

New Year's Message by H.E. President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf
To the Liberian People
(Delivered December 30, 2011)

My Fellow Liberians:

Let us give praise and thanks to Almighty God for his manifold blessings upon us as a people and upon our beloved Liberia, now in its ninth year of peace and stability.

2011 was a momentous year for our country. Yet we proved to the world, more importantly we proved to ourselves, that we had reached the level of political maturity to hold democratic, free, fair and transparent elections in our once fractured land.

As I speak to you, my Fellow Citizens, 2012 is upon us – a New Year, a new beginning, a new Administration. The coming of a New Year is a time for reflection, of looking back on accomplishments and of things unfinished. The New Year is also a time for resolutions and looking to the future.

We are proud of the significant progress we made over the past six years: in peace and security, economic revitalization, governance and the rule of law, and in rebuilding infrastructure and providing basic services –the four pillars of our Poverty Reduction Strategy.

We endeavored, in the first term, to address issues that required our immediate attention: to restore growth, mobilize investment, repair broken infrastructure, and to put into place the necessary laws,

policies, strategies and systems. We accept that we didn't do all that we wanted; we simply underestimated the scale of the tasks.

Yet, if our people will look around, and remember from whence we started, they will agree that, indeed, we've come a long way. The benefits from the work we've done in the first six years are starting to show. Our pledge is to continue along this path. Having put the fundamentals into place, we are moving forward with the socio-economic reconstruction, development and advancement of our country.

The Liberian people renewed their confidence in our team by re-electing us to a second term. We proudly accept the challenge to work harder to complete what we started but could not finish. It is a welcome responsibility that makes us more focused and strengthens our commitment and resolve to get the work done.

The first priority on our 2012 agenda will be to address the situation of our young, unemployed and uneducated youths. We are emphasizing vocational and technical training as an imperative! Our youths need jobs, but they also need to develop the skills for the jobs that are coming in our mining, agriculture and forestry and, God willing, petroleum sectors. We are confident that the benefits of our natural resources will show results by improving the lives of our people.

At the heart of our national agenda for peace is national reconciliation, which is critical for socio-economic development and progress, as well as for peace, security and stability. National reconciliation will be the catalyst for energizing our people into

collective actions for the greater common good and national cohesion.

However, we want to remind every Liberian that we have a constitutional duty to protect the lives and safety of all of our people, and that no one has the right to undermine the peace and stability of the nation.

We appeal to every Liberian to be law abiding, upholding and embracing all that we have worked to achieve. We encourage our people, especially the youth, to look to the future with renewed hope and zeal.

We call upon every Liberian to co-exist in peace and security, in a spirit of reconciliation and national unity. It will require the collective effort of all Liberians to continue rebuilding our country and to ensure that peace, stability and democracy continue to prevail. It is our fervent hope that 2012 will be a year of true patriotism and reconciliation that will accentuate the positive things that unite us.

We will, over the next six years, continue to implement our long-term vision and development agenda; conclude the processes for constitutional reform; expand infrastructure to a larger number of the population; strengthen our natural resources management; and ensure that we retain an open society based upon transparency and accountability.

As a New Year dawns, we pray God's guidance in leading our nation in the direction of peace, reconciliation and development. Let me seize this opportunity to wish Liberians – at home and in the Diaspora – and residents within our borders, a joyous holiday season and a very happy and prosperous New Year.