

Keynote Address

Delivered by

His Excellency Joseph Nyuma Boakai, Sr.

President of the Republic of Liberia

on the occasion of the

71st Graduation Ceremony of the

Gabriel L. Dennis Foreign Service Institute, Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Ellen Johnson Sirleaf Ministerial Complex

Oldest Congo Town, Liberia

Wednesday, November 12, 2025

Honorable Former Vice President Jewel Howard-Taylor;

Honorable Speaker and Members of the Legislature;

His Honor the Chief Justice and Members of the Judiciary;

Honorable Minister of Foreign Affairs and Members of the Cabinet;

Excellency, the Doyen and Members of the Diplomatic Corps;

Distinguished Guests;

The Director General, Faculty, and Administration of the Gabriel L.

Dennis Foreign Service Institute;

Aspiring Diplomats of the Graduating Class

Families, Relatives, and Friends

Members of the Press;

It is always an honor and a great joy to join you today and deliver the keynote address at the graduation ceremony of the Gabriel L. Dennis Foreign Service Institute.

Each visit to this prestigious institution fills me with pride and admiration for its enduring legacy of excellence. I am especially delighted that the one hundred and twenty graduates here today represent the largest graduating class in the Institute's remarkable 74-year history.

This ceremony is also unique because it combines three segments of the Institute's training platform: the 10-month Regular Academic Program, the Madam Suakoko Graduate Program exclusively for Female Diplomats, and the six-week Refresher and Orientation Program for elected and appointed officials and professionals.

As emerging diplomats, you have completed rigorous training in various areas, including Development Diplomacy and Multilateral Diplomacy, with executive refinement.

Today's graduation, for all its positive reasons, also paves the way to support Liberia's commitment to reclaim its historical role as the leading force of African diplomacy on the global stage.

The Gabriel L. Dennis Foreign Service Institute has evolved into a crucible of excellence, forging diplomats equipped to navigate the complexities of modern international relations.

My candid impression is this: the Institute does not merely train—it transforms. In the grand Metternich tradition of diplomacy—where intellect, restraint, and the subtle art of negotiation shaped the destiny of nations—the FSI instills in its students a mastery of both principle and pragmatism. Its curriculum, blending rigorous theory with the practice of statecraft, upholds standards that rival the world's most esteemed diplomatic academies. From economic statecraft to conflict mediation, the FSI ensures its graduates emerge not only as representatives of Liberia but as architects of its expanding global influence.

Yet, excellence requires ongoing renewal. Optimal capacity building is essential in this field.

Every Liberian diplomat, civil servant, and aspirant to multilateral institutions or the corporate sector must take advantage of the Foreign Service Institute's programs.

That is because Liberia's progress depends on a group of professionals who speak the language of global governance fluently, with integrity, and with strategic foresight.

I would like to thank the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Director General, faculty, and administration of the Gabriel L. Dennis Foreign Service Institute for improving the training modules and rebranding the institute at a time when Liberia is ready to take on a significant role as a non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council.

Under your guidance, the FSI has maintained its foundational mandate and has elevated its stature both locally and internationally.

Your proactive efforts in establishing and nurturing relationships with other diplomatic training institutions, such as the United Nations Institute for Training and Research, UNITAR, in Geneva, the Foreign Service Academy in Sierra Leone, the International Relations Institute of Cameroon, and the Institute of Diplomatic Studies in Egypt, among many others, are commendable.

These strategic partnerships are essential channels for sharing knowledge, best practices, and innovative ideas. They ensure that our diplomats are trained with a modern, global outlook and prepared to handle the complex, interconnected challenges of the 21st century. You have established the FSI as a center of excellence, and for that, our nation is thankful.

My Dear Graduates, the Foreign Service of Liberia represents a premier, though not exclusive, path for your exceptional talents. The elite training you have received is far more

than a vocational credential; it is a foundation for leadership across all sectors of global diplomacy. Whether you serve at any of our foreign missions, on the global stage of international organizations, or in the private sector, your expertise is a national asset. And we must commend you for that.

From this day forward, you carry the mantle of a Liberian diplomat, empowered to represent our nation's interests and values with integrity, wisdom, and distinction in every forum. Your journey does not end today; it begins anew. You are entering a world where the art of diplomacy is more critical than ever.

You will be at the forefront of championing Liberia's interests, from attracting investment in key sectors such as agriculture, infrastructure, and technology to protecting the rights of our citizens abroad and advocating for global action on climate change, which threatens our coastal communities.

The world you are about to enter is significantly different from that of your predecessors. It is a landscape of interconnected crises and opportunities, shifting alliances, and complex challenges that no single nation, no matter how powerful, can resolve alone. Climate change, global economic instability, cybersecurity threats, and geopolitical tensions shape this new environment.

In this complex world, the role of the diplomat is more critical than ever. Therefore, as you step out from these halls into the arena of global affairs, I charge you with a special mission built on four core pillars.

First, be strong Advocates for Liberia's Prosperity. Your primary mandate is to serve the interests of the Liberian people.

This means moving beyond traditional diplomacy to become economic diplomats par excellence. You must be at the forefront of attracting responsible investment, promoting "Made in Liberia" products, forging partnerships that create jobs for our youth, and championing our key sectors—from agriculture and mining to tourism and technology.

Second, be Architects of Peace and Regional Stability. Liberia's journey from a country once torn by conflict to one of post-conflict recovery is a story you must own and share.

Our hard-won peace is our most valuable asset. You are now its guardians. You must engage with our neighbors in the MRU, ECOWAS, and the African Union, promoting Liberia as a credible partner for stability. Champion regional integration, collaborate on cross-border security, and leverage our experience to support peace processes everywhere.

Third, be Good Examples of Integrity and Service. The title "Diplomat" is one of great privilege, but it is founded on trust—the trust of your government and, most importantly, the trust of the Liberian people.

Let me charge you to carry the mantle of service with uncompromising integrity, professionalism, and patriotism. Reject the temptations of corruption in all its forms. Be known for your competence, your diligence, and your ethical standards.

Remember that you represent every Liberian. Your conduct, both public and private, must reflect the highest ideals of the service to which you have sworn an oath. You are the modern face of Liberia; let it be a face of honor, dignity, and principle.

Fourth, be Champions of the ARREST Agenda to Amplify Liberia's Renewal. The ARREST Agenda is our national mission to transform our country, grounded in our nation's resilience. You are called to be deliberate, unyielding, and dedicated to the success of nation-building. I want you to consider this our nation's development blueprint—a proactive, detailed plan to establish Liberia's place as a leader and source of respect in the 21st century.

I want to further charge you today as emerging diplomats to carry with you the words of Edward Wilmot Blyden, who reminded us that, "A nation is not necessarily great because it is independent... The size of a country does not determine its greatness, but the character of its people."

You now bear the responsibility of shaping Liberia's character in the eyes of the world. Go forth with courage, with wisdom, and with a deep, abiding love for your country.

I encourage you to be the diplomats who not only attend cocktail parties and reports on events at the post but also brings benefits to Liberia through transformative initiatives. Be the advocate who not only seeks aid but also forge meaningful partnerships through economic diplomacy. Be the representative who makes every Liberian, both at home and abroad, proud to say, "That is my kind of DIPLOMAT."

The future of Liberia's new foreign policy now relies on you. We trust in your ability to manage the complexities of the 21st century and to create a future of peace, dignity, and prosperity for all our people.

We want you to go forth from this place with confidence, but also with humility. Be bold in your ideas, but wise in your counsel. Be firm in your principles, but flexible in your methods. Be proud ambassadors of the new Liberia—a Liberia of resilience, peace, and progressive ambition.

I wish you God's speed and wisdom in your future endeavors, and may God bless you, prosper the works of our hands, and save our Liberia.

Thank You.