

Transcript of President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf's statement during the groundbreaking on Friday, June 5, 2009, for the construction of a new United States of America embassy Complex in Monrovia.

Transcript by the Office of the Press Secretary to the President

Prez. Sirleaf: Ambassador Linda Thomas Greenfield, other officials of the U. S. Embassy here present; Mr. Speaker and President Pro-Tempore of the Liberia Senate; members of the Legislature here present; Doyen and Excellency members of the diplomatic corps; our special visiting guests; clergy, Madam Mama Toomey, Special invited guests; fellow citizens:

I am pleased on behalf of the government and people of Liberia, joined by other branches of government to be a part of this ceremony for ground breaking for the construction of a new U. S. Embassy here in Monrovia, Liberia.

Madam Ambassador: we take this as you have correctly said, as a vote of confidence in Liberia's future. We have strategic partnership with the U.S. in so many ways, as our number-one partner in the area of security (sector) reform where a lot of progress has been made.

We have strategic partnership in the area of economic revitalization. You have been a key partner in helping to address our debt issue, and promoting the opening up of our economy, including attraction of private sector capital and investment.

We have a strategic partnership in the area of infrastructural developments where you have been with us in the area of building roads, schools, clinics and hospitals. Now, we are moving forward to what I can see now as being far more effective way of a new partnership, in the area of governance and rule of law.

This morning, I was listening, when I heard on the BBC, about a Liberian who has been, or is in jail for fraudulent acts in the operations of World vision here in Liberia. But we want to suggest here that we all must now work together so that any Liberian who commits fraud and move to the U.S can be punished there, or sent here for punishment.

We must work together more effectively for those who extort; those who cheat, not only in government, but also throughout the private sector, not to find safe heaven anywhere.

This means that there should be improvement in our court and justice systems. We must work together to ensure that this corruption that is undermining the integrity, reputation, credibility and progress of this country is brought to a halt.

We are not going to relent. We know so many who engage in this, and we are going to ask our legislators to work with us, to have laws in every area, including rape and corruption that remains our biggest challenge.

We ask you not to give visas to anyone who participates in fraud here and want to flee to the United States. We are going to work in this area, and we hope that you will become a strong partner with us, so that we can move forward; so that we can begin to address this problem.

As you correctly said, I wonder when you walked in here at Greystone and stated reasons why these premises were chosen for the construction of this new U.S Embassy here.

According to you and Madame Mama Toomey, there are so many reasons for choosing this site for the building of this embassy. Greystone was chosen and we are pleased about this choice of selection, because many reasons have been cited by Madame Mama Toomey and by the Ambassador that by building a new embassy here, we can memorialize the suffering and sacrifices of lives of many who sought refuge at these premises; who went through suffering to escape the war that was affecting our country.

We also recognize in choosing this site that you will give an added wing to the University of Liberia as they are about to set up an endowment fund from resources made available for the rent of these premises.

We like to thank and ask you to convey our thanks and warm sentiments to Secretary of State Clinton; those who made the decision to be able to give Liberia this fullness of confidence, including employment that will be generated here to help our private sector entity benefit from this your construction work, which is a significant improvement to our efforts to achieve our poverty reduction goals.

We like to thank you Liberians, who have been with them, in ensuring that the new embassy provides the kind of services they need as a strategic and effective partner to our country.

We ask God to help us promote this partnership as a strategic and historical one, that is been actually strengthened by the friendly people of our two nations. I hoped other ambassadors here will also queue up in line to call us for ground breaking ceremonies of their own embassies here too, in time to come.

Thank you all; as you may be aware, when we leave here today, we are going for another ground breaking ceremony for the construction of one-thousand housing units for our people. Ambassador Linda Thomas Greenfield and other officials of this embassy and different branches of government, Mr. Speaker, Mr. President Pro Tempore of the Liberian Senate, members of the legislature; the press, Doyen and members of the diplomatic Corps, Madame Mama Toomey, Special invited guests, our visiting guests, my fellow citizens I am pleased to be here with you today, and I want to say thank you.