

STATEMENT BY HER EXCELLENCY MADAM ELLEN JOHNSON
SIRLEAF, PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF LIBERIA AT STATE
DINNER IN HONOUR OF HIS EXCELLENCY MR. JOHN AYGEKUM
KUFUOR, PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF GHANA, MONROVIA,
LIBERIA, NOVEMBER 22, 2008

Your Excellency President Kufuor and Members of Delegation,
Mr. Vice President and Mrs. Boakai,
Mr. Speaker, Mr. President Pro Tempore and Members of the Legislature,
Mr. Chief Justice and Members of the Supreme Court of Liberia,
Members of the Cabinet,
Mr. Doyen and Members of the Diplomatic Corp,
Bishops, Prelates,
Former Officials of Government,
Fellow Citizens,
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,
Friends:

I am overjoyed to receive in our midst today, a distinguished and illustrious son of Africa, His Excellency John Aygekum Kufuor, who, through dedicated and exemplary distinction and quality performance, has brought great pride both to himself, his country, Ghana, and the African continent. We are proud of him, and his achievement as a statesman, a leader and democrat.

In the Liberian tradition, and on behalf of the Government and people of Liberia, and in my own name, we say, welcome, welcome, and welcome to Liberia, the land of liberty, friendship and loving people.

Undoubtedly, President Kufuor has carved for himself a very special place in the hearts of Liberians for his personal and official actions leading to the resolution of the Liberian civil crisis and the dispatch of international peace keepers to give the nation peace, tranquility and stability. Liberia is certainly a home for you because you are in the hearts of all Liberians.

But apart from winning a special place in the hearts of Liberians for his good deeds, Liberia is naturally home to all sons and daughters of Africa, especially Ghanaians with whom we have sanguine relations. As a torchbearer in the struggle for independence, freedom, and liberty in Africa, opening the country up to fellow Africans is obligatory upon us. We view

Ghana from the context of shared value – a single family – with a long history of cooperation, collaboration and fraternity.

Liberia and Ghana share common views on African and world affairs. It is out of this shared view that they constituted the original triangle in laying the foundation of the Organization of African Unity which is now transformed into the African Union. A son of Liberia, Edward Wilmot Blyden conceived and promoted the concept of Pan-Africanism far ahead of his era. This concept was given form and expression by Kwame Nkrumah, an illustrious son of Ghana. Thus it was not an error in history for when the first meeting to lay the foundation of African Unity was held in Accra, and the second in Sanniquellie to give birth to the Organization of African Unity (African Union).

As you prepare to embark on a different vocation following the end of a successful tour of duty, we wish you peace and success in your future endeavor, and hope that your expertise will be utilized at all times in matters relating to fostering peace, democracy, human rights and integration in West Africa, in particular, and Africa, in general. You have made us proud by the demonstration of quality, competence and excellent administrative skills.

The second peaceful transfer of power in succession, over which you are presiding, further demonstrates that Ghana has come of age in democratization. We hail you and the people of Ghana for this milestone achievement.

Although this visit marks the end of an official visit to Liberia as President of Ghana, our doors will remain opened for other visits by you as a private citizen, respected statesman, and a wise elder in the sub-region.

The development of good neighborliness through cordial and friendly relations constitutes and remains a strong pillar in the foreign policy and relations of Liberia. We shall endeavor to play a meaningful role in the promotion of peace in the country, the sub-region and the larger international community as we have been acclaimed to doing in the past.

Liberia is committed to seeing stronger integration in West Africa where political boundaries will disappear and where our people will develop a true sense of belonging, moving freely and living wherever they choose. In short, it is time we speed the policy of integration, accelerate intra-regional trade

and commerce aimed at lifting the standard of living of our people while at the same time discouraging migration to Europe and other parts for better living conditions when we have abundant natural resources to empower our people economically and socially. In order to make the region attractive, we need proper management and equitable distribution of our natural resources to reduce, if not alleviate, poverty.

It is time that West Africa takes cues from the current economic downturn to begin preparing for the aftershock and ripple effects which will eventually come.

We cannot afford the luxury of procrastinating as a consequence of civil war, instability, corruption and chronic dependence not to harness our wagons in moving our region in the direction of progress and development, which eventually will lay the basis for guaranteed peace and stability.

Once a bastion of coups, wars and the irregular transfers of power, we can see that the tenet of democracy is taking root and that more and more countries are enjoying peace and stability as a result of the growing epoch of democratization on the continent.

We want to thank you, President Kufuor, for all you have done for us – from peace enforcement, peace keeping and monitoring to peace making which has given us the environment of peace and stability to enable us to reconstruct and develop our country. We also want to express our appreciation for welcoming and sheltering our citizens for all the years we were in the state of crisis. We now call upon all of them still residing in your borders to remain law abiding citizens refraining from participation in your internal affairs including the coming election.

The people of Liberia will always remember you, your good deeds and the lasting peace you give to them.

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