

**A Special “26” Message to the Liberian Diaspora
From H.E. Madam Ellen Johnson Sirleaf
President of the Republic of Liberia
On the Occasion of the Nation’s 165th Independence Anniversary
July 26, 2012**

Fellow Liberians of the Diaspora:

It is with pleasure that I address you today as we, Liberians, both at home and in the Diaspora, assemble to celebrate the 165th Independence Day of our beloved country.

The war that uprooted many of you is now a thing of the past. The conflict is over. It was a long road to travel, but we are at a point where we can sigh with relief. For the first time in almost 30 years, young Liberians are now growing up with no memory of gunshots, refugee camps, displaced centers or any of the traumatic events experienced during the war.

As all of you are aware, a few months ago we held our second successful general and presidential elections, a milestone in our march to democracy. The electoral process did not go without its challenges, but in the end the Liberian people spoke, giving us the mandate to continue implementing the development agenda we embarked upon six years before.

During the first term, we started to lay the foundations for sustainable peace, security, social and economic stabilization. We put forth our recovery agenda, based on four pillars. The major areas of that reconstruction agenda included

security sector reform, economic revitalization, governance and the rule of law, and the restoration of basic social services and infrastructure development.

In this second term, we aim at transformation, with focus on infrastructure expansion, youth empowerment, reconciliation and justice, and changing minds and attitudes. We call upon you, fellow citizens, to do your part to ensure that this transformation takes place.

One of the cardinal issues that we face is reconciliation. Our administration has taken steps to create a just and fair society, with opportunities for all Liberians. We want to create an environment where social and economic justice is a reality. This is why we call on all Liberians to come onboard.

Each one of you, wherever you may be, must find a way to contribute to the national transformation. We are most appreciative of the contribution you make to our national economy with the remittances you send every day. When there was no government or state machinery to provide support, the money you sent helped many to survive the scourge of hunger and disease.

The challenge ahead is to determine what kind of investment you could make now that would benefit the nation and also bring you rewards. The remittances are good for emergencies, but I want you to look beyond that and start something that can touch the lives of others, something that can bring you home.

In the next few months, our administration will launch a new Diaspora Policy that will operate directly from my Office. As you have done in the 2030 Vision consultations, we want you to continue to participate fully in the debate on our national future. How do we build Liberia? What kind of country do we want to

leave for future generations? The education, wealth and experience that you have accumulated can be important tools for the implementation of our national development agenda. We are a nation of great potential, and it is time that we tap into our immense human and economic resources.

In the past six years, we have sent information missions into the Diaspora, not only to keep you abreast of what is happening at home, but also to collect your views on how to proceed, including you in the consultations on Vision 2030. As we move forward, that policy of interaction – the same policy of broad consultation we have instituted here at home as a pillar of our democratic process – will continue and will take a more formal and inclusive nature.

As some of you may be nearing retirement, remember that you can render great service in your home country. We therefore invite you to come to visit, to make an investment, and pool your resources to have a greater impact.

As we celebrate this historic Day, I call on you to work together, to resort to dialogue to resolve your differences and support national causes. The fact that Liberians in the Diaspora always find each other, in your various associations, is testimony to your profound attachment to your country.

We are about to embark on a new cycle where we have decided to take a long-term view. Inasmuch as there are daily priorities to sort out, I believe that a long-term view of our society, where we imagine and discourse on where we want Liberia to go and how we intend to get there, can help us shape our future in the direction we want. We invite you to participate in this search for solutions, so that together, we can build together a greater and stronger Liberia.

We're so glad that on yesterday the United Nations Security Council delisted seventeen persons who had suffered from an assets freeze and travel ban. Our government has been instrumental in this, and we hope that many of you there who have relatives that can now move about freely, in accordance with the rights granted under our Constitution, will join us in making sure that they enjoy themselves during this "26" season.

Every year, I issue a Proclamation for the Independence Day celebration. I want to thank the Mayor of the city of Cleveland, Mr. Frank G. Jackson, for joining us in this tradition by issuing a Proclamation making July 26, as Liberia's Day in the city of Cleveland. We want to thank the Mayor and the people of Cleveland for their hospitality and solidarity with Liberians.

May God Bless Liberia.

Happy 26 to all!