



**MISSION OF THE REPUBLIC OF LIBERIA  
TO THE UNITED NATIONS**

820 SECOND AVENUE, SUITE 1300  
NEW YORK, NY 10017

Check against delivery

**Statement**

**by**

**Honorable Morris M. Dukuly, Sr.  
Minister of State for Presidential Affairs & Chief of Staff to the  
President of the Republic of Liberia**

**at**

**The United Nations Meeting on AIDS:  
Uniting the World Against AIDS  
31 May - 2 June, 2006**

**Delivered on Behalf**

**of**

**Her Excellency Madam Ellen Johnson Sirleaf  
President of the Republic of Liberia**

**United Nations  
New York**

**Friday, June 2, 2006**

**Mr. Secretary General of the United Nations  
Excellencies, Distinguished Heads of State and Leaders  
of Delegations of Member Nations**

**Honorable Ministers,  
Ladies and Gentlemen:**

**I bring warm greetings from the President of the Republic of Liberia, Her Excellency Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, the Government and people of Liberia to you distinguished Leaders of Member States of the United Nations and Organizers and participants in this important meeting.**

**On behalf of the Government and people of Liberia, I welcome this opportunity to stand here this afternoon to express solidarity with you and the countries and people you represent. Our shared vision of a world liberated from the scourge of HIV/AIDS binds us to act collaboratively to provide leadership for our people as we face the challenge of containing the menace and impact of HIV/AIDS on our individual nations and peoples.**

**As you know, Liberia has only recently begun its journey of recovery from more than 14 years of civil conflicts. Countries that regrettably and unfortunately have traveled along the path of civil crisis such as we, in Liberia, have, understand and appreciate the consequences of such conflicts on their societies and peoples. And those countries, like Liberia, whose human capital is threatened – and sometimes decimated by HIV/AIDS, also understand and appreciate the effects it has on their forward movement and socio-economic development.**

HIV/AIDS, in the determination of the Government of Liberia, is the most ominous threat to human development in our time. My presence here representing the President, Government, and people of Liberia is to affirm our recognition of the collective danger that HIV/AIDS presents to all of us and to our nations.

Nearly a quarter-century ago, the first case of HIV/AIDS was reported in Liberia. Since then, the sero-prevalence rate of this dreadful disease increased from less than 1% in 1986 to about 8.2% in 2001. The highest rate of infection is 8.5% among the aged cohort of 30-39 years. The highest rate of infection is 105% found amongst females aged between 15-29 years. Heterosexual transmission is the most common route of infection.

The Government of Liberia has initiated several actions to respond to the epidemic of HIV/AIDS cast against pre- and post-war realities in my country. We have a National AIDS Control Program (NACP) and a broad-based, multi-sectoral National AIDS Commission. The national strategic plan developed in 2000 and upgraded in 2004 calls for concerted actions for prevention, treatment, care, and support for HIV/AIDS affected and infected individuals, families, and communities.

To date, the health sector's response is to promote prevention, treatment, care, and support, targeting the most vulnerable segments of our population as outlined in our national strategic plan. In spite of these efforts, we face serious challenges, especially in educating,

sensitising, preventing mother to child transmission, securing the safety of our blood supply system, providing counseling and testing, nation-wide distribution of anti-retroviral drugs, providing support for HIV/AIDS orphans.

Currently, we have pursued the following initiatives:

- Initiated a strategic approach to prevention at all levels of our health delivery system.
- Embarked on efforts to control and mitigate the impact of HIV/AIDS through strategies that, for example, confront the feminization of HIV/AIDS.
- Are seeking secure and sustainable financing for scaled-up response to HIV/AIDS at all levels of our population.
- Are engaged in efforts to create awareness and overcome stigma and discrimination – and change our society's response and attitude toward persons afflicted and living with HIV/AIDS
- Seek to enhance the role of the private sector and civil society organizations and other national and international partners in contributing to programming, monitoring progress, advocacy, and promotion of health.
- Are endeavoring to strengthen the human resource capacity of health and related sectors to the overcome challenges in service delivery.

To address these challenges, concerted action, led by a new type of partnership that is results driven, participatory at all levels, and community-oriented is being forged in Liberia. Leadership at the national level in defining targets, benchmarks, and indicators in coordination with our county health teams, with inputs from our district and community level facilities represent some of the steps we have taken to deal with the HIV/AIDS threat to the life and vibrancy of our country.

**Distinguished Excellencies:**

We wish to reaffirm the commitment and resolve of the Government of Liberia under the leadership of President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf to fight HIV/AIDS which, as I have already said, is the greatest challenge of leadership of our generation. In our resolve to fight this battle, we must also seek to address two of the factors that underpin the spread of HIV/AIDS: poverty and deprivation in our societies. This is because the pattern of disease and the generally poor state of health of our people speak to the high level of poverty, illiteracy, social instability, and inaccessible health services. This situation underscores the need for the integration of our service delivery with broader efforts to combat poverty, and food insecurity, while fostering development and the strategic role of the health sector in making life better for our people.

The Government of Liberia remains committed to the 2001 Abuja Declaration, in which African Heads of State and Government pledged 15% of their annual budgets to improve the health sectors of

their nations. In our Government's fiscal budget of 2006-2007, we have endeavored to meet this goal – and we remain committed to do more in the future.

**Excellencies:**

Ultimately, we see a nation that is free from the scourge of HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria. But we cannot achieve this goal alone. We need a new partnership that helps us build on the small gains that we have already made in confronting this menace to our existence and productive capacity as a nation.

I could not conclude this statement without saying a word of thank you to member states of the United Nations for the investment you have made in our country. The peace that we now enjoy and the new democratic environment in which we live have in large measure been created through international partnership led by the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL). Thanks to you, fellow members of these United Nations, Liberia is back! However, we continue to count on the solidarity of each of your leaders and countries to help us sustain the gains of peace and to confront and overcome the threat of HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria in our country.