



MISSION OF THE REPUBLIC OF LIBERIA
TO THE UNITED NATIONS

866 UNITED NATIONS PLAZA, SUITE 480
NEW YORK, NY 10017

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STATEMENT

BY

**HIS EXCELLENCY MR. JOSEPH N. BOAKAI
VICE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF LIBERIA**

AT THE

**64th SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS
GENERAL ASSEMBLY
UNITED NATIONS HEADQUARTERS
NEW YORK**

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 25, 2009

**Mr. President;
Mr. Secretary General;
Excellencies, Heads of State and Government,
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen**

We are honored, for the second time, to address this August body on behalf of Her Excellency President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, the Government and People of Liberia. We congratulate you, Dr. Ali Abdussalam Treki, and your country, the Great Socialist People's Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, on your election as President of the 64th Regular Session of the United Nations General Assembly. Being the consummate diplomat, we are convinced that your wealth of experience will come into play as we tackle the complex issues on the agenda of the current session, whilst entertaining the hope for a resounding success. In this context, we assure you of the full cooperation of the Liberian delegation.

Permit me, therefore, to seize the opportunity of paying deserving tribute to your predecessor; H. E. Miguel d'Escoto Brockmann of the Republic of Nicaragua, for the very able and effective manner in which he steered the affairs of the 63rd Regular Session of the United Nations General Assembly. His sound and shrewd leadership were critical in steadying the turbulence occasioned by the severe global economic and financial crisis. Likewise, we commend the Secretary General, H. E. Ban Ki-moon, a visionary statesman for his unfaltering efforts with which he continues to administer the affairs of our organization. His renewed dynamism and sense of purpose serve as impetus to our collective aspiration for the attainment of global peace, security and development.

Mr. President:

Liberia continues to make steady progress under the excellent and indefatigable leadership of Her Excellency President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, since her inauguration in January 2006, as the first democratically elected woman Head of State of an African country. The government has undertaken a number of important initiatives, aimed at enhancing national dialogue and reconciliation. On June 30, 2009, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission submitted an unedited report, which did not gain the unanimous consent of the Commission, since two members issued dissenting views. The Report, nonetheless, since its release, has spurred national debate, and the President has committed herself to working with all stakeholders for the implementation of the recommendations, which must be in consonance with the Commission's mandate, the wishes of the Liberian People, and the laws of our Country.

In order to protect the fundamental rights of the Liberian people, the President has also nominated members of the Independent Human Rights Commission, which will have the responsibility of monitoring the implementation of the TRC Report. Under the Liberian Constitution, the nominees must meet the consent of the Liberian Senate, and that process is currently underway. We have also established the Land Commission and its Commissioners have been appointed to address the explosive issues of land disputes and the need for Land reform.

We note with satisfaction the achievement of the national disarmament, demobilization, rehabilitation and reintegration (DDRR) Programme carried out in conjunction with the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL). This programme was successfully concluded in July of this year. High

unemployment especially among the youth, however, remains a major challenge.

Liberia is pleased with the progress being made in the reconstitution of the Armed Forces of Liberia, involving the training of 2,000 strong Army, with the assistance of our development partners particularly, the United States of America. Notwithstanding, we continue to encourage gender sensitivity in this important area of national endeavour, considering that only 58 women presently form part of the new force.

Improvements have also been registered in the performance of the reorganized Liberia National Police Force, with the establishment of an Emergency Response Unit. The Police, however, continue to face difficulties in achieving full operational capability in the areas of infrastructure, equipment, logistics and other requirements. Two weeks ago, successful partnership consultations were held at the United Nations Headquarters here in New York on the strategic plan for the Liberia National Police. The responses of our partners, especially India, were encouraging. The objective of the strategic plan is to introduce an integrated program that would ensure consistency of doctrine and training philosophy to enhance continuity. A similar strategic plan is also required for the Bureau of Immigration and Naturalization to improve its efficiency and effectiveness in border control.

Mr. President:

We are pleased to report that Liberia has continued to make significant strides in the administration of justice and rule of law, in spite of daunting obstacles. We have established a special sexual and gender based violence crimes court, which has begun hearing cases and encouraging victims to

come forth and report in the spirit of confidentiality and justice. Concomitantly, the government has further adopted several gender-sensitive policies and framework in pursuance of Security Council Resolution 1325(2000).

The post-conflict reconstruction and development require all Liberians to participate in the ongoing recovery and sustainable development. Government is therefore promoting and encouraging women involvement at the leadership level and all other spectrum of society, with emphasis on the education of the girl child.

In this connection, I wish to refer to the International Colloquium on Women's Empowerment, Leadership Development, International Peace and Security, that was co-convened by the President of Liberia, H.E. Madam Ellen Johnson Sirleaf and President of Finland, H.E. Madam Tarja Halonen in Monrovia, from March 7-8, 2009. At that event, the Monrovia Declaration calling for action on Security Council Resolution 1325 on "Women, Peace and Security," and "Climate Change and Gender." We want to thank all our partners and friends of the International Community including the U.N. system institutions and UNMIL, who contributed to its success in March 2009.

In that regard, we reaffirm that Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security recognises that women as civilians in conflict situations are not only victims but also powerful agents for peace and security of their communities.

We also recognize that Security Council Resolution 1820 (2008) is an important component of Security Council Resolution 1325 with regard to rape and sexual violence against women and girls.

Therefore, we recommend that the Security-General appoints a special envoy on women, peace and security who would galvanize Member States to implement Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) and to ensure that the path towards the tenth anniversary is well prepared in a coherent manner.

Mr. President:

As a follow up to the Monrovia extraordinary meeting, a side event to this 64th session of the United Nations General Assembly was jointly hosted yesterday by these two exemplary women leaders here at the United Nations Headquarters to focus on the implementation of Resolution 1325 and Climate Change. In commending them for their excellent work, we join in their appeal to all Member States, governments and non-governmental organizations to support the Monrovia Declaration.

Liberia wishes to thank all the participants in this historic event and renewing their support of the Government of Liberia for the reform of the United Nations System, including the urgent need for gender equality in all its organs and related agencies.

Mr. President:

Liberia's economic revitalization is shaping up to become a post-conflict success story due to the combination of the disciplined leadership and prudent policies of Her Excellency President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf and a very constructive partnership with the international community. We remain

cognizant of the fact that no amount of foreign assistance can transform a nation in the absence of sound moral leadership and technical competencies as well as commitment to improve the well-being of its citizens. It is out of this realization that we formulated the Government's poverty reduction strategy and have cultivated a strategic partnership with friendly countries and organizations within the international community.

In this connection, the country experienced a 7% growth in 2008 and is expected to register 5% this year, largely as a result of the negative impact of the global economic meltdown on demand for our major commodities and fall in capital inflows. National revenue collection rose by about 25% last year. We have improved our business and investment climate by establishing the "One Stop Shop" concept to spur private sector growth and create jobs. We have rehabilitated a total of 674 miles of primary and secondary roads to link communities that were isolated from central administration as a result of the 14-year civil crisis. A robust and comprehensive Civil Service Reform Strategy has been instituted as a critical component of the public sector reform.

Moreover, the President has promulgated a policy of mandatory free and compulsory primary education, with special emphasis on girls, who are often victims of institutionalized biases and abuses.

Mr. President:

We have undertaken several economic reform initiatives and have set up the Liberia Anti-Corruption Commission to create a transparent and predictable business and investment climate as well as encourage greater foreign direct investment.

Liberia has also made noticeable progress towards reaching the targets for relief under the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) initiatives. Qualifying under this process will open up the country to borrowing on the international financial markets and accepting loans.

Mr. President:

While Liberia has made and continues to make impressive progress towards the consolidation of peace, the gains remain fragile. In post conflict situations such as ours, stability is linked to development. Weak institutional capacity in the area of rule of law, coupled with the absence of employment opportunities, especially for the youth, continue to pose threat to sustained progress. As we expect to hold general elections in 2011, successful conduct of these undertakings will set the nation firmly on the path of stability and democracy. It is therefore envisioned that a continued sustainable socio-economic development will serve as catalyst for a smooth electoral process.

The Mano River Union countries of Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea and La Cote d'Ivoire continue to host significant numbers of each other's refugees in the Sub-region. For instance, there are more than 65,000 Liberian refugees that are reportedly spread around West Africa, posing humanitarian challenges that require urgent action for cross border movements. This is why we continue to urge fast track and relaxation of some of the stringent conditions for development assistance, if Liberia is to truly remain a model for post conflict reconstruction and democracy.

In this connection, Liberia requires empathy and support of the international community for its young democracy as it improves upon the situations of human rights, transparency, corruption and good governance, which are important priorities of the government.

In this vein, we wish to express heartfelt gratitude of the Government and people of Liberia to the United Nations Security Council for extending the mandate of the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) for another year, and further requesting it to provide a conducive security environment for the holding of General and Presidential Elections in 2011. The crucial nature of this democratic transition cannot be overemphasized, as we commend the gallant men and women of UNMIL for their courageous and sacrificial services in keeping the peace.

Mr. President:

The issue of cross border movement mentioned above demonstrates the point that the security and stability of the countries of the Mano River Union Sub-region are inextricably linked and that progress in one country cannot be divorced from progress in anyone of the Member States. Elections are soon to be held in La Cote d'Ivoire and Guinea. As Chairman of the Mano River Union and a Member of the International Contact Group on Guinea, President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf is urging the United Nations and the international community to stay constructively engaged with Guinea while urging adherence to the original agreement so as to ensure a smooth transition to democratic rule in that country.

Cross border movements among the Mano River Union countries have become more complex and problematic due to the growing number of cases involving illicit drug trafficking, human trafficking and other organized transnational crime in the entire West African Sub-region and beyond. These problems necessitate the urgent need for collective international action to tackle these criminal activities that are a menace to regional peace and security.

Mr. President:

Liberia supports the decision of the leaders of the Southern Africa Development and Economic Community (SADC) for the lifting of the United Nations sanctions against Zimbabwe. We are encouraged that the power-sharing agreement between the parties continues to hold as the country tries to recover.

As regards Somalia, we note with regret the continuing deterioration of the situation in that country. In view of the unfortunate state of affairs there, Liberia calls for renewed commitment by the international community, to provide logistical and financial support to the African Union Peacekeeping initiatives to restore peace in that country.

Mr. President:

Liberia, as a beneficiary of peacekeeping operations, registers its strong condemnation of the recent barbaric killings of 17 African Union Peacekeepers in Somalia. On Darfur, we are heartened by the expressed willingness of all the parties to end armed hostilities and to find a political solution to the problem that will ensure lasting peace for all of the people in that region.

Liberia welcomes the just ended Summit on Climate Change convened by the Secretary General. We firmly believe that urgent action is needed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and help all member states, particularly developing countries to adequately respond to the harmful effects of this global phenomenon.

Liberia continues to join in the call for a more democratic security council that reflects the realities of the 21st century. The world today is far different and more complex than that of the 1940's when this organization came into being.

Mr. President, Liberia supports peacekeeping operations to put out the flames of war. However, we wish to underscore the benefits of establishing an early warning mechanism that will deal with potentially explosive situations before they escalate into full blown conflagration that presents ghastly choices.

Additionally, it is important that the international community provides special assistance and dispensation to post-conflict countries to shield them from shocks in the worldwide system, such as the current global financial crisis. These upsets often have the effect of reversing the gains made in restoring peace to countries emerging from conflict. This is why Liberia welcomes the empathy and support of the international community to rebuild its institutions destroyed by protracted civil conflict. The current global financial crisis is impregnated with the potential to undermine donor support to our national renewal agenda, thus threatening much needed foreign direct investment and delivery of social services.

The result of Government's inability to provide these basic services to its people has the propensity to provide fertile ground for acts of destabilization from internal and external sources. It is cheaper to prevent these risks than to have to mobilize already diminishing resources at much higher cost sometimes involving human lives and great resources to react to them.

Mr. President:

In conclusion, we pledge our unstinting support to your leadership and entertain the hope that together, we can advance the cause of humanity and make the world truly a better place to live.

May God Almighty continue to bless us all.

I thank you.