

Statement by H.E. President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf
Agenda Item 10: “Consideration of the 2012 Report on Assessing Progress
Toward the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)”

Fellow Heads of State;
Ladies and Gentlemen:

I have requested to intervene under Agenda Item 10, “Consideration of the 2012 Report on Assessing Progress toward the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)”, in the light of a new role I have been selected to undertake, in framing a post-MDG global strategy.

As you know, almost twelve years ago, in September 2000, leaders from 189 countries (and over 23 international organizations) met and signed on to a global approach to development, aimed at improving social and economic conditions in the world’s poorest countries. Those eight Goals targeted every aspect of social, economic and political deficiency.

Shortly following the Millennium Declaration, African leaders came up with a new approach to development, the New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD), aimed at eradicating poverty and placing their countries on a path of sustainable growth and development, while participating actively in the world economy and body politics.

Notwithstanding its good intentions, NEPAD did not fulfill all expectations, due in part to a huge gap in funding promised by the G-8 industrialized nations. The lesson learned was that Africa cannot and must not develop local, national or regional development plans by counting on donors; that we must, instead, base our policies on local resources and capacities. Our Brother, Prime Minister Meles has been a champion on this.

As we approach 2015, the target date for the MGDs, we must reflect on the successes and challenges.

We have made progress in all of these areas, the most significant being in the Goals dealing with universal access to education, where the number of school age enrolment in Africa has jumped from 58 percent in 1999 to 76 percent in 2010, and where parity in the ratio of male to female enrollment has grown from the average, in 1999, of 91 girls for 100 male students, to 97 girls for every 100 males in 2010.

While the statistics vary from country to country, it is important to share lessons learned and to see how something we could not achieve locally was successful somewhere else. For example, I would like to ask my Brother, President Kagame, how Rwanda achieved the highest ratio of male-female in the workplace, not only in Africa, but in the world? Elsewhere on the continent, the number of people living under extreme poverty – with less than \$1.25 a day – has been halved, and wider access to medication has allowed us to mitigate the dangerous spiraling of malaria and HIV/AIDS.

As we begin to look beyond 2015, we must ensure that the gains made are not only sustained, but improved upon. The progress made is a credit to the African people who remained productive and resilient under difficult conditions. We must also give credit to this new class of African leadership – men and women elected by their people and responding to their needs – that is slowly but surely changing the relationship between government and people.

The question therefore is no longer whether development and progress are taking place on the continent, but, rather, how do we sustain the gain? How do we make sure there is no roll-back? And, more importantly, how do we ensure that our environment – our legacy to future generations – is not overused and destroyed in order to feed the urgencies of today? We therefore have a two-pronged challenge: to maintain and sustain the gains without jeopardizing the future of generations to come by overusing our natural capital.

On May 9, United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon invited President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono of Indonesia, Prime Minister David Cameron of the United Kingdom, and me, as the President of Liberia – to co-chair a High-

Level Panel on the post-Millennium Development Goals framework on development.

With the target date set for achieving the MDGs due to expire in three years, Secretary-General Ban saw the need to: launch a process to establish Sustainable Development Goals that build on the MDGs; find better ways to measure progress that go beyond gross domestic product; and advance action to improve people's lives through decent work, social protection and the empowerment of women and young people. To address sustainable development challenges, the Secretary-General called for a clear direction for enhancing the global institutional framework.

In the coming months, the High-Level Panel on a post-MDGs development framework will commence a discourse on a possible roadmap for global recovery and sustainable development.

That exercise will be global, and needs the input of everyone everywhere. In Africa, while consulting with the leadership and institutions, we will focus particularly on the voices of the people, the poor people, through civil society organizations that have already started their work and are well represented here in Addis.

Let us endeavor to make 2015-2025 the Decade of Transformation for Africa.