



# REPUBLIC OF LIBERIA

THE PRESIDENT

*EJS/MOS/RL/378/'06*

November 24, 2006

Dear Friend,

Greetings from Liberia. With this letter, I would like to invite you to attend the Liberia Partners' Forum to take place in Washington, DC on 13<sup>th</sup> -15<sup>th</sup> February, 2007, co-hosted by the World Bank, the United States Government, the United Nations, and the European Commission. The first two days of the Forum will be held at the World Bank's facilities, focusing on Donor partners while the third and last day will be held at the IFC Head Office, focusing on Investor partners.

This is an unprecedented event for the new Liberia that we are working hard to build. It will take place with the support of the International Community working closely together with a democratically elected Government after years of armed conflict that resulted in Liberia's isolation and curtailment of normal external relations.

## *Cause for Hope*

The transition to peace and democracy in Liberia began with the Accra Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) signed in August 2003 among stakeholders including political parties, civil society and the former warring parties. This ended a conflict that started in the late 1980's which in itself was bred from the years of dictatorship, massive abuse of human rights and widespread mismanagement of national resources by successive failed regimes.

The CPA not only envisaged the restoration of peace but also its sustenance through the re-establishment of democratic institutions, with effective transparency and participation of all Liberians in the process of making decisions about the future of the nation, the development process and its benefits. It is in this context that the elections of October-November 2005 took place with the support of the international community as guarantor and protector, thereby allowing the people of Liberia to freely choose their leadership. As a result of these elections my Administration was inaugurated on January 16, 2006.

These are hopeful days for our people, having made the choice to turn the corner, leaving behind the dark years of abuse of their human rights and destruction of lives and property. But this is also a time of sober realization of the monumental challenges and hard work that lies ahead. We would like to discuss these challenges with our partners, and together consolidate and deepen the constructive partnership that has brought us to this stage.



### *Restoring Public Financial Integrity*

To assist in the re-establishment of institutions and practices of responsible management of national resources the international community and the National Transitional Government of Liberia (NTGL) agreed in September 2005, on a Governance and Economic Management Assistance Program (GEMAP). We are committed to making GEMAP work and to ultimately rendering it unnecessary by ensuring that transparent and responsible public financial management are engrained in our national systems and procedures. Several partner governments and international organizations have been working closely with us to make this possible. To further assist us in this process, and as part of the restoration of normal relations with the international financial community, we have been implementing an IMF Staff-Monitored Program that has helped us to focus and make substantial progress in restoring fiscal discipline and responsible public financial management.

### *Restoring Basic Administrative Functions and Public Services*

As a new Administration, we have made major efforts to begin to respond to the expectations of the people of Liberia. The adoption and implementation of a "150 Day Program" by my Administration was to enhance prioritization and coordination of actions to restore a minimally functional administration and basic services such as water and electricity. For the first time in many years, on July 26, 2006, we restored lights to some parts of Monrovia thus cutting through the dark of the night and enhancing security. The significance of the event was evident in the account of a 17 year-old young man who had never seen street lights in his entire life and rejoiced that he could come out of the house into the street to do homework.

Through the "150 Day Program", our young administration sought to restore rural farming by ensuring the distribution of seeds and basic implements, as well as the return and settlement of externally and internally displaced Liberians. With assistance from the World Bank, the EC, the US Government, the United Nations Mission in Liberia, and a number of other governments and international Non-Governmental Organizations, we will take these actions further by activating programs for the reconstruction of urban and rural infrastructure with substantial labour intensity to simultaneously provide much needed jobs.

I invite you to attend the meeting so that together we can take stock of our shared achievements in restoring peace, democracy, a functional public administration, and in the revitalization of the economy of Liberia. I invite you to participate in the emerging good news story of Liberia that your support is making possible.



### *Dialogue for Enhanced Partnership*

We aim to make the Partners' Forum a stepping stone in our common efforts. We have been engaging with some of the key international partners in mechanisms to coordinate our efforts, namely the Economic Governance Steering Committee (EGSC) of GEMAP and the Liberian Reconstruction and Development Committee (LRDC). In July we had the opportunity to dialogue around some of the issues that confront us in the context of the Partners' Meeting held in Monrovia. We also further exchanged views on the challenges and agenda ahead in the context of the Side Meetings we had in New York on the occasion of the UN General Assembly, and in Singapore during the IMF/World Bank Annual Meetings. We continued to interact with some of you, further reaching out to those who have not been closely following developments in Liberia.

### *The Challenges Ahead*

Sustaining the pace of reforms is clearly an important goal of my Administration, as we struggle to overcome the breakdown of institutions and governance, in the context of leadership and administrative capacity limitations which are much greater than we anticipated when we assumed office earlier this year.

We face the challenge of delivering on very high expectations with very limited human and financial resources. We also face the challenge of providing the right environment for generating domestic resources, attracting foreign investment to create much needed jobs, and to rehabilitate and expand economic and social infrastructure. In addition, we face an extremely large external debt overhang which stops us from accessing larger volumes of financial resources for development. We look forward to discussing strategies that can help us deal with these challenges quickly.

We are eager to discuss how to accelerate the disbursement of existing commitments from the donor community to fund and support the reconstruction and development process. We also look forward to drawing lessons and facing up to the challenge of moving from relief to development, including that of ensuring adequate financing.

Going forward, we want to share with you our vision and key policy choices outlined in our Interim Poverty Reduction Strategy, to discuss the financing needs associated with its implementation, and to exchange views about the development of a full Poverty Reduction Strategy. We plan to discuss with you how best we can improve on the mechanism and processes of our partnership and the most effective ways of delivering and using the assistance provided to us. In this connection, we look forward

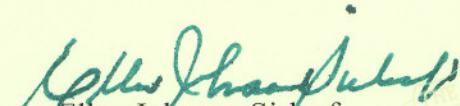


to engaging with you on the joint effort we must all make to enable Liberia to summon the critical mass of national leadership and technical competency necessary to make the reforms sustainable in the long run.

Delivering practical results in these key areas and making a palpable difference in the daily lives of Liberians is critical to maintaining the hard-won peace, to dialogue and cooperation amongst Government and International Partners in rebuilding the nation, and in living in peace with our neighbours as a respected member of the international family.

I look forward to seeing you in February and to working together thereafter in continuing to build the new Liberia.

Sincerely,

  
Ellen Johnson Sirleaf

