

Statement by the Liberian Delegation to the ECOSOC Special Meeting

Mr. President;
Mr. Secretary-General;
Heads of Delegation;
Distinguished Delegates;
Ladies and Gentlemen:

On behalf of the Government of Liberia, I am grateful for the level of assistance you have and continue to render the Country during these difficult times in our Nation's history.

Liberia is among six West African countries that are confronted with the outbreak of the deadly "Ebola Virus Disease" (EVD). The epidemic has claimed the lives of several of our citizens while scores of others are currently being infected with the virus particularly our health workers who are on the frontline to contain this disease. The epidemic also threatens our hard won gains in terms of social and economic progress since the end of the civil war about a decade ago.

The outbreak has seriously affected economic activities throughout the Country with a sharp decline in agricultural production particularly domestic food production, mining activities as well as activities in the service sector. Also, concessions companies have scaled down their operations as expatriates fled the Country for fear of contracting the Ebola virus. This has resulted into low revenue performance, while expenditure demand has increased thus placing tremendous pressure on the Government's fiscal position. In order to effectively manage the Country's meager resources in these difficult times, the Government has instituted fiscal measures which are intended to ensure that the Government avoids a fiscal collapse. Moreover, with the help of our development partners, we have been able to mobilize resources that have been crucial to financing the fight against the epidemic as well as providing some level of macroeconomic stability.

Initially, we panicked in our response to the outbreak and decided to militarize the response by the imposition of nationwide curfew, state of emergency, quarantine zones and the closure of borders. Those measures constrained movements and made food harder to find and more expensive to buy, especially locally produced food, reduced the incomes for food producing households and the spending power

of food consuming households who constitute a significant portion of the poverty stricken masses. Realizing that these measures were counterproductive to the fight against this faceless killer and owing to the community wide participation which greatly helped in reducing the case loads, we have demilitarized the response by not extending the state of emergency after it had expired and making the curfew more flexible while at the same time we have put into place public health regulations aimed at curtailing the spread of the disease.

The outbreak has no doubt exposed the vulnerabilities inherent in our systems and has changed our way of life, challenge our cultural and religious practices and ironically given us an opportunity to rebuild every fabric of our economic and service delivery systems. The Government has developed an Economic Stabilization and Recovery Plan that seeks to address our structural deficiencies, improve service delivery systems and protect the investment that have been made since the civil war ended.

While we cease the opportunity provided to us by this outbreak to reform all of our systems and change the structures and fundamentals of our economy, we do not seek to re-invent the wheels or put bluntly, abandon the existing development plans and strategies. What we do seek, as a Country, is to consolidate all of our existing sector policies and strategies consistent with our medium and long-term development plans (the Agenda for Transformation and Liberia Rising 2030) into one document for robust and rigorous implementation.

The Government of Liberia with the support of our development partners and the international community is working hard to contain the epidemic while at the same time ensuring macroeconomic stability. The Country's development agenda is at risk if quick and targeted actions are not taken. The immediate priority is containing the outbreak and mitigating the immediate impact of the EVD outbreak by buttressing the Government's efforts. But in the medium to long-term, financing a comprehensive post-Ebola economic recovery plan is a strategic imperative. We MUST protect the success story of Liberia since the civil war ended and the investments that have been made; there is no better time than now for the Government and its partners to strengthen coordination.