

**Remarks by H.E. President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf
at Official Launch of the National Symbols Review Project
Paynesville City Hall, Montserrado County
February 6, 2014
(As Delivered)**

Let me first express gratitude to the Speaker who designated the Deputy Speaker; to the Deputy Speaker who agreed to come because Thursday is their plenary day. Today they are all in a meeting. Tuesdays and Thursdays are not a good time for them because they are busy doing their legislative work.

Many may recall the report for the *Vision 2030* and the consultative process that took place. During those rigorous consultations – I see Dr. [Togba Nah] Tipoteh is here; he's one of those that headed the group that went around the country, gathering the views of Liberians as to what we need to do to unify people, to have a sense of national identity, to feel that we all have shared values, we all have one destiny, one people – some of the things identified as not promoting that spirit of unity were some of our National Symbols – the Flag, the Anthem, Awards, among others.

All of those things, people expressed concern and said we need to look at them and what they mean in terms of coming together as one nation, one people for the future. That's what this process is all about.

However, the consultation process has not taken place. Even among the leadership, among the three branches of government, there still needs to be more consultation for them to agree with the process, for them to be a part of the process, for them to also guide and lead the process. Some consultation has been done, but not sufficient.

So, I want for you to consider this as the preliminary launch of this project to enable the team, and the Governance Commission, to go and do what is necessary so that when we have another meeting we can have everybody onboard – feeling that what we're trying to do is something that we all will commit to and we all will be a part of.

It's come a long way, they've done a lot of research and analysis and papers. But at the end of the day, this is serious business. It has political implications; it has financial implications; and all of those must be taken into account.

Liberians like pomp and pageantry and symbolism. I don't think, Madam Mayor, we needed all these fancy things with balloons here today. I don't think we needed a fancy program. This is something that requires getting a large group of people together to be able to start the thinking of this and them going around the country – like Dr. [Elwood] Dunn said; like the Deputy Speaker [Hans Barchue] said – in all the nooks and crannies so that everybody can have a say, and when

we finally determine what will be our future symbols, it's something that everybody will stand up and say: Yes, this is what we want. This is what we like. This is what will bring the Liberian people together.

So I urge you to take a common approach, a simple but effective consultative approach on this. We will work with you so you can start that process and get it right; so that we can make sure that tomorrow, if our flag will have one palm tree inside it, because of all the reasons the Deputy Speaker said, everybody will see that palm tree and say we want that palm tree because we can get the red oil, because we can use palm kernel, crack it and get oil, and we can use the branches to sweep the floor or cover our heads when we want to demonstrate, whatever; but then we all will agree that this is the way we want to go.

So let me thank you for coming, urge the Governance Commission to start the process of consultation, and to have another meeting.

We will consider it launched because we need to get started; we need to get the consultation going; we need to start doing the papers; we need to start preparing the agenda and what not.

So we consider it launched, but I will urge them to now go one step further to get a bigger group to see this, so the next time we come back to the City Hall, I will see all these chairs filled with people who now agree that we need to start that process, to think about these symbols so that we can see a future that we all belong to, that we all can identify with.