



OFFICE OF THE CHAIRMAN

REPUBLIC OF LIBERIA
NATIONAL TRANSITIONAL GOVERNMENT OF LIBERIA
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Speech by His Excellency
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Chairman of the National Transitional
Government of Liberia

to the 59th Session of the
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Mr. President:

It is an honor for me to stand here today, to address this 59th session of the General Assembly of the United Nations.

When, in 1945, Liberia joined the efforts to establish this organization to bring an end to a global war and to pursue justice and maintain world peace, little did we know that we were subscribing to an insurance policy that, 68 years later, would provide coverage for Liberia, redeem its people and save her sovereignty.

As you know, Liberia is a country in transition from continued crisis to sustainable peace. The United Nations, the United States and the European Union, have all worked along with the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in stabilizing the situation, attending to the humanitarian crisis, and navigating the difficult road to peace.

We remain immensely grateful of the role of South Africa and ECOWAS for providing *regional leadership* in the search for peace in Liberia. The pivotal roles played by both the Federal Republic of Nigeria and the Republic of Ghana deserve special commendation.

We are particularly grateful to Secretary General Annan and the United Nations, the United States and the European Union for *partnering with ECOWAS* in these endeavors.

I am pleased to inform this Assembly that the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) signed in Accra, Ghana, in August 2003, continues to guide the Liberian peace process. A power-sharing National Transitional Government comprising all warring factions, political parties, and civil society is working. The ceasefire agreement signed on June 17, 2003 continues to be insured by the 15,000 strong UN peacekeeping force (UNMIL), operating with a Chapter VII mandate. The force is now disarming and demobilizing all armed groups.

At the beginning of the United Nations Mission in October 2003, we estimated that some 38,000 combatants would have submitted themselves to the disarmament and demobilization program. Today, 73,600 fighters have been disarmed. Over 22,000 pieces of serviceable weapons of all kinds have been surrendered and decommissioned; and more than 5 million rounds of ammunitions collected and destroyed by UNMIL.



Meanwhile, the high number of combatants disarmed and demobilized has overwhelmed our capacity to rehabilitate and reintegrate them. The absence of social infrastructures exacerbates the situation. War-related damage to the national infrastructures and community facilities is extensive. Without exception, all communities have lost their capacity to accommodate and support even the slightest caseload of returnees.

Some of the ex-combatants have enrolled in civil works programs sponsored by UNMIL, EC, USAID and the People's Republic of China. A significant number are seeking readmission into regular academic programs. Others are enrolling in vocational training institutions to acquire life skills.

There are special efforts being made for children and female former fighters to receive specialized care and training through programs sponsored by UN agencies and other international and local NGOs.

As a direct result of the civil conflict, a sizeable number of Liberians are currently residing outside of the country, mostly as refugees.

As disarmament nears completion and as government extends its authority, the UNHCR is preparing for organized repatriation of Liberians.

In addition, some 500,000 Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) are expected commence leaving IDP camps and return to their local communities towards the end of October this year.

Mr. President, the role the United Nations is playing to bring sustainable peace and human dignity to our country and people is phenomenal and indicative of the new challenges the U.N. and the international community must face and meet head on if we, the people of the United Nations, are to live in peace and enjoy our inalienable rights. Peace and freedom to enjoy these rights under the rule of law requires not just curative measures but preventive actions to such as addressing the problems of poverty, ignorance and disease of the world's poorer peoples and countries.

Mr. President, the National Transitional Government's recovery agenda has as its focus the improvement of the wellbeing of our people by the creation of employment opportunities to put returnees and ex-combatants to work. Our recent history teaches us, that when ex-combatants are not meaningfully rehabilitated and reintegrated; when many



in our society are not stakeholders and are excluded, we run the risk that they will return to violent crime and conflict. We are extremely worried about this prospect.

Against this background, there is now *real urgency* to revive our economy and create jobs. That is why in June of this year, I pleaded with the *Security Council* to lift the sanctions imposed on timber and diamonds - two sectors that hold great potential for job creation and economic recovery.

Sanctions continue to hurt Liberia. It must not be forgotten that the sanctions were imposed primarily because Liberia was exporting conflict by trafficking in arms for diamonds. A related reason was the lack of transparency and accountability in the management of state resources, especially from the forestry sector and maritime program. This situation on longer obtains.

Our government is not buying arms. To the contrary, we are disarming tens of thousands of combatants. We are also cooperating with the IMF, the World Bank, the African Development Bank, the European Commission, and the of US Treasury and State Departments in putting into place proper mechanisms for transparency and accountability in the use of state resources.

In this regard, the European Commission is funding the systems audit of five revenue-generating agencies and the Central Bank of Liberia.

The World Bank is working with the Government to reform the public procurement system and is assisting the Liberia Petroleum Refinery Corporation to put into place a system of international competitive bidding of petroleum products.

The IMF is assisting the Central Bank introduce transparency in the management of the foreign exchange regime. The U.S Treasury Department is engaged with us in financial sector reforms, particularly in the areas of monetary policy, revenue enhancement, budgeting, and expenditure controls.

Also, the U. S. State Department is working with the Forestry Development Authority in implementing an environment-friendly forestry reform program.

Given all these efforts, we once again appeal to the Security Council to lift the sanctions to enable us create jobs and attend to the enormous social needs of our people.



Mr. President, security sector reform is an essential element in the Liberian peace process. The complete re-structuring of the Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL) is crucial. The United States, which is playing the leading role in this effort, has fielded an assessment mission to Monrovia. Bilateral discussions have begun over the details of how the Liberian army shall be restructured.

The Liberia National Police and other state security institutions are also being reformed. Last week, the United States government and my government signed a US\$10 million grant supplement to finance the restructuring of the new Liberia Police Force.

In early February, the United Nations, in collaboration with the U.S. government and the World Bank, co-hosted a Donors' Conference for Liberia. The aim of the Conference was to seek support for our two-year reconstruction plan.

The international community responded generously with pledges of US\$520 million. I am happy to report that, to date, \$455 million of those pledges have been classified as firm commitments. Projects are under way to spend those funds and bring much needed relief to our people.

Mr. President, elections in Liberia are not new, but most have been characterized by widespread rigging. Thus, unfair elections in themselves have been a major source of conflict in Liberia. This time around, Liberians are determined to undertake free and fair elections as an *equity participation in the investment of sustainable peace and national renewal*.

The National Electoral Commission (NEC) has completed consultations with all stakeholders on electoral reforms. These reforms will address the critical issues relating to the conduct and integrity of the up-coming elections.

The Transitional Government *remains committed* to the holding of elections in October 2005, and to the smooth transfer of power to a democratically elected government in January 2006.

Liberia has developed strong collaborative efforts with our neighbors in the Mano River Union (MRU) to end the activities of armed not-state actors. The three Mano River Union Countries have committed themselves to strictly adhering to the Non-Aggression and Security Cooperation Treaty of the Union and the meticulous implementation of the 15th Protocol.



Liberia reiterates her commitment to cooperate with all provisions on security and peace as enshrined in the charters of the United Nations, the African Union, the Economic Community of West African States, and the Mano River Union.

We call on the United Nations to *urgently* engage in *crisis prevention and strengthening the peace* in our region. In this regards we urge this body to work with regional and sub-regional organizations such as the Africa Union and ECOWAS.

Today, more than ever before, the utility of the United Nations is being tested. Never before has the world faced so many different types of conflicts in so many different places at the same time. However, we are encouraged by the fact that the high number and complexity of these problems have not lessened the determination of member states to stay the course of fostering international peace and stability.

The threat posed by global terrorism combined with widespread poverty, especially in developing countries, constitute real barriers to the attainment of the Millennium Goal.

The continued existence of conflicts in the Middle East provides a worrisome cause. After decades, it is time that a workable solution be found to the Israeli-Palestinian issue.

The current Iraqi crisis is also troubling to a world body searching for solutions to world conflicts. Liberia calls for a unified global approach to the Iraqi question and urges the United Nations to play an active role in the resolution of that crisis.

In Africa, news from the Darfur region in Sudan is frightening. We support the position of the African Union on the Darfur problem, and ask for a speedy resolution of the crisis so as to bring relief to the region.

The recent massacre of nearly 200 Tutsis in Burundi sends a grim reminder of the 1994 genocide in Rwanda. Urgent action should be taken to contain the situation in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Mr. President, making peace is difficult because resolution of conflict sometimes engender new contradictions that must be addressed. In post conflict situations like ours, where national capacities have been decimated, the continued goodwill of the international community to assist in reconstruction is paramount. We thus pray for the *continued engagement* of the United Nations in global crisis.



Liberia has gone through fifteen years of violent conflicts. In Accra, Ghana, in 2003, Liberians reasoned together to reject war and build a better society. Liberia is now *breaking through from a failed state* to a democratic and vibrant society. There is now a growing sense of hope and optimism among our people. *We cannot fail now, for we have seen the cost of war as compared to the price of peace. Liberians have finally resolved to choose the path of peace and stay on it.*

I thank you.