

Remarks by

His Excellency Joseph Nyuma Boakai, Sr.,

President of the Republic of Liberia At the Liberia Hosted High-Level Event on Women,
Peace and Security

Conference Room 5 United Nations Headquarters

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Excellencies, Distinguished Guests, Partners,

Ladies and Gentlemen:

Good morning!

We have a saying in Liberia, that, “Men make the big decisions while women make the small decisions. But it is the women who decide which decisions are big and which decisions are small.”

Let me begin by warmly welcoming everyone gathered here today, including those joining us from Monrovia. Please allow me to extend a special greeting to the women gathered at the Peace Hut in Fish Market this morning.

The story of the end of Liberia’s civil war cannot be told without recognizing the courage and determination of Liberian women. Our war did not end only at the negotiating table in Accra. Peace was driven from the markets, churches, mosques, streets, and communities of Monrovia, where women refused to be silent and refused to leave until leaders listened.

The world sometimes speaks of including women in peace as an act of generosity.

Liberia knows better. Women were not merely involved in our peace processes. Liberian women helped build peace. We remember the Women in Peacebuilding Network, the Liberian Mass Action for Peace (some of them are here with us in this room), the market

women, and Muslim and Christian women who crossed every line that conflict had drawn between our people. They mobilized across religious, ethnic, and political lines.

They were not invited to the peace processes; they made themselves impossible to exclude.

Liberia became the first post-conflict country in the world to adopt a National Action Plan to implement UN SCR 1325. Since then, we have implemented a second NAP, and today we present the third iteration of that commitment: NAP III.

During implementation, we faced challenges, made mistakes, and learned. Because of those experiences, NAP III is our answer not only to what worked but also to what did not.

As we renew our commitment to the Women, Peace and Security agenda, we have framed NAP III around five areas of action, aligned with Liberia's ARREST Agenda for Inclusive Development.

First: Prevention - Liberia seeks to address the causes of conflict, not simply its symptoms. Prevention means investing in social cohesion, addressing inequality, challenging harmful norms, strengthening early-warning mechanisms, and ensuring that women are at the center of efforts to prevent violence before it escalates.

Second: Protection and Access to Justice. My Government has already taken steps in this direction through Executive Order 131 of 2024, which established the Office to operationalize the War and Economic Crimes Court. For women who survived conflict-related violence, transitional justice is essential to accountability and closure.

When establishing the Office of the War and Economic Crimes Court (OWECC-L), women advocates and civil society organizations were instrumental in advancing statutes that prioritize gender-sensitive justice. These address conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV) and gender-based atrocities committed during the civil wars.

Third: Participation - Peace cannot be sustainable when women are present as victims but absent from decision-making. My Government is therefore committed to increasing women's representation in elected and appointed positions and to ensuring that women have a meaningful voice in peace and security decision-making at every level.

Within the Armed Forces of Liberia, we are taking deliberate steps to advance women's meaningful participation. Through affirmative measures, we are working to remove barriers that have historically limited women's participation in the military.

In February 2026, the AFL, in partnership with UN Women Liberia, launched a two-year Elsie Initiative Fund project to remove institutional barriers, strengthen recruitment and retention of women, and expand opportunities for their deployment and leadership in United Nations peacekeeping, where applicable. This initiative is an important part of Liberia's ongoing journey under the Women, Peace and Security agenda.

Our immediate ambition is to reach 15 percent female representation in the Armed Forces by 2028, while contributing to our broader national goal of 40 percent by 2030.

As a non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council, Liberia does not intend to advocate for women's participation in peacebuilding around the world while failing to create space for women at home. Now, we must ensure they have the opportunity, authority, and institutional support to lead.

Fourth: Relief, Recovery and Resilience — Conflict today is not defined only by the wars of the past. New and emerging challenges—including climate pressures, democratic reversals, violent extremism, transnational crime, displacement, economic insecurity, and other forms of violence—also have significant implications for peace and security. For women and girls, these challenges can further deepen existing vulnerabilities and inequalities.

NAP III is therefore designed not only for the last war but also for today's and tomorrow's threats. Our approach to recovery must go beyond rebuilding infrastructure. It must also rebuild livelihoods, restore dignity, strengthen institutions, and ensure that women and girls are not left behind.

Fifth: Coordination, Accountability and Financing — I have directed the relevant institutions, in collaboration with civil society, traditional and religious leaders, women's organizations, and our international partners, to adopt this Plan as a shared national undertaking. In turn, my Government pledges the political will, institutional coordination, and resources needed to implement NAP III.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

This moment is significant for another reason. Liberia's journey from being on the UN Security Council agenda for fourteen years to now sitting at the Council table and assuming its Presidency in December presents an important opportunity for the country to make Women, Peace and Security a signature priority.

Drawing on Liberia's peacebuilding experience and women's leadership through initiatives such as Peace Huts, Liberia offers evidence of localization, with the Peace Hut model as our contribution to the global Women, Peace and Security toolkit.

Also, we bring regional perspectives. Liberia is in a sub-region facing democratic reversals, transnational crime, insecurity, and contested borders. We will advocate for preventive diplomacy and locally led solutions before crises escalate into conflicts that require reactive intervention.

When Liberia sought a seat on the United Nations Security Council, we committed to bringing the voices of women and youth into that chamber, particularly those who contribute to peacebuilding in their communities. This is part of honoring that commitment.

As a member of the Security Council, we intend to arrive at the annual Women, Peace and Security Open Debate having done at home what we ask of others internationally.

And this brings me back to the purpose of today's gathering: A seat is an opportunity, not an achievement. What we do with it is the achievement.

NAP III is the domestic half of that same commitment. We are launching this Plan at a time when financing for peacebuilding is diminishing worldwide. We have learned an important lesson that a plan that depends entirely on the priorities of others is not truly a national plan.

While we recognize that Liberia cannot do this alone, and seek support to implement the NAP III, we are committed to demonstrating the highest level of political will to own it.

Our task now is to ensure that the next generation inherits not only the memory of the peace women fought for, but also the institutions, opportunities, and freedoms that make that peace enduring.

To our partners and friends, thank you for standing with Liberia and for believing in the power of our women to build and sustain peace.

To the mothers at the Fish Market who joined us today, your courage changed the course of our nation. Today, we carry that courage forward.

That is the promise of this Third National Action Plan—to build a Liberia where every woman and girl can live safely, participate fully, lead with dignity, and help shape our country's future.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is now my honor to launch Liberia's Third National Action Plan on Women, Peace, and Security (NAP III).

Thank you.