

Keynote Address By

His Excellency Joseph Nyuma Boakai, Sr.

President of the Republic of Liberia

at the

Two-day High-Level Consultative Conference on Next Steps for United Nations Resolution A/RES/80/250 on the Transatlantic Slave Trade.

Accra, Ghana

Thursday, June 18, 2026

Your Excellency John Dramani Mahama, President of the Republic of Ghana;

Your Excellencies, Heads of State and Government;

Distinguished Representatives of the African Union, CARICOM, CELAC, the Global African Diaspora, United Nations agencies and Institutions, Civil Society, and Development Partners;

Distinguished Delegates;

Ladies and Gentlemen:

It is an honor to address this conference and to serve on the Global Advisory Panel on Reparatory Justice. I thank my brother and good friend, President John Mahama, and the Government and people of Ghana for convening this important gathering.

It is fitting that we meet on these historic shores, still marked by the memory of those who were torn from their homes, families, and communities and forced across the Atlantic. Their suffering still calls us to confront one of history's gravest crimes against humanity.

We gather to ensure that this resolution becomes not only a statement of historical recognition but also a framework for truth, justice, healing, and institutional repair.

More than 500 years after the first victims were taken across the Atlantic, and 200 years after the trade was formally abolished, the adoption on March 26, 2026, of the United Nations Resolution recognizing the trafficking of enslaved Africans and racialized chattel enslavement of Africans as among the gravest crimes against humanity marks a significant and necessary moral moment.

We honor the millions who suffered and died, those who resisted and survived, and the descendants who continue to live with its effects.

This resolution carries profound significance. It acknowledges the wrongs of the past and recognizes how the continuing vestiges of the Atlantic slave trade shape our present realities and influence the future of our one world.

For Liberia, the legacy of the transatlantic slave trade is woven into the fabric of our national story and continues to shape our understanding of identity, belonging, and nationhood.

Our experience demonstrates that the consequences of slavery cannot be measured solely in terms of lost labor, stolen wealth, or economic deprivation. They also include intergenerational social, cultural, psychological, and political impacts that can persist for centuries.

If we are to pursue meaningful reparatory justice, our efforts must extend beyond financial considerations. They must also embrace historical truth-telling, reconciliation, identity restoration, cultural healing, education, institution-building, and the strengthening of social cohesion.

As we consider the next steps following this historic resolution, Liberia offers its experience as evidence that justice, healing, and reconciliation are inseparable from sustainable development and lasting peace.

With this resolution now adopted, the question before us is simple: what must we do next?

Allow me, therefore, to propose five priorities for implementation.

First, we must develop a common African position and implementation framework in collaboration with CARICOM and Diaspora organizations, supported by a coordinated roadmap with clear priorities, responsibilities, and timelines.

Second, working with the United Nations, we should establish an African Union–United Nations Expert Commission to design a Global Reparatory Justice Mechanism.

Third, we must confront misinformation and erasure through truth, education, and research by strengthening the teaching of African history, preserving archives, and supporting universities and research institutions across Africa and the Diaspora.

Fourth, repairing historical wrongs requires the restitution of stolen cultural artifacts and heritage objects, together with development partnerships that address persistent inequalities rooted in slavery and its aftermath.

The scale and depth of the trafficking of enslaved Africans and racialized chattel enslavement cannot be measured fully in financial terms alone. Yet the transatlantic slave trade, forced labor, and resource extraction generated enormous wealth that shaped the economic foundations of many societies across the world.

There is no doubt that the slave trade and its aftermath contributed profoundly to inequality and underdevelopment in Africa and across the Global South. The past has helped shape the inequities of the present.

Fifth, we call for development partnerships and global initiatives that address persistent inequalities and underdevelopment rooted in slavery and its aftermath, grounded in shared responsibility and mutual respect.

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

To all those across the world who seek to understand and engage honestly with this history, and to the nations and societies whose shared task it now is to help chart the path forward, the call for reparatory justice is not an effort to assign personal guilt to the present generation for the sins of the past. Rather, it is a call for understanding, empathy, and a willingness to confront uncomfortable truths.

We invite our partners across the world to share in our anguish, to recognize the enduring consequences of this historic injustice, and to join us in a common commitment to healing and repair.

Together, let us forge a solemn pact that the dehumanization, exploitation, and racialized enslavement of any people shall never, ever again find refuge in our institutions, our economies, or our collective conscience.

Let this be our common promise to humanity and to generations yet unborn.

History has brought us to a rare and defining moment. Future generations will judge us not by the eloquence of our declarations, but by the courage of our actions.

This resolution has opened a door. Whether that door leads to meaningful justice, reconciliation, and healing now depends on our collective resolve.

Let this not be remembered as another conference or another resolution that stirred consciences briefly before fading into history.

Let it be remembered as the moment when the world chose truth over silence, justice over hesitation, and moral courage over the comfort of the status quo.

Today, through us, those voices speak again. They call not for vengeance, but for recognition; not for division, but for reconciliation; not for charity, but for justice.

Let us therefore leave Accra united in purpose and committed to ensuring that the gravest crime against humanity is met with one of humanity's greatest responses: a determined global effort to restore dignity, repair historical wrongs, and build a future founded on equity, shared prosperity, and our common humanity.

If we succeed, generations yet unborn will remember that in this moment, we chose not simply to remember history, but to help shape it.

May God bless our work.

Thank you.