

**Special Remarks by H.E. President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf
At Swearing-in Ceremony of U.S. Peace Corps Volunteers
C. Cecil Dennis, Jr. Auditorium
Friday, August 3, 2012**

I've tried to make it my duty to participate in all of the swearing-in ceremonies, and I do so because you represent a group of dedicated young and old people who put your personal lives on hold, who leave your country, family, your friends and associates to come and be here with us as we try to transform our country with education at the center of the effort that we make.

On behalf of an appreciative Liberian people, let me welcome the 44 new Volunteers – it has already been said, 35 are traditional two-year Volunteers and nine are Response Volunteers; and to you, Mr. [Vince] Groh, and all the Peace Corps family, a big thank you for keeping your promise to keep expanding the numbers year after year.

It was some 52 years ago when President John F. Kennedy challenged Americans to serve their country in the cause of peace by living and working in developing countries. Fifty-two years on, you still continue to do that; you still continue to respond to that call.

I believe you said 50 years for Liberia, right? That means we came on stream just two years after the program started. So, for us, having you here today just makes it a big, big occasion for us to thank you.

We have challenges. I'm sure you've come face to face with some of them. We're still checking on the payment of rent.

Despite travel advisories and other reports, you still come to serve. I see this as an expression of confidence in our effort to make progress to improve security, to promote economic development, good governance, to respond to the health and educational needs of our people.

We're so pleased that the program continues to expand. I understand this is the largest group, and you've already said that there will be 65 Volunteers in country serving in nine of 15 counties, as Mr. Groh has pointed out, teaching English, Math

and Science, mentoring at least 7,000 Liberians in the 39 government-run high schools. That arrangement should enable you to work directly with our principals, counterpart teachers and our students, all aimed at enhancing our national capacity.

Minister [Mator] Kpangbai has already talked about the latest results of the West African Examinations Council (WAEC) and how your effort has improved our own ratings. Today we have to attribute it to you because there was a time when most of our students failed those exams and it speaks to the importance of quality instruction.

Our own teachers are preparing themselves, and those of you who will be working with them from Cuttington, to enhance their own capabilities to lift the level of the quality of their instruction, means we can look forward to an even greater number of our people moving to make sure we reach the overall standard of WAEC, moving from the special status standard to which we now subscribe.

Next year, 2013, you'll be in all 15 counties, and our five southeastern counties that have not benefitted from you will next year be a part of this program.

You may recall, and you mentioned it, Mr. Groh, that when I was at the Peace Corps office in June, I mentioned that it was time that our own young people, even our own old people, to be a part of this initiative and that we should now have a pairing relation, a training relation. Our people will join the Peace Corps as national volunteers, working with each of you in those schools that will represent not only an opportunity for them to interact and to enhance their own capability; but also to promote among themselves, with our people in the communities, in the schools, the kind of relationship that leads to reconciliation and to peace promotion. So I hope the Ministry of Education is working with the Peace Corps office to ensure that the 2013 group will have Liberian Volunteers.

Special thanks to you, Volunteers, for what you do; for the strong role models that you represent, the patriotism in serving the cause of your country, promoting and serving humanity. And thank you, Ambassador [Michael] Arietti for the U.S. support of this program and for enabling Liberians to interact, to be partners with people from the Peace Corps as they serve our communities.

I look forward to seeing many of you when I go to the counties for visits, whether it's torgbogee or dumboy; whatever it is, or wherever you will be, I'll call for you, your associates and partners, so that we can be able to continue to say to you how thankful we are for the service that you render our country.

Thank you.