

REMARKS

BY

**HIS EXCELLENCY DR. GEORGE MANNEH WEAH
PRESIDENT REPUBLIC OF LIBERIA**

AT THE

SUMMIT OF HEADS OF STATE

ON

DROUGHT RESILIENCE

AND

SUSTAINABLE LAND MANAGEMENT

**THE 15TH CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES (COP-15) OF THE
UNITED NATIONS CONVENTION TO COMBAT
DESERTIFICATION**

ABIDJAN, COTE D'IVOIRE

MAY 9, 2022

Excellencies, Heads of State and Governments;

***Your Excellency Mr. António Guterres,
Secretary-General of the United Nations;***

***The President of the 15th United Nations Convention to
Combat Desertification;***

Heads of International Organizations;

Distinguished Delegates;

Ladies and Gentlemen:

Upon my arrival in Abidjan yesterday, I learned of the untimely death of Mr. Amadou Soumahoro, President of the Ivorian National Assembly.

On behalf of the Government and People of Liberia, and in my own name, I would like to extend sincere condolences to His Excellency President Alassane Ouattara, and the Government and People of La Cote d'Ivoire, for this great loss. May His soul rest in Perfect Peace. Amen.

EXCELLENCIES, DISTINGUISHED LADIES AND GENTLEMEN:

On behalf of the Government and People of Liberia, kindly allow me to express my sincere thanks and appreciation to His Excellency Mr. Alassane Ouattara, President of the Republic of Cote D'Ivoire, for the invitation extended to me to represent the Government and People of Liberia at this important conference on combating desertification and drought, which are having an increasingly negative impact on the socio-economic conditions of our various countries, especially in Africa, as well as in many other parts of the world.

The theme of this 15th Conference of the Parties (COP-15) is:

“Land. Life. Legacy: From scarcity to prosperity”

This could not be more appropriate to draw our collective attention to the urgent necessity to preserve, protect, and manage land more efficiently. Land is a major natural resource that is too often taken for granted, and it is important that we become aware that, if it is neglected, or used unwisely, it can become a wasting and depletable asset. The connection in the Theme between “Life” and “Legacy” is profound, as we do not only derive sustenance from land, but we also have a duty to ensure that it will continue to support the lives and livelihoods of future generations.

We have been made aware that the global stock of healthy land is being increasingly degraded through the combined effects of desertification and drought. It is therefore important that we use this forum to formulate new policies and approaches to mitigate

the negative impact of these phenomena, by restoring degraded land and combating desertification.

EXCELLENCEIS, DISTINGUISHED LADIES AND GENTLEMEN:

As you are aware, in October last year, many world leaders met in Glasgow, Scotland, at COP26, to discuss the issues surrounding climate change, and to re-awaken the global community to once again conclude on the full implementation of the Paris Agreement, as well as find a lasting and sustainable solution to global warming.

I represented my country at COP26, and fully participated in the discussions, because we are of the view that Africa happens to be one of the most vulnerable regions in the world that are heavily impacted by climate change, which tends to impede the growth and development of our dear continent.

As I stated in Glasgow during COP26, the problem of climate change is not of Africa's making, yet we continue to experience the worst consequences of it. Drought and floods are beginning

to occur with increasing frequency on the continent, and in many countries which have never experienced them before.

This has not only led to the deaths of thousands of our citizens, and the displacement of millions of our people, but has also caused a direct reduction in food security and an increase in cross-border migration of populations. Unless we act urgently and decisively together to deal effectively with this problem, drought and desertification brought about by climate change have the potential to create major insecurity on our continent.

EXCELLENCIES, DISTINGUISHED LADIES AND GENTLEMEN:

The issue of finance is key to addressing land degradation and ecosystem restoration to avoid drought. We acknowledge and commend the various international mechanisms such as the Global Environment Facility, Green Climate Fund, and many others that are working with countries to address the issue of combating drought, reducing or preventing desertification, and restoring lost land.

However, as I stated at COP26 in Glasgow, there is an inherent imbalance in the current architecture of climate financing. We who are the richest in terms of forest resources and biodiversity are also the poorest in terms of socio-economic development. We who are the lowest emitters of harmful greenhouse gases, and who bear the brunt of the impact of climate change, benefit the least from the solutions and financing for tackling climate change. And we who maintain and protect the largest remaining tracts of forest reserves, receive the lowest payments for these ecosystem services.

In an effort to address this imbalance, I proposed at COP26 the establishment of an **African Carbon Trade Mechanism** for the continent, so that Africa's economic growth and development can benefit from its forest resources in a manner that is equitable and commensurate with its positive contributions to the fight to reduce global warming.

Again, let me reiterate here that Liberia stands ready to host the meetings for the establishment of this Mechanism.

EXCELLENCIES, DISTINGUISHED LADIES AND GENTLEMEN:

With one of the highest annual rainfalls on the African continent, Liberia is not yet a drought-stricken country. Nevertheless, in preparation for the unknown future, in 2019 my Government completed and submitted the first National Drought Plan, in fulfillment of the objectives of the UN Convention to Combat Drought and Land Degradation.

My Government also committed itself during COP26 to ensure that at least thirty (30%) percent of Liberia's forest will remain untouched, through the establishment of several protected areas. I am now pleased to announce that, through the effort of the Environmental Protection Agency and its Partners, five (5) such protected areas have already been established.

Additionally, with support from the Liberia Forest Sector Project, funded by the Norwegian Government with technical support from FAO, the Liberian Forestry Development Authority conducted and published the first National Forest Inventory in 2021, which is the first inventory conducted in the last thirty (30) years.

EXCELLENCES, DISTINGUISHED LADIES AND GENTLEMEN:

The African Continent, in particular, awaits concrete, meaningful, and action-oriented decisions from this Conference. The next two weeks will involve intense deliberations and negotiations, but I am confident that Abidjan COP-15 will produce sustainable solutions that will set a new world direction in saving the Earth from further land degradation and desertification, thereby giving hope to the most vulnerable nations and their citizens.

Let us work together to protect our common heritage.

I thank you.