

Talking Points by H.E. President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf
At World Business and Development Award Ceremony
New York, Tuesday, September 21, 2010

To the Organizers of this Awards Ceremony: the International Chamber of Commerce, the United Nations Development Programme, and the International Business Leaders Forum;

Mo Ibrahim, Philanthropist and Good Friend of Liberia;

USAID Administrator Raj Shah;

Secretary of State Andrew Mitchell of the United Kingdom;

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen:

- I am pleased to be a part of this World Business and Development Award Ceremony, which recognizes the key role of the private sector in helping to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). We congratulate the five winners to be announced, and wish them success in their respective enterprises.
- I'm asked to answer 3 questions: Why Liberia needs the private sector? What my Government is doing to attract investment? And what support the development community can provide to scale the private sector's role?

Why does Liberia need the private sector?

- The private sector will be the engine of our country's growth. Particularly the Small and Medium Enterprise (SME) sector holds the potential of creating the level of employment required in a post-conflict recovery environment.
- Four key reasons for the private sector in Liberia:
 - Resources – the potential of the private sector to mobilize resources is not under the same constraints as those faced by Government.
 - Sustainable and broad-based – utilizing the private sector is a way to engage and empower a wider range of actors within the community.
 - Reduce role of the Government – Government oftentimes does not have all of the answers or the resources, and engaging the private sector empowers the population through increased income and economic opportunities.
 - Market forces – using the private sector allows Government to leverage the market to provide timely information, and appropriate and innovative solutions.

What is the Government doing to attract investment to Liberia?

- Providing an enabling, transparent environment in which it is easy to operate businesses.

- A revised Revenue Code and Commercial Code that make it quicker and easier to enforce business contracts.
 - The environment for open dialogue between the Government (public sector) and the private sector has been created, evidenced by Government's active participation in the Liberia Better Business Forum (LBBF).
 - Working with donors and the private sector to rebuild infrastructure because better infrastructure will help open up new markets and areas of economic opportunity.
- The development community can provide support to us in the following ways:
 - Forums for Government and the private sector to talk, and structure that dialogue so it is meaningful and useful for policy makers;
 - Keep policy makers within Government informed of best practices from around the world;
 - Develop Government's capacity to identify, attract, negotiate, monitor and evaluate projects by businesses that will have a development impact and support the MDGs ("business/development partnerships");
 - Promote increasing business linkages between formal and informal enterprises through targeted initiatives and a system of incentives;

- A marketplace to match businesses with social projects; and
- Help Government develop the infrastructure that makes business/development partnerships an attractive commercial proposition.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON THE WORLD BUSINESS AND DEVELOPMENT AWARDS

The International Chamber of Commerce (ICC), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and the International Business Leaders Forum (IBLF) are pleased to open nominations for the 2010 World Business and Development Awards in support of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) – eight internationally-agreed goals to alleviate poverty by 2015.

Created in 2000, the Awards recognize the key contributions the private sector has made to the MDGs, demonstrating how innovative business models, backed by strong partnerships, can enjoy commercial success and at the same time improve the lives of millions of people.

“Increasingly the private sector is a critical component for increasing aid effectiveness and achieving the Millennium Development Goals,” said Jean Rozwadowski, Secretary General of the ICC. “The World Business and Development Awards are the first international business awards given on a biennial basis to recognize business for its role in alleviating poverty and fostering an enabling environment for enterprises of all sizes and sectors to grow, create jobs, and pursue technological innovation and cooperation.”

With the deadline for MDGs achievement set for 2015, the UN system has devoted 2010 to building a renewed momentum for working toward them. In less than 150 days, leaders from business and government will convene in New York for the special MDGs summit, hosted by the UN Secretary-General. The Summit aims to produce a global action agenda, specifying the roles and partnerships – including those of the private sector - required to achieve the Goals.

The deadline for nominations for the World Business and Development Awards is 1 July 2010. Companies, institutions and associations of all types and sizes are invited to participate by nominating a project that documents business activities leading to progress in one or more of the MDGs.

The winners will be announced and presented with an award on 21 September 2010 in New York on the sides of the MDGs summit during a ceremony presided over by high-level officials. Winners will be profiled in the publications and on the official websites of ICC, UNDP, Business Call to Action, and IBLF.

An international judging panel made up of ICC Secretary General Jean Rozwadowski and IBLF's Acting Chief Executive Officer Graham Baxter as well as leaders of non-governmental organizations, business entities and international agencies will make the final selection.