

Press Statement by Her Excellency President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf
On Cabinet Appointments
January 19, 2011

Ladies and Gentlemen of the Press, thank you for being here.

The purpose of this gathering is to inform the public on the first group of persons nominated to the Cabinet in the new Administration.

In doing so, I want to express my thanks and appreciation to of all those who served in the Cabinet during the previous administration. The majority have done so with competence, commitment and integrity. Those who are being nominated today fall in that category. They have served well, and they are expected to bring even more credibility to and support for Liberia in their retained or new portfolios.

Let me start by saying that in making the nominations for the new Administration, we will try as much as possible to have a balance in county, gender and ethnic representation. However, our overarching principle is to appoint those who have performed and those who have the requisite competence, commitment, integrity and good human relations.

I am therefore extremely pleased to nominate Mr. Augustine Ngafuan to the position of Minister of Foreign Affairs and Dean of the Cabinet, who will bring to the task the probity in financial management that is so well needed in our Diplomatic Missions, and the negotiating skills that he has so well exhibited that has resulted in a significant reduction in our large external debt, thereby giving us the fiscal space to accelerate the implementation of our development agenda. Minister Ngafuan will also be responsible for our relationship with the outside world, our bilateral and other relationships, building upon what has already been achieved, but expanding it to the place where, in our region, and in our continent and in the world, Liberia is seen as a country with equality with others, and we know that he will bring this to his new task, building on that which he's already done.

I am equally pleased to appoint Mr. Amara Konneh as Minister of Finance. Minister Konneh has guided the formulation of our development agenda and has managed the relationship with policies that have resulted in increased levels of development assistance including budgetary support. He also coordinated the implementation of our just concluded Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS). He will guide the process of integrating the portfolio of Finance and Economic Planning consistent with that which pertains in other African countries. He will also be charged with leading the effort to establish an autonomous Revenue Authority, also consistent with our African countries. His competence and ability will stand out as he leads the formulation of a long-term development agenda, the ongoing visioning exercise.

I am even more pleased to re-nominate Mr. Brownie Samukai to the position of Minister of National Defense. He has guided the process of establishment our new Army, arranged training for our officers and enlisted men, reactivated the Coast Guard and maintains a mutually strong and equal relationship with those countries, particularly the United States, which is assisting to build the capacity and competence in our security sector. Going forward, he will play a role in the reform of the security sector, the plans for the wind-down of UNMIL, and ensuring that the right Liberian leadership comes into place in the Armed Forces of Liberia.

Finally, we are pleased to appoint Deputy Minister Jerolinmek Piah as the new Press Secretary to the President. He will carry out the functions dutifully performed by Mr. Cyrus Badio and, we hope, bring to it a renewed dynamism that will improve our communication with the public at large. Cyrus has done a good job, and we thank him. We also know his passion and his interests in other areas in which he has served in the past. We will work with him to ensure that he gets placed in those positions that enable him to continue to perform, with competence, to continue to perform with what is required to improve our communication.

Ladies and Gentlemen of the Press, thank you, and let me say a big thank you to our four nominees, all of whom have served so well, all of whom we are

proud of, for what they have done to bring this country to this place of progress, and to say to them that they have my full confidence – what they have done, and what I expect them to do. They will be with me, I hope, for the six years of this Administration, accomplishing our goals until I exit and they decide to take off on their own paths. Let me thank you all.