

WELCOME REMARKS

AND

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

BY

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

AT THE OPENING OF THE

**NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON SEXUAL AND GENDER-
BASED VIOLENCE (SGBV)**

THE MINISTERIAL COMPLEX
MONROVIA, LIBERIA

Her Excellency Madam Clar M. Weah, First Lady of the Republic of Liberia;

Mr. Speaker and Honorable Members of the House of Representatives;

Mr. President Pro-Tempore and Members of the Senate;

Madam Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, Former President of the Republic of Liberia;

The Doyen and Members of the Diplomatic Corps;

The Acting Dean and Members of the Cabinet;

Bishops, Prelates, and Members of the Clergy;

Officials of Government;

Heads and Members of All Political Parties here present;

Chiefs and Traditional Leaders;

Representatives of Civil Society Organizations;

Local and International Development Partners;

Members of the Inter-Ministerial Task Force on Sexual and Gender-Based Violence;

Social Justice Advocates;

Political and Business Leaders;

Distinguished Personalities;

Members of the Fourth Estate;

Marketers, Students;

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen:

I would like to take this opportunity to say a warm welcome to each and every one of you who have come here today to participate in this historic first National Conference on Sexual and Gender-Based Violence in Liberia.

We are gathered here today under the theme: “A National Call to Action: Inclusive Involvement to Fight Rape and Sexual and Gender-Based Violence in Liberia”.

This urgent call to action is in response to an alarming increase in rape and Sexual and Gender-Based Violence in recent times, especially during a time when we are at war with the deadly Covid-19 pandemic. We are in fact witnessing what is actually an epidemic of rape within the pandemic, affecting mostly children and young girls across the country.

This National Conference is therefore being convened out of my Government’s grave concern about the unprecedented recent surge of this evil scourge, which is a follow-up to a Special High-Level Meeting which I called last July to discuss the status of rape and other Sexual and Gender Based Violence (SGBV) cases in the country.

During that meeting, I appointed an Inter-Ministerial Task Force on Sexual and Gender-Based Violence, with a mandate to engage all stakeholders to discuss, consult and develop a Roadmap on enhancing the fight against Sexual and Gender-Based Violence. Subsequently, the Roadmap was completed in the shortest possible time and presented to my Government.

Our aim and purpose during this National Conference, therefore, is to rally all Sexual and Gender-Based Violence stakeholders to

discuss openly and contribute collectively to determine the best practices and procedures that would enable us to bring an end of rape and other forms of Sexual and Gender Based Violence in Liberia.

At the end of this Conference, these proposals will be taken into account and serve as a validation of the “Government of Liberia & Partners’ Roadmap on Ending Sexual and Gender-Based Violence 2020-2022”.

Following the review of this Roadmap over the next two days of our deliberations, the Government plans to achieve effective results by adopting a new approach to addressing the Sexual and Gender-Based Violence-prevention process across all sectors, which will be characterized by adequately-funded prevention and response mechanisms.

The expectation is that at the end of this Conference, the Roadmap will be fully inclusive of every possible thought we have on fighting this menace to our society, with the objective of improving our coordinated national response.

With the adoption of these strategies, we are hopeful that we will be able to improve and strengthen the enforcement of existing legislation, policies and standards that support the prevention and response to Sexual and Gender-Based Violence, thereby reducing the incidence of rape, child marriage, and female genital mutilation, amongst others.

We also want to ensure that our women, girls, boys and other vulnerable people at risk of abuse in our society will have increased access to information, protection and specialized services.

As President, I want to assure you that I remain relentless in my commitment to the cause of reducing and eradicating Sexual and Gender-Based Violence in Liberia.

Once again, let me welcome everyone, and wish for you all a fruitful and productive discourse.

Thank you.