



CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

REMARKS

BY

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

AT THE GENERAL DEBATE OF THE
76TH SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 23, 2021

HIS EXCELLENCY MR. ANTÓNIO GUTERRES

Secretary General of the United Nations

EXCELLENCIES, HEADS OF STATE AND GOVERNMENT;

AMBASSADORS;

HEADS OF DELEGATIONS;

ESTEEMED DELEGATES;

DISTINGUISHED LADIES AND GENTLEMEN:

I am pleased and honored to address this Seventy-sixth (76th) Session of the United Nations General Assembly on behalf of the Government and People of Liberia.

I want to use this occasion to congratulate His Excellency **Mr. Abdulla Shahid** on his election as President of the Seventy-sixth Session of the United Nations General Assembly; and avail to him Liberia's fullest support in the fulfillment of his duties and responsibilities.

I also wish to congratulate His Excellency **Mr. Volkan Bozkir**; for his distinguished stewardship in steering the affairs of the 75th Session of the General Assembly.

Let me also congratulate His Excellency **Mr. António Guterres** on his election for a second term as Secretary General of the United Nations, which begins on January 1, 2022. Mr. Secretary-General, I commend and thank you for your continued diligence and commitment to the work of the United Nations, and for ably steering its affairs, even in the face of unprecedented challenges.

EXCELLENCIES, DISTINGUISHED LADIES AND GENTLEMEN:

The negative socio-economic impacts and health consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic remind us of the measure of work that is required at the global and national level to combat this pestilence.

This is reflected in the theme for this 76th Session:

“Building resilience through hope to recover from COVID-19, rebuild sustainably, respond to the needs of the planet, respect the rights of people, and revitalize the United Nations”

The Theme is a clarion call to all peoples of all nations, that as we try to re-build our Covid-impeded economies, we must do so in a sustainable manner that will take due account of our environment, and have due regard for the fundamental human rights which are enshrined in the Charter of this noble institution.

Meanwhile, it is important that we pay heartfelt tribute to the courageous and dedicated public health workers around the world for their continued selfless service in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic. The world owes to them a debt of gratitude.

EXCELLENCIES, DISTINGUISHED LADIES AND GENTLEMEN:

The Theme of this General Assembly also calls for a revitalization of the United Nations to make it more relevant and effective in the true fulfillment of its mandate in a changing world. This is a task that has been recognized as an imperative priority by successive previous leaders and members of the Organization in recent times.

Six years ago, and true to the ideals and principles of its Charter, the United Nations General Assembly took a giant step forward to promote the economic and social advancement of all peoples, and to better their standards of living, when it adopted the landmark 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. This was meant to be a global plan of action; for people, planet, prosperity, peace and partnership; with the goal of eradicating poverty in all its forms and dimensions.

However; since our transition to the Decade of Action for the implementation of the new Sustainable Development Goals,

the world has been engulfed by a global pandemic which has posed enormous strains on our capacity to implement the 2030 Agenda, and has even raised the possibility of reversing development gains.

In order to build resilience through hope, we must continue to emphasize the need for attention and support to vulnerable societies and developing countries; particularly, the Least Developed Countries. Sustainable recovery from the pandemic must be based on the principle of inclusiveness and solidarity; and within the context of leaving no one behind.

Addressing the particular needs of the Least Developed Countries could significantly contribute to recovery. Support for the upcoming Fifth Conference on Least Developed Countries (LDC-5), to be held in Doha, Qatar in January 2022;

and the new Program of Action for Least Developed Countries for the coming decade, will also provide the basis for sustainable recovery, and the timely implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.

MR. PRESIDENT, DISTINGUISHED DELEGATES:

Permit me; on behalf of the Government and People of the Republic of Liberia, to extend deep appreciation to all our bilateral, multilateral, development, regional, sub-regional, national and local partners; for their support in our fight against the COVID-19 pandemic, and the assistance they continue to provide in our quest towards recovery.

In response to the pandemic, my Government, in line with our National Development Plan; “The Pro-Poor Agenda for Prosperity and Development” (PADP), has developed a Post-COVID-19 Economic Recovery Plan.

This Plan aims to reduce the impact of the pandemic by providing the basis for economic recovery through short term actions, and investments in key sectors, including agriculture and tourism.

Under the Economic Recovery Plan, the Liberian economy is already beginning to show signs of resurgence, and in spite of the negative impact of the coronavirus, projections for GDP growth is now positive, and is expected to reach four (4%) percent in the coming year.

Through the implementation of difficult macroeconomic reforms, my Government has been able to obtain a substantial increase in domestic revenue generation for the first time in more than a decade, and we are committed to broader economic and investment climate reforms.

In the agriculture sector for example, my Government is endeavoring to vigorously launch agricultural promotion projects, which will increase agricultural production through new entrepreneurship opportunities, innovations, and safe farming techniques. Moreover, conscious of the importance and impact of infrastructure on social and economic development, as enshrined in the PADP, my Government has identified investment in roads; energy and ports as key priority areas.

EXCELLENCIES, DISTINGUISHED LADIES AND GENTLEMEN:

A further reflection on the theme for this year’s General Assembly highlights the necessity to respond to the needs of our planet. The reality of climate change facing our planet demands the urgent attention and collective action of all national and international actors.

We have all observed the extension of deserts and recurrent droughts in Eastern and Southern Africa; the increasing intensity and frequency of storms and floods in our region; the alarming rise in the levels of the world’s oceans due to the meltdown of the Arctic; and the frequency and size of forest fires that destroy thousands of acres of arable lands and properties. These conditions threaten our survival as inhabitants of this precious earth.

In this regard, the recent re-entry into the Paris Accord by the United States of America is a decision that my Government wholeheartedly welcomes and applauds, as we believe that this manifests and demonstrates the critical leadership needed to mobilize global coordinated action.

In the same vein, it is noteworthy that the President of the United States of America, in a recent nationwide address to the American People on the devastation caused by Hurricane Ida, called for immediate and urgent action to combat and reverse global warming trends.

For far too long, we state actors, including those on my own continent who have faced the harshest extremes of weather and climate, have been guilty of window-dressing climate issues with rhetorics and passive declarations. Liberia humbly submits to this august body that now is the time for concerted and decisive action.

Liberia, for its part, reaffirms our commitment to continue our good stewardship of our critical ecosystem of tropical rainforest, coastal mangroves and interior peatlands.

Our recently completed National Forest Inventory carried out with the support of the World Bank and the Kingdom of Norway, revealed that Liberia is endowed with nearly seven (7) million hectares of forest, representing nearly half of the entire remaining Upper Guinea forest in the West Africa region. If you add to this our 1.9 million hectares of agro-forestry and coastal mangroves, it becomes obvious that close to ninety (90%) percent of our landmass sequesters carbon.

Our forests are the last remaining untouched tracts of forested land in this region and contain some of the highest above-ground carbon stocks of any forest in the world, even higher than the carbon stocks in the great Amazonian Forest. As one of the last reserves of such high carbon stocks, it is imperative that Liberia's forests are maintained in the future. My government reiterates its commitment to do so.

Nevertheless, we know that many of the highest carbon stock forests in Liberia contain essential natural capital and ecosystem service benefits; benefits which have so far eluded us as a developing nation. Liberia has a youthful population and faces enormous pressures for rapid development that provides decent jobs and livelihoods, especially in our productive sectors of agriculture and mining.

Our economy needs to develop, and we want to do so sustainably. We want to continue to maintain our forest and ecosystem endowments, and our incredible bio-diversity, as we embrace climate-smart approaches to agriculture and mining, which are our economic mainstays.

However, in order to do so, Liberia needs meaningful partnerships on this journey of sustainable development; partnerships with the United States, as well as with the rest of the developed world, including the private sector, to allow

us to leave our forests intact because of their extraordinary capacity to capture carbon for the benefit of the industrial world.

We are therefore looking forward to constructive engagements with all interested parties in this regard.

The impending United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP26) will provide yet another opportunity to generate more ambitious climate actions and commitments.

EXCELLENCIES, DISTINGUISHED LADIES AND GENTLEMEN:

Cognizant of the fact that growth and development is always enhanced by the existence of peace and security, my Government remains committed to the sustenance of democracy, the rule of law, and the consolidation and maintenance of peace and security in Liberia. We remain resolute and steadfast in this commitment.

We thank the United Nations for its continued effort to maintain peace around the world. With deep gratitude, we want to thank you, as well as the African Union, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Mano River Union, and all our International Partners and Friends, for providing the support for the peace we continue to enjoy in Liberia. We will continue to rely on that support in enhancing our capability to maintain peace in our Land.

EXCELLENCIES, DISTINGUISHED LADIES AND GENTLEMEN:

After the brutal civil war that ravished our country and divided our people for more than 15 years, and which finally ended just over two decades ago, it is important to agree on a process that would bring closure to the wounds of the victims, and thereby guarantee the sustenance of peace, stability, justice, and national reconciliation.

As I have mentioned during my previous address to this body, my Government has already begun consultations with our National Legislature – the representatives of our people - in this regard.

Today, we can report significant progress in that we have already received a submission and recommendations from the Liberian Senate, which is the Upper House of our national Legislature.

We are now awaiting a similar submission from the Honorable House of Representatives, after which it is our further intention to have a wider engagement with the Liberian Judicial System, and with our strategic International Partners and Organizations. It is my hope that at the end of this consultative process, a National Consensus will evolve that will determine the pathway to resolving this issue.

In the meantime, we continue to encourage our citizens to utilize the Palaver Hut method, where perpetrators and victims can meet in traditional community forums to resolve their issues and their differences.

This is in keeping with one of the major recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission that was established at the end of the civil conflict.

MR. PRESIDENT, EXCELLENCIES, ESTEEMED DELEGATES, DISTINGUISHED LADIES AND GENTLEMEN:

Let me reiterate that the way forward to a resilient post-Covid recovery must begin by ensuring that our interventions will be guided by the 2030 Agenda; ensuring affordable access to vaccines, testing and treatments on an equitable and inclusive basis; and strengthening the capacity of developing countries, particularly, the Least Developed Countries, so that no one is left behind as we strive to achieve the timely implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. These important and critical objectives can best be realized and accelerated through improved partnership and increased solidarity among all Member States.

I thank you.