

REMARKS BY

HIS EXCELLENCY DR. GEORGE MANNEH WEAH

PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF LIBERIA

ON THE OCCASION OF THE LAUNCHING OF THE SHE'S YOU MOVEMENT

THE CENTENNIAL PAVILION

BROAD STREET

MONROVIA, LIBERIA

THURSDAY, JULY 20, 2019

FIRST LADY OF THE REPUBLIC OF LIBERIA;

Her Excellency Chief Dr. Jewel Howard Taylor,
VICE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF LIBERIA;

Her Excellency Mrs. Rebecca Akufo-Addo
FIRST LADY OF THE REPUBLIC OF GHANA;

Her Excellency Mrs. Fatima Maada Bio
FIRST LADY OF THE REPUBLIC OF SIERRA LEONE;

The Speaker, President Pro-Tempore and Honorable Members of the 54th Legislature, here present;

The Chief Justice and Associate Justices of the Supreme Court of Liberia, here present;

The Doyen and Members of the Diplomatic Corps;

The U.N. Resident Coordinator to Liberia;

The Dean and Members of the Cabinet;

Heads of Government Agencies, Commissions, and State Enterprises;

Other Officials of Government, here present;

It gives me great pleasure to stand here today to launch the She's You Movement, which is the flagship program of my dear wife, Her Excellency Ambassador Clar Marie Weah, First Lady of the Republic of Liberia, in her national advocacy campaign for the empowerment of women and girls in our beloved country.

But, before I do so, I would be remiss if I did not add my voice to the chorus of warm welcomes that have come from the many speakers who have preceded me at this podium.

Now therefore, on behalf of the Government and People of Liberia, and in my own name, I would like to thank all of our special guests and participants who have come from far and wide in support of this worthy cause. We welcome you to our country, and we thank you for your commitment to the noble goals and objectives of the She's You Movement.

And now, to my strong, beautiful, and darling wife Clar, MY First Lady, I want to tell you that I am very proud of you for taking this bold and selfless initiative to address the plight of the girls and women in our society.

I think you will agree with me, Clar, that I know you better than anyone else, and I think we should share with our audience the reason why I can make such a statement with confidence.

Next week, we will be observing and celebrating our 27th wedding anniversary!! After spending these many years with you, I believe that I can be considered an expert on your character.

I say this to let the world know that I know that you are not doing this for your own glory or reward. Coming from humble beginnings, throughout the years that I have known you, you have always shown compassion for the less fortunate, the disadvantaged, and the underprivileged.

And you have also demonstrated an even greater passion for righting their wrongs, lifting them from distress and despair, always trying to give the encouragement and support that would empowered them to a better existence.

Early last year, after you visited a number of orphanages and homes for the elderly in and around Monrovia, you returned home and told me how sad you were at the poor conditions in which the children and old people were living.

You were shocked and appalled, and I vividly recall you saying to me, "George, how could people do that? Is this the country we are living in? We can't leave it like that! No, George, I am so sad. I am going to build a home for the elderly, and I will begin to explore how I can be of service to the many orphans that I have seen."

True to your word, as always, you then took your own money and began the construction of a home for the elderly in Grand Bassa County. Today, the home is completed and ready for occupancy.

Then you were further motivated to do something for orphans. First of all, you adopted two of them to live with you personally in our home. And now you have taken many of them to live under the care of your Clar Hope Foundation, where you are expanding its facilities to take in many more.

Today, as First Lady of Liberia, you are under no obligation to do any of this. But this position has given you a new vantage point, whereby you can see and better appreciate the unfortunate plight of the vulnerable women and girls in our society.

Your position as First Lady has also given you a new platform, from which you can bring their plight to a wider audience of like-minded people and organizations, who will be able to put their resources and support behind your efforts to uplift and protect the vulnerable people in our society.

But Clar, I am not surprised by any of this. You have always cared about the plight of Liberians. For example, you were very sensitive to our situation during our long civil crisis. I remember that when I had to take money from our account – millions of dollars – to support the Lone Star, our national football team, you did not only readily agree and encourage me to do so, but you were always on the plane to accompany me to the games.

I also recall an incident during the war one Christmas when you had accompanied me to Abidjan, and we were told that some Liberians from the refugee camp had come to our hotel to greet me. We went outside to meet them, and you were surprised to see more than 2,000 persons, calling on me for their “Christmas”. You turned to me and said: “George, you know what? Go to your people, and do what you have to do. They need you.” And you then assisted me to give each of them something for Christmas.

Madam First Lady, my Government is grateful for your efforts as founder and leader of the She’s You Movement. Your programs and objectives are complimentary to what we are already doing to address these issues.

The involvement of women, girls, the elderly, orphans, and other marginalized groups, in all sectors, can contribute significantly to sustainable development, economic growth, social transformation and political stability in Liberia. However, development cannot succeed or be sustained if violence against women is embedded in the social fabric of society.

We recognize that women are an indispensable part of the socio-economic advancement of our nation. A country cannot develop, if we leave our women and girls behind in the development process.

We will remain focused on finding innovative ways in which we can advance gender equality and the empowerment of women, particularly in the area of social protection systems, access to public services and sustainable infrastructure.

The She's You Movement is perfectly aligned with Governments' policies and objectives in this regard, and we thank you and welcome your participation and involvement in support of our programs.

My commitment and dedication to this cause is also on a personal level, because I was raised by a very strong old woman, my maternal grandmother, Madam Emma Forkay Klon Jlah Brown, who taught me a deep and long-standing appreciation and respect for the value of women and girls, and the important role that they can play in our society.

As President, and Feminist-in-Chief of the Republic of Liberia, and as a HeforShe Champion, I commit to continue to lead the efforts to address and rectify the glaring disparities in our social and economic environment.

Madam First Lady:

Before I close, let me wish you a Happy 27th Wedding Anniversary, in advance. I cannot believe that the time has gone so fast, and I just want to thank you for standing by me through all these years.

I remember that when we were celebrating our very first anniversary, we saw a couple who were celebrating their 35th, and we looked at each other and wondered whether we would ever get to that number of years together. Well, we are almost there!

I love you, Mama T.

And now, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen:

I hereby launch the She's You Movement in Liberia

I thank you.