



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

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CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

STATEMENT

BY

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PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF LIBERIA

TO THE 61ST REGULAR SESSION

OF THE

UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY

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**Madam President,
Mr. Secretary General,
Your Excellencies, Heads of State and Government and Heads of Delegations,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen:**

It is a great honor for me to address this 61st Session of the United Nations General Assembly on behalf of the people of Liberia, not just in my capacity as a leader, but in the heralding position as the first democratically elected woman President of Liberia and in Africa.

Let me congratulate you on your election as President of the 61st Regular Session of the General Assembly, trusting that you will bring your demonstrable experience to the work of this session. I am proud of you because you are the first Arab Muslim woman, and the third woman to occupy this noble position. One of your women predecessors, Angie Brooks, hailed from Liberia. I was pleased to honor her on last Friday in a moving ceremony here in New York for her dedicated services and pride she brought to the country.

Also, let me seize this opportunity to pay deserving tribute to your predecessor, Mr. Jan Ellison of Sweden for his insightful knowledge and enlightened leadership in steering the affairs of the 60th Session of the United Nations General Assembly.

I wish to welcome and congratulate the Republic of Montenegro on its admission as the 192nd member of the United Nations Organization, and assure it of Liberia's friendship, solidarity, and support.

May I pay a special tribute to Dr. Kofi A. Annan, outgoing Secretary General of the United Nations. I had the privilege of working with him as a former senior staff of UNDP, and I am personally aware of his dedication and commitment to the Organization, particularly the reform of the United Nations and the strengthening of its institutions. As I said during an honoring ceremony in Monrovia in July, we are proud of his record of enhancing the responsibility of the United Nations – responsibility to protect the poor from the rich; the weak from the strong; and the humble from the arrogant. Mr. Secretary General, the Liberian people, and indeed all of Africa are proud of you and your accomplishments.

Madam President:

Sixty-one years ago when countries gathered in San Francisco, California to urgently address issues related to the scourge and scars of World War II, and the need for peace in a post-conflict world, Liberia was there, and was a signatory to the Charter of the

United Nations. The purposes and principles of the Charter have proven to be of durable value over the years.

Times have changed, and with it, the world too has changed beyond our imagination when this Organization was established. Today, we are truly a global village, interconnected physically and electronically, increasingly bound by a shared commitment to confront and overcome the challenges that threaten global peace, stability, and the well-being of our human family.

Yet, the original aims and objectives of the United Nations remain today as relevant as they were when the Charter of the organization was signed 61 years ago. The need to maintain international peace and security; to cultivate friendly relations among nations; to achieve international cooperation in solving global economic, cultural, social and humanitarian problems as well as to promote respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms constitute, and still remain the cardinal objectives of this organization.

Thus, the main focus of this year's deliberation, which is implementing a global partnership for development, serve to remind us that this session must vigorously consider how to bring equity to the present international financial, trade and development structures; how to do more in creating the conditions that will improve the standard of living of mankind everywhere. How to be sensitive to the needs and assure developing countries the dividends of globalization.

In the new Millenium, the United Nations should not operate on the structures designed sixty-one years ago. We must therefore review the inequitable representation of the world's people as reflected by the present structure of the Security Council. It is in this regard that a reform of the United Nations is urgent, especially the decision making process in the Security Council which appears to be undemocratic and hegemonic. The apparent continued violations of the United Nations Charter by some member states on account of national interests is a disguised threat to world peace and security. Hence, we must now find an acceptable solution where nations large or small will have equal treatment in consonance with the Charter. The United Nations was conceived to promote world peace and democracy.

I strongly support women and gender equality and look forward with interest to the report of the High-Level Panel on System-Wide Coherence, appointed by the Secretary-General earlier this year, which is expected to submit its final recommendations on UN reform. It is my hope that the establishment of a new, independent UN fund or program for the empowerment of women and gender equality will be fully supported by member states, and that such fund will have sufficient resources to support targeted programmes for women empowerment desperately needed at the national level.

Madam President:

Three years ago, representatives of contending warring factions, political parties and civil society in the Liberian conflict gathered in Accra, Ghana, under the auspices of international partners and signed the Accra Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA). Under provisions of the CPA, a National Transitional Government was installed in October, 2003, with a mandate to disarm combatants and prepare the country for elections. In October and November, 2005, legislative and presidential elections were held, leading to our historic and landmark election by the Liberian people. The United Nations played a pivotal role in this national transformation. For, and on behalf of the Liberian people, I wish to thank the United Nations and other international partners for the mammoth role played in securing peace, and bringing sanity to Liberia. Since our inauguration on January 16, 2006, we have enjoyed the full support and cooperation of the UN.

Today, I come to also express the deep appreciation and gratitude of the people of Liberia and their friends everywhere to the men and women of the United Nations Military Mission in Liberia for their active role in securing and enhancing peace and security in Liberia. I am proud to say that the leadership, commanders, and men and women of the various contingents of UNMIL have largely comported themselves well, performed their mission with diligence and dedication. They have sacrificed greatly and persevered in a very challenging peace keeping environment. The Special Representative of the Secretary General deserves particular commendation for his foresight and support of our country's reconstruction efforts. I thank them all sincerely on behalf of the Liberian people.

There are others to whom we owe a huge debt of gratitude – namely the Economic Community of West African States, the African Union, the European Union, the United States of America, the People's Republic of China, among others, have been selfless and generous in their material, financial, and moral support of our cause. I will be remiss if I do not single out the sacrifices made by our West African brothers and sisters to bring peace and sensibility to a suffering people. I thank you all.

Throughout its history, and excluding the period of our civil conflicts, Liberia has always been in the vanguard of promoting good neighborliness, peace, security, and stability in our sub-region, our continent, and our one world. We therefore actively supported the founding of the Organization of African Unity (now African Union), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the Mano River Union, among others, because without peace, security and stability, there is very little that humankind can achieve.

In keeping with this tradition, and since my inauguration as President, my Government has undertaken personal shuttle diplomacy to develop harmonious and closer ties of friendship, cooperation and solidarity with our immediate neighbors in the Mano River basin. These efforts have paid huge dividends with the restoration of confidence, peace and security in the region. We have also extended this spirit of fraternity and solidarity to Governments and countries of West Africa as well as the African Union.

While we are enjoying a semblance of peace, we are particularly concerned about conflicts in other parts of the world. Of notable concern is the protracted crisis in the Middle East, which continues to create a state of restlessness and threatens world peace and security. From our experience, we have learned that no matter how protracted a conflict, the parties must sit around the table to iron out their differences and make peace. Both the Israeli and Palestinian authorities owe their respective peoples, and the rest of us in the world, an obligation to break out of their cocoon of pride to resolve their differences harmoniously. We call for the active engagement of the UN in the peaceful and amicable resolution of the Middle Eastern crisis.

Elsewhere in Africa, and especially in neighboring Cote d'Ivoire, the standoff in the peace process there is troubling. We call on the parties in Cote d'Ivoire to save their people from further punishment by resolving their differences. As a neighbor, we have offered to participate in encouraging dialogue and negotiation among the parties in Cote d'Ivoire. The situation in that country requires strong and decisive intervention to prevent it from becoming a wider sub-regional and regional crisis.

The situation in Darfur and the slow pace with which it is being addressed requires urgent attention. Reports about the current situation in Darfur teetering on the brink of disaster is frightening. The continued stalemate over whether an AU or UN force should be deployed or maintained in the region exposes weaknesses in international cooperation and collaboration, and demonstrates a lack of international will to address the sufferings and yearnings of the citizens and residents of Darfur who plea everyday for international intervention. Darfur represents a potential humanitarian catastrophe. The world must not allow a second Rwanda to happen. In the new Millennium, civilized nations must not be indifferent to any conflict, internal or external, regardless of the factors that fuel them.

The United Nations' obligation to protect the helpless and innocent must remain paramount in this regard. My Government therefore calls on this General Assembly and the Security Council to exercise the Chapter Seven Authority to restore peace, security, and stability to Darfur.

Madam President:

My delegation is pleased with the successful holding of the peaceful democratic elections in the Democratic Republic of Congo for the first time in forty years. We look forward to seeing a peaceful conclusion of the final stage of this process and the ushering in of a government elected by the people of that country. It is our hope that the democratic gains made in the DRC will be sustained to enable the new Government to employ the vast national resources of that country for the benefit and welfare of the people.

Madam President:

Globalization has significantly altered the world and economic transactions among States. Africa will remain on the periphery of this global village unless, we as leaders, awaken to the imperatives of the ever changing requirements. The first step toward this process of awakening is the promotion of democracy, free enterprise, good governance, human rights, and social justice in our countries and across our continent.

There is increasing evidence which shows direct correlation between the material and moral well-being of a people and their country, and the quality of their democratic environment. My Government is keenly aware of this reality. We have therefore promulgated policies that support openness, transparency, accountability, and equitable distribution of our meager natural resources while endeavoring, to address the development and reconstruction challenges of the country.

Madam President:

Five years ago on September 11, 2001, few yards from this hall, terror of unimaginable proportions struck, shocked the world, and claimed more than 2500 precious and innocent lives. As the people of the United States and the families of innocent dead remember their tragic and irreparable loss this month, the people of Liberia join me in affirming our identification with their loss. We mourned with them then and we mourn with them now. We also resolve, as all civilized nations have, to join the global effort to fight terrorism anywhere in the world recognizing that it is today the most single challenge to world peace and collective freedom.

Madam President:

The world has witnessed a significant achievement in science and technology leading to rapid industrialization and the improvement of the standard of living of humankind.

Although the gains have led to the development of new medicines and other scientific knowledge, it has equally posed a threat to the environment and human survival. Rapid industrialization and scientific discoveries can have damaging impact upon the environment. Unless there is modification in our activities, the pleasure from successes in scientific achievement could sadly lead to tragedy and doom.

Thus, in the race for modernization and development, we can not ignore the potency of threats posed by environmental degradation to our survival. Saving the planet is the precursor to the continued existence of its more than five billion inhabitants.

It is in this regard that my delegation supports the efforts of the Commission on Sustainable Development, the Kyoto Protocol and the decision reached on Agenda 21 during the 1992 Rio Conference intended to raise international awareness of the degradation of the environment and the need to reverse the negative trend. We trust that environmental issues will remain a priority on the global agenda.

Madam President:

Among the many impediments to social and economic development in Africa are poverty, poor health delivery systems, intra-regional wars and civil conflicts.

The devastating impact of HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases, has contributed significantly in retarding the progress of the African continent. While countries in the developed world are leaping ahead in science and technology, Africa is still groping with finding the means to combat curable diseases while joining in the search to address the incurable.

Celebrating the silver jubilee of HIV/AIDS brought to focus the recognition that this deadly virus has eluded the sophistication of science and technology thereby posing one of the greatest challenges to our development effort. The political will of Africa is challenged to act speedily in its eradication to combat this health crisis. To this end, we call upon our partners in the developed world to treat the issue of antiretroviral drugs outside of politics as a purely social and humanitarian matter of an emergency nature.

Madam President:

The Government of Liberia welcomes the partial lifting of the arms embargo and the ban on timber as imposed by UN Security Council Resolution 1521 (2003). We also look forward to the lifting of the ban on diamonds as we seek to meet the requirements of Resolution 1343 (2001). My Government pledges the fullest cooperation in the realization of the objectives set out in these Resolutions and we remain grateful to the

international community for the continuous assistance and support toward our search for peace, security and postwar reconstruction and development of our country.

Madam President:

Today, I stand here in testimony of the rebirth of my country; of our reemergence to assume the once enviable and critical role as the first independent African Republic

We are aware that we face awesome challenges; the challenge of rebuilding our infrastructure, including education, health, and other institutions; the challenge of addressing generations of gender imbalance, especially as it relates to the education of the girl child and promoting for women their rightful place in society; the challenge of promoting democracy, participation and fundamental freedoms and rights in an environment of equal opportunity.

We have made important beginnings and we remain committed and encouraged by the bilateral support provided by our bilateral and multilateral international partners. The recent visit of His Excellency the Secretary General and other similarly important visits by leaders of international financial institutions clearly underscore the commitment of the United Nations and the international community to working with my Government to nurture and strengthen peace, and to foster development.

Madam President:

In closing, let me say that today, as in the past, Liberia wishes to reaffirm its commitment to the United Nations, this time worn but irreplaceable machinery and indispensable framework for international peace and international relations.

We must all join our steadfast forces to make this institution work for the good of humankind.

I thank you.