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**Think development differently, UN envoy challenges donors' partnership conference**

*Monrovia, Liberia* – A two-day donors' partnership conference aimed at taking stock of the achievements during the first six months of Liberia's new post-war government and developing a consensus on the way forward for recovery, reconstruction and development, began today in the capital Monrovia.

"It is not a pledging conference but an assessment conference. An assessment of our implementation capacity, an assessment of the pace at which we have been able to achieve our objectives," said President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, opening the conference. She stressed the importance of looking at the lessons learnt and the constraints faced to develop the right strategies to plan the way forward.



President Johnson-Sirleaf presenting her vision for Liberia

Outlining the priorities under the four strategic areas of security, education and health, economic infrastructure and governance, President Johnson-Sirleaf presented her vision for the medium-term development of the country to Liberia's international donors and development partners, acknowledging it as an "ambitious agenda." She highlighted the importance of ensuring that the people of Liberia can move around safely and they are involved in gainful economic activity with access to education and health services.

Lauding President Johnson-Sirleaf's government for the considerable progress made during the first six months in office and recognizing the number of priorities that still need to be addressed, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Alan Doss, challenged the participants to come up with innovative ways of planning and implementing programmes of cooperation. "Can we bring our resources together in a more cohesive and coordinated fashion as we are doing, for example, in the Governance and Economic Management Assistance Programme? How can we secure donor harmonization and coherence for the benefit of Liberia?" the SRSG asked.

Special Representative Doss urged the Government and its development partners to think about 'doing development differently' to ensure that resources get to those who need them most. "We need to achieve an 'accountable decentralization' that puts resources directly into the hands of local communities and families," he said.

Mr. Doss also quoted from the remarks made by Secretary-General Kofi Annan during his recent visit to Liberia. "Too many times, we have witnessed the same weaknesses in international responses to post-conflict situations, in the shortage of funds, in the lack of international coordination, in the tendency for international actors to leave too hurriedly. This can reverse hard won results and weaken attempts we are making to build societies," he said, citing the concern the Secretary-General had raised. "It is imperative that the international community stay with Liberia in the long term."

Recounting the lessons learnt during the transitional period and the first six months of the new administration, Minister of Planning and Economic Affairs Toga McIntosh said that the basic services and agriculture sectors were significantly under-funded, in comparison to other sectors.

The donor conference was attended by senior Ministers and Government officials, representatives from the African Union, the European Union, the United States, the United Kingdom, Nigeria, India, Germany and Denmark, as well as officials from the World Bank, the African Development Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the United Nations.

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