

**STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF LIBERIA
AT THE CLOSE OF THE JOINT MINISTERIAL HIGH LEVEL MEETING
BETWEEN LIBERIA AND SIERRA-LEONE
ON WATER, SANITATION AND HYGEINE (WASH)
MARCH 22ND, 2012**

Honorable Ministers, particularly, we are pleased to have our colleagues from Sierra Leone join us, our Partners, Civil Society Organizations from all around, Ladies and Gentlemen.

This Joint Ministerial High-Level Meeting enabled us to recognize the progress that both countries have made. More importantly, to look at the awesome challenges that is ahead of us that we must meet if we are to improve the conditions for water and sanitation in our countries.

The MDGs are just a few years away for the target date. Perhaps we may not be able to meet those targets given how far behind we are. But I think it's this meeting that provides us with the opportunity to begin to determine, each of our countries, what goals we can set to accelerate our effort towards achieving in large measures those goals if not totally that the improvement in the next few years can be so demonstrable and that this meeting can look back and say as a result of the focus that came from this meeting we have been able to show this progress.

As we all prepare for the high-level meeting next month in New York, again, this meeting has enable us to make certain commitments that will be taken by our representatives at the meeting. Some of those commitments include: Building the institutions that will have responsibility for implementing the goals set by our countries; recommending increased budget allocation and specific budget lines for water, sanitation, and hygiene; undertaking a process of decentralization such as through district councils or other appropriate institutions and giving them the responsibility to be able to carry out the roles that they have for being able to improve delivery at the local level.

You've also made the commitment to raise the profile and the resourcing for sanitation and preventive health intervention by restructuring where appropriate those particular departments and units at the district level to give them much more responsibility in carrying out the programmes for improved water and sanitation.

We've also committed ourselves to improve overall planning and monitoring systems and to build stronger partnerships that will improve governance of the sector, promote mutual accountability and ensure full civil society participation, not only in the planning, but the monitoring and evaluation of the progress as we move on.

I believe that these commitments and these policy decisions represent a reflection of the commitment of our two countries to ensuring that through water and sanitation enhancement we can have a more effective fight against poverty.

It's clear from the statistics that too many children, too many people die from the lack of clean water and sanitation. There is nothing more basic than that if we're talking about improved welfare of a nation. Let me say to all of you that all you have done in these few days to enable us to be more conscious has made a great contribution.

We are committed to investing in water and sanitation as a means of accelerating the health condition and the welfare of our people.

Let us leave these meetings not just with these commitments on paper, not just with the nice exchanges, but really go back to our countries. For those entities responsible to ensure that these targets are met to really go to work to make sure we follow the steps that we will take, each of us in our countries, the goals that we will set, that we will ensure that we follow them very carefully and closely because this is going to make a big difference in the lives of our people.

Once again, thank you all for your participation.

