

SPECIAL MESSAGE

BY

H. E. DR. GEORGE MANNEH WEAH
PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF LIBERIA

ON THE OCCASION OF

THE OBSERVANCE OF THE 176TH INDEPENDENCE ANNIVERSARY
OF THE
REPUBLIC OF LIBERIA

THE CENTENNIAL PAVILION
MONROVIA, LIBERIA

JULY 26, 2023

Her Excellency Madame Clar Marie Decontee Weah,
First Lady of the Republic of Liberia;

Her Excellency Chief Dr. Jewel Howard-Taylor
Vice President of the Republic of Liberia;

The Speaker and Honorable Members of the House of Representatives;

The President Pro-Tempore and Members of the Senate;

Her Honor the Chief Justice, Associate Justices, and Members of the Judiciary,

His Excellency Adama Barrow,
President of the Republic of The Gambia;

His Excellency Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo,
President of the Republic of Ghana;

His Excellency Dmytro Kuleba,
Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Ukraine;

His Excellency Dr. Sidie Mohammed Tunis,
Speaker of ECOWAS Parliament; and
Members of the ECOWAS Parliament, here present;

Amb. Feni Kouakou, Former Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of
Cote d'Ivoire to Liberia;

The Honorable Delegation from the African Union;

The Dean and Members of the Cabinet;

The Doyen and Members of the Diplomatic Corps;

The Honorable Chief Zanzan Karwor,
Chairman of the National Council of Chiefs and Elders,
and Orator of the Day;

Our Special Guests;

Bishops, Prelates, and Members of the Clergy;

Officials of Government;

Chiefs and Traditional Leaders;

Development Partners;

Superintendents and Local Government Officials;

Political Leaders and Business Leaders;

Marketers and Students;

Members of the Fourth Estate;

My Fellow Citizens;

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen:

Today, on this auspicious occasion of the 176th anniversary of our beloved Republic of Liberia, we gather here at the historic Centennial Memorial Pavilion to celebrate another significant milestone in our nation's history. With hearts full of gratitude and reflection, we thank the Almighty God for guiding us through 176 years of independence as a sovereign nation and people.

As we stand here today, we cannot ignore the shadows cast by the checkered past of our nation, particularly the dark chapter of the civil war that destroyed our beloved land for 15 long and painful years. We remember the lives lost and the countless families torn apart, with over a quarter of a million Liberians perishing, and more than 1.5 million displaced, both at home and abroad. It is a stark reminder of the cost of division and discord.

Yet, amidst the ruins of that time, we have persevered, united by a common purpose and an unwavering determination to rebuild our nation. We have proven that what unites us as Liberians is far stronger than what divides us.

Today, we celebrate not just the anniversary of our independence but also the resilience of our people who, through all challenges, have clung to the hope of a united and prosperous Liberia.

On this day, I extend my sincere gratitude to our fellow Liberians for their tenacity and commitment to preserving our statehood and sovereignty despite our internal differences. It is this unity and determination that have enabled us to overcome the darkest of times and move toward a brighter future.

I would also like to extend my heartfelt appreciation to our friends and allies, especially my friends and brothers, His Excellency Adama Barrow, President of the Republic of the Gambia, and His Excellency Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo, President of the Republic of Ghana; for honoring our invitation and gracing this occasion with their presence.

I also want to thank the Speaker and Honorable Members of the ECOWAS Parliament, and the distinguished representatives of the African Union, who have honored our invitation to be present here today. Your presence signifies the strong bonds of brotherhood and solidarity that exist within the African continent.

In a similar vein, I want to thank all the other guests who have honored our invitation to grace this occasion. We are grateful that you have come from far and wide to share this historic moment with us.

DISTINGUISHED LADIES AND GENTLEMEN:

Let me now take this moment to congratulate Chief Zanzan Karwor, Chairman of the Council of Chiefs and Elders, for the beautiful oration he delivered today. His selection to serve as National Orator on this day was in honor and respect to the Traditional Chiefs and Zoes of our land.

I am sure that his message has resonated with all Liberians, as it did with me, and that it will have a meaningful impact on our unity, our peace, and our forward progress. It is also my hope that the message in today's oration will inspire us to re-examine ourselves and continue relentlessly in our pursuit of national reconciliation.

DISTINGUISHED LADIES AND GENTLEMEN:

The theme of this year's celebration, "Giving Our People Hope For A Violence Free, Fair, Transparent and Inclusive And Credible Elections", has served us notice about our Constitution and our duty to uphold it. We must remember that the adoption of the Declaration of Independence was done simultaneously with the first Constitution of Liberia. In this regard, the Anniversary of both the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution constitutes Independence Day.

When I took the oath of office as President of this Republic, I pledged to uphold and defend the Constitution of the Republic of Liberia to the best of my ability. As

law-abiding citizens, you have also pledged similar allegiance to the country on various occasions. Together, we have a collective duty and obligation to uphold, protect and defend the Constitution. The theme of this year's celebration is therefore a reminder for us to do our duty to our country and our God.

It is interesting to note that today marks the final Independence Day celebration of my first mandate as President of Liberia, and the last before the holding of General and Presidential Elections in the next few months. As I seek to be returned for a second mandate, I am focused on sparing no energy in ensuring that the interest of the Liberian people is served, and that their will is done.

You will recall that, along with other stakeholders, we recently signed the Farmington Declaration, which imposes on us the obligation to make the environment violence-free and to work together to ensure that the ensuing elections are free, fair, transparent, and inclusive.

Today, I reiterate, with renewed resolve, my commitment to patriotically discharge the responsibilities imposed on me as your leader, in the promotion and preservation of the fundamental rights and freedoms that are guaranteed by the Constitution, and to strive to create an atmosphere that is conducive to the free and unrestricted right to exercise your franchise in a peaceful, transparent, and inclusive process. I promise that the conduct of the October 10th General and Presidential Elections will be credible, and will meet all national and international standards.

Although I am the Chief Executive Administrator of the country, the success we are promising does not rest with me alone. The inclusiveness of this exercise requires the full and committed participation of all our citizens and friendly partners. Above all, it requires the unreserved commitment of those political stakeholders who are vying for positions in these forthcoming elections, as well as their followers. It should be understood that, while our individual and collective

political interests are uppermost, those desires should not be put above the interest and general well-being of the country, which is indeed our collective interest.

After long and bitter years in the wilderness of anarchy, we should know the value of peace. I am happy that since August 18, 2003, when leaders of various factions and interests made a solemn affirmation to end violence by signing the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in Accra, Ghana, Liberians have demonstrated their resolve never to resort to violence or go to war to settle their grievances. All leaders since then, including me, have upheld the pledge to uphold the peace and keep our country stable and progressive.

I call on our citizens to be proud of themselves and their country - to be proud of preserving the sovereignty and cohesive integrity of Africa's first and oldest republic. Many thanks also go to our friends, partners, and foreign residents for assisting us to uphold and defend our sovereignty.

Our combined fortitude and patriotic commitment are an inspiration of hope for the future of a Liberia that will rise and remain a bastion of positive history in Africa and the world.

As we look to the future, we do so with hope and optimism. We have come a long way, and I firmly believe that the best days of our nation are yet to come. Our journey toward prosperity and progress is far from over, but I am confident that, together, we will continue to develop the spirit of love, unity, and reconciliation that will propel us forward as a nation-state.

FELLOW CITIZENS, DISTINGUISHED GUESTS, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN:

In conclusion, let us continue to stand tall with pride for our nation's achievements, and let us march forward with renewed resolve to overcome the challenges that lie

ahead. Together, united as one people, we will build a Liberia that continues to shine as a beacon of hope and progress in Africa and the world.

May God bless you all, may God bless Liberia, and may we celebrate many more prosperous and peaceful years as an independent and sovereign nation.

Happy Independence Day to all! I thank you.