

**H.E. Vice President Joseph N. Boakai
Vice President of the Republic of Liberia
At Launch of National Climate Change
Steering Committee and Secretariat
C. Cecil Dennis Auditorium
October 18, 2010**

**Hon. Amara Konneh, Minister of Planning & Economic Affairs and
Chairman, NCCSC;**

**Ms. Anyaa Vohiri, Executive Director, Environmental Protection
Agency;**

**Hon. Christopher Neyor, Advisor to the President on Energy,
Environment & Climate Change Secretary of the NCCSC;**

Officials of Government;

Our Partners in Progress;

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen:

We are here this afternoon to launch the National Climate Change Steering Committee and its Secretariat, which will be responsible for developing a comprehensive national framework to combat climate change in Liberia.

I am delighted to represent the President, Mrs. Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, and to participate in this ceremony. In setting up the NCCSC, this government is fulfilling yet another commitment our administration made to fulfil our national obligations as signatory to the United Nations Climate Change Convention, and the Kyoto Protocol to combat climate change.

This Steering Committee is a multidisciplinary team drawn from relevant line ministries, agencies, civil society, development partners and academia. We expect that its recommendations will reflect a range of perspectives, utilizing a consultative and participatory approach.

Climate change is a global issue considered a major threat to development. Not only is it an environmental issue, it also has social, economic, political and development dynamics. Even though our national emission level is negligible – there is no escape for large and small states alike from this environmental problem.

Current erratic weather patterns in Liberia make it difficult for our farmers to carry out normal agricultural activities. Last year, we declared a national disaster due to the caterpillar infestation, which affected several counties.

Although with less severity this year, the pest has returned. What we have now is a climate-induced crisis with far reaching implications for food security.

Our road rehabilitation is slowed due to unpredictable rainfall, leaving contractors with less time to complete projects.

The prolonged rainfall is giving rise to an increase in water-borne diseases, especially malaria, typhoid fever, and cholera.

Our coastal cities are under threat due to coastal erosion that is climate-change embedded because of rising sea levels. We have visited the communities of King Gray, Cece Beach, West Point and other areas to see, first-hand, what climate change is doing to our people.

This UP-led government is unwavering in its commitment to ensuring that every Liberian lives in a clean and healthy environment.

As part of government's efforts to achieve this objective, the President has asked me to announce the following measures:

1. Establishment of the National Climate Change Secretariat within the Office of the President, as endorsed by the Cabinet;
2. Establishment of the Rural Renewable Agency by Executive Order;
3. Completion of the National Adaptation Program of Action (NAPA); the National Energy Policy promoting renewable energy; the Low Carbon Economy Strategy Document; and the Vulnerability Assessment of our coastal cities.

Similarly, we are pleased to declare three coastal cities – Monrovia, Buchanan and Robertsport – which have been selected to benefit from the NAPA pilot project. Under this program, walls will be erected to minimize coastal tidal waves that are eroding our coastal areas.

Funding in the amount of US\$2.9 million for the project is provided by the Climate Change Least Developed Countries Fund. However, more

moneys will be needed to adequately deal with the problem of coastal erosion.

Liberia is participating in the World Bank Forest Carbon Partnership Facility. It is hoped that our participation will lead to the preparation of a policy for Reduced Emission from Forest Deforestation and Degradation (REDD). Under this climate change mitigation mechanism, rain forest countries like Liberia will receive incentives to conserve their forests.

One such incentive is the trading of carbon stored in our forests, which has lately become a focus of our fight against corruption. The Carbon Harvesting Corporation (CHC) debacle is a classic case of misrepresentation, bribery and influence peddling that brought our country unwarranted negative international press coverage.

We cannot make the kind of progress we want if a few individuals manipulate the system for personal gain at the expense of the country.

The NCCSC, as the high-level policy and decision-making national body for carbon and other climate change activities, must ensure that transparency, integrity, and the national interest are considered in its analysis, deliberations and decisions. This is our foremost expectation of you.

Last year, we actively participated in the climate change negotiations and the Summit in Copenhagen, which I attended. At that gathering, we informed the world of Liberia's commitment to fight climate change through the development of a low carbon economy strategy. A few

months later, we registered our support for the Accord, in line with the endorsement of the African Union.

We hope that the upcoming UN Climate Change Negotiations in Cancun, Mexico, will produce a fair and legally binding climate treaty the world desires and deserves.

The President commends our development partners for their continued support to the government and people of Liberia in the effort to combat climate change. We further call on them to support the new Secretariat as it formulates a national policy to conduct a comprehensive greenhouse gas inventory, prepare a vulnerability and adaptation strategy, develop socio-economic analysis, public awareness, capacity building, finance, and implement other result oriented activities as pathways to low carbon emission.

On behalf of the President, I am very pleased to announce that the National Climate Change Steering Committee and its Secretariat are now ready for business. Be assured that you can count on our usual guidance and support.

May the Almighty God always bless us, protect our sovereignty, unify us, preserve our dignity and keep us safe.

I thank you.

