

**Statement by H.E. President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf
On the Theme of “Together We Stand”
In Celebration of National Unification Day
Monday, May 14, 2012**

Dear Friends:

On the occasion of the celebration of National Unification Day, our nation has a duty to be thankful to God for His grace and his mercy toward us. We must offer praises to all of our citizens – some of whom have gone before us and those with whom we must continue on this great journey to build our nation and to secure its future.

We must also express gratitude for the various contributions made by our friends, without whom assistance and support it would have been more difficult if not impossible to sustain our peace; to consolidate our democracy; and to be positioned, as we are, in the real prospect that Liberia’s tomorrow will be better – so much better – than our yesterday.

It is befitting that we are gathered here, on historic Providence Island – the spot where some of our forefathers landed and where a peace meeting took place in 2003, ending our nation’s long nightmare.

As we celebrate the aspiration of the policy of national unification and integration, let us pause to pay deserving tribute to the late President William V.S. Tubman whose vision brought the attention and laid the foundation to address over a century of lingering issues of disparity, division and exclusion in our society. It must be said that the magnitude of discrimination in the deprivation of basic human rights led to the promulgation of the National Unification and Integration Policy.

Our historian, Rev. Emmanuel Bowier, has enlightened us with his insight about how this Day came to be the law of the land over half a century ago. He has spoken sufficiently about it.

Today’s theme, “Together We Stand,” is a statement that is so obvious, but one which we, as a people, have not always practiced, leading to division

and conflict. We know that there is strength, and power, in numbers – where everybody brings something to the national quilt – and that when we work together as one, we thrive and are unstoppable.

Fellow Liberians:

Today, we celebrate the deepening roots of democracy and the unhindered flow of freedoms – freedom of expression and of the press; freedom of worship, freedom of assembly, and of association. Today, we celebrate progress – real and sustainable progress - displayed in the undisputed emergence of a new order of social, economic and political integration and transformation by which Liberians are enabled to reach across previous lines of divisions and inequalities in the body politic to foster a new and inspiring sense of common purpose and shared values, shared ownership of our country. That is what we have to offer.

While we still have some ways to go, today we befittingly celebrate our right to be different without enduring previous strings of prejudice, marginalization or exclusion. We celebrate our difference in tribe, in gender, in religion and in association knowing that we must no longer be accepted or left aside because of superficial difference, but that we must come together – we must stand together – as we ought to always do, in the pursuit of the causes of our nation. We must never forget that, notwithstanding our physical and other perceived differences, nationally and spiritually, we are indeed the same people.

We share the same values of citizenship. We are inspired by the same cravings of humanity; we extend from the same chain of history; and we yearn for the same future of peace, equality, opportunity, justice and prosperity.

At the time, the major objective of that policy was the settling of tribal and ethnic quarrels. Today, we place emphasis on the values of patriotism, respect for authority; understanding and obeying the laws and traditions of our society.

On this seventh celebration of National Unification Day, it is time that we stand together. We stand together not only for a moment, but for a lifetime; not only for ourselves, but for our children and our children's children; not only because of the past, but because of the future. We must stand together not only because it is expected of us, but because it is the only means by which we can all be lifted up.

In standing together, no single group can lay claim to this nation; it belongs to all of us. We are all the same; nobody is different; nobody can be excluded.

And so today, I again extend my hand of friendship, of peace, and reconciliation to all Liberians. For me and this administration, the theme of this day's celebration rings true: Together We Stand as all Liberians!