

Goodwill Message by President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf
To the Liberian People at Christmas and New Year

Fellow Liberians:

A very happy holiday season to you! To Christians throughout our glorious land, I say Merry Christmas; and to all the people of Liberia, I say a very Happy New Year.

As 2009 draws to a close, I wanted to reflect on how far we've come in just four years.

Our Government inherited a lot of problems; for example, arrears owed to legislators, civil servants, the disbanded army, domestic suppliers, as well as to regional and international organizations.

We also inherited a majority of the staff found in government institutions today, many of whom have been there for years. And even though we've tried to right-size the large number of people, thousands are still there.

So the problems this country faces do not stem from any one group or person or from this Government; it's an accumulated problem of dishonesty, corruption and indiscipline that has been passed on from successive governments.

We have tried, in almost four years in office, to address these problems, and are glad today that, with the participation of the public, and through the freedom of speech, we can now disclose and expose all of these ills that have plagued this country for decades.

We also applaud the media for what they've done to expose these wrongdoings, and I'm glad that we are now installing systems to tackle them: for example, we are addressing the compensation issue that has left people vulnerable, leading them to do improper things; we are trying to settle arrears; we are trying to recover government properties and assets. We are installing systems, all aimed at re-establishing the pillars of integrity.

We are also working to establish a stronger judiciary that will enable us to be more effective in our fight against corruption.

We know we have not done all the things we want to do, and we have not responded to all the needs of the people. But if Liberians would look around the country, and really assess what has been accomplished in less than four years, they will have to admit that we've done well. Our pledge is to continue to do more, even under the circumstances of scarce resources.

We call upon all citizens, particularly those in the rural areas, who have shown appreciation and gratitude for the changes that have led to a better welfare for them, to continue to be law-abiding, participating in discussions on government's policies, programs and progress, including activities funded by the County Development Fund, which is under review. Most of all, I wish for a peaceful and Merry Christmas.

I will be spending my Christmas in Belle Yellah, as promised, and hope that the road now under construction – for the first time in the history of the country – will be completed to get us there.

To all of you, Dear Citizens, a happy and peaceful holiday season and a prosperous and successful New Year.