

**New Year's Message by H.E. President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf
to the Liberian People
December 30, 2013**

Season's Greetings, my fellow Liberians:

Time marches on: One year ends, and a New Year, a new beginning, is quickly upon us.

Many of our loved ones are no longer with us, and we miss them dearly. May their souls rest in perpetual peace.

Let those of us, who are privileged to witness the dawning of a New Year, give praise and thanks to the Almighty for his many blessings bestowed upon us as a nation and a people.

The arrival of a New Year is a time of reflection – of looking back on accomplishments and of things left unfinished. The New Year is also a time for resolutions and looking forward, toward the future.

In looking back, we can say that 2013 was a landmark year for the people of Liberia, for we rejoiced in commemorating the 10th Anniversary of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement that ushered in a decade of quiet peace to our once broken land. We proudly proclaimed to the world that we had lived through a decade of uninterrupted peace, thanks to the contribution from all Liberians and the generous support received from regional institutions and global partners.

Our country remains a fragile state, yet the record of continuity in peace and democracy is clearly present. Let us continue to build upon this significant achievement for the good of our motherland.

The year 2013 also saw us begin to implement our *National Vision 2030* – the guiding principle that will underpin our national development initiatives over a 20-year period – out of which we constructed our *Agenda for Transformation* – a medium-term economic growth and development strategy – and a *Strategic Roadmap for National Healing, Peacebuilding and Reconciliation*. Together, these policies are guiding us on our journey to the future as “One People, One Nation, United for Peace and Sustainable Development.”

In 2013, we placed great emphasis on infrastructure, with power, roads and ports as the three areas of concentration, because these, in turn, facilitate the education, health and agriculture sectors.

We made progress in the fight against corruption, in terms of prevention and punishment, although our work is far from done. We moved an inch ahead on our reconciliation program, with the launch of the Palava Hut Initiative in Zwedru. However, we all know that reconciliation will come about only with the commitment of all to peace and unity. Only if we all work together to address the many related issues, will our country progress and prosper.

Although growth has remained satisfactory, our economy has not performed to our expectations, due to delays in operationalizing investment. This, in turn, is caused by land and benefits disputes and, to a certain extent, official bureaucratic bottlenecks. This resulted in pressure on the exchange rate which impacted our people, leaving them with less money in their pockets to meet basic needs. We have already taken measures to get our mining, agriculture and forestry operations back on track, to get the economy functioning fully as planned.

Nevertheless, we are proud of our efforts and the progress, in the past year, under the AfT pillars of peace, justice, security, and rule of law; economic transformation; human development; governance and public institutions; and the many cross-cutting social issues of youth unemployment, gender equality, child protection, disability, the environment and more.

As we ring in the New Year, 2014, let us welcome it with a sense of humility and remember that as Liberians, we must continue to strengthen our peace. We want 2014 to be a year of true patriotism and reconciliation that will accentuate the positive things that unite us.

Our plan for 2014 is to accelerate development efforts, to move the economy and create more jobs. In this dry season, we will forge ahead with our infrastructure development, particularly roads, power and ports which are the essentials that make everything else happen in the country. At the same time, we will implement the results of the study taken to address the problems of the education sector, and forge more effective efforts to promote food security through agriculture.

Looking beyond 2014, we will continue to implement our long-term vision and development agenda; conclude the processes for constitutional reform; expand infrastructure to a larger number of the population; strengthen the management of our natural resources; and ensure that we retain an open society based upon transparency and accountability.

We will build upon the satisfactory level of cooperation in the Mano River Union, ECOWAS and the African Union, and continue to strengthen and broaden good relations with bilateral and multilateral partners. Liberia was proud to contribute a small contingent of troops to the UN peacekeeping mission in Mali, which is performing well.

My fellow Liberians: Our country has great potential, and our resilient people have the potential to rise above the challenges we face to really come together and make Liberia the truly great nation that it's meant to be. It is a privilege for me to be a part of the leadership of our nation in this era of transformation.

As a New Year dawns, we pray God's guidance in leading our nation in the direction of peace, reconciliation and development. We wish Liberians – at

home and in the Diaspora – and residents living within our borders, a joyous holiday season and a very happy and prosperous New Year. May the New Year be filled with health, happiness and prosperity.

Happy New Year! May God bless us all, and bless our Liberia.