AND GENTLEMEN:

For almost three decades now, Liberia has not been able to conduct a national forest inventory that would enable us to know the approximate value of this critical asset to guide national development planning. However, with the support of the United Nations Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO), I am pleased to report that Liberia has now concluded the first post-war national forest inventory. We are very grateful to the FAO for this support.

The inventory revealed that Liberia is still a forested nation that is endowed with many unique plant and animal species. I can attest to this because, during my

recent County Tours, I witnessed and deeply appreciated the greenery of our Country, and its vast and impressive forests.

What is important for us now as a Nation is to ensure that our God-given resources should now be wisely used as a way of meeting the needs of the present generation, without compromising the needs of future generations. The theme of this Conference should therefore be a wake-up call for all of us to work together, in order to ensure that we restore the integrity of those de-graded ecosystems that have been heavily impacted in previous years in the quest for socio-economic development.

I am informed that a State of the Environment Report, which is due to be released this year, points to several environmental and climate challenges. These include, but are not limited to:

1. Rapid encroachment of the Savanna in the North West of the country;
2. Contamination and pollution of our major water basins, especially from mining activities;
3. Burning of waste in urban communities; and
4. Abuse of wetlands, including illegal building of structures.

All of these challenges pose serious risks to the timely attainment of the goals and objectives of the PAPD. It is our moral duty and obligation as citizens to ensure that we manage and protect the environment of Liberia responsibly. I therefore call upon all citizens and foreigners within our borders to work together for a cleaner and healthier environment.

It is in this light that I am pleased to inform this Conference that my Administration remains committed to all of the multilateral environment agreements that Liberia has signed to date, including the Paris Accord, and all other protocols on climate change and the environment.

Ambassador McCarthy, kindly convey our sincere thanks and appreciation to your Government for re-joining the Paris Climate Accord. The return of the United States and its global leadership to this important forum will restore hope to the international community, especially the developing countries in Africa, and the Small Island Developing States.

Let me take this time to thank the organizers of this important and timely Conference. I would also like to thank the Management and Staff of the Environmental Protection Agency for the work that they do in the interest of our Environment, and admonish you to continue to do so for the good of Mama Liberia. On my part, I pledge my fullest support, and that of my Government, to the EPA in the faithful execution of its mandate.

Meanwhile, I want to encourage all participants to deeply reflect on the theme of this Conference, and critically deliberate with openness and frankness on those issues that the Conference is intended to address.

I urge you to come up with realistic decisions that will form the basis of protecting and managing the Liberian environment and strengthen the resilience of our country against the negative impacts of climate change.

And now, in my capacity as President of the Republic of Liberia, and Chief Patron of this Conference, I do hereby officially declare the National Conference on Environment and Climate Change, open!

I thank you.