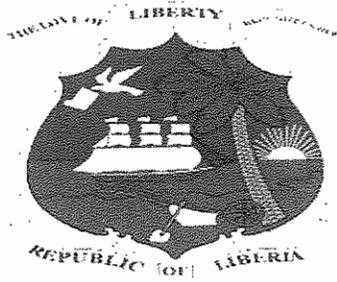


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STATEMENT

BY

**HONOURABLE JOSEPH N. BOAKAI
VICE PRESIDENT
REPUBLIC OF LIBERIA**

AT THE

**66th SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY
UNITED NATIONS HEADQUARTERS**

**NEW YORK,
26 SEPTEMBER 2011**

Mr. President,
Mr. Secretary General,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

Liberia congratulates you, Mr. President, on your election to the important office of President of the 66th Session of the General Assembly. We are confident that you will steer the work of this session in a manner which brings pride to your great country – the State of Qatar. Mr. President, we wish you well and pledge Liberia's full support to you in pursuit of the priorities which you have identified.

Let me also pay tribute to your predecessor, His Excellency Joseph Deiss of Switzerland for the effective manner in which he conducted the affairs of the 65th Session of the General Assembly. His sound and outstanding leadership enabled the session to register many achievements.

We warmly congratulate the Secretary-General, His Excellency Ban Ki-moon on his unanimous re-election and extend highest commendation to him for his vision and foresight, and for the tireless efforts with which he continues to administer our organization. We embrace the priorities which he has set for his second term, centered on sustainable development.

Mr. President,

It gives me great pleasure to welcome and congratulate the Republic of South Sudan upon her admission as the 193rd member of the United Nations, and to assure her of Liberia's friendship, support and solidarity.

The theme chosen for this year's general debate, "The role of mediation in the settlement of disputes" could not have been selected at a more opportune time. Communities within our world continue to be polarized by conflicts, which have their roots in political marginalization and socio-economic inequities. Despite global interdependence, inter-state relations are still constrained by divergent ideological convictions and structural inequalities in the global economic system. These have resulted

in divisions which undermine our efforts to move as one global community towards sustainable development.

Mediation, as part of preventive diplomacy, is indeed a powerful dispute resolution mechanism. The United Nations has a central role in promoting mediation in pursuit of peace. The good offices of the Secretary-General remain critical to the mediation efforts of the UN. Regional and subregional organizations are assuming an increasingly active and complimentary role in mediation and the peaceful settlement of disputes. These initiatives must not only be acknowledged and encouraged but also supported by the global community.

As a post conflict country, Liberia has benefited immensely from multi mediation efforts ranging from national, regional and international initiatives aimed at restoring and maintaining stability in the country. Our experience leads us to suggest that greater emphasis be placed on preventive measures, and that the tools of mediation be employed as soon as early warning signs of conflict emerge. The benefits of establishing an early warning system that will deal with potentially explosive situations before they degenerate into full-blown infernos are obvious.

Mr. President,

It is nearly a decade since this body and friendly nations intervened to restore Liberia to normalcy. This intervention ended a disastrous 14-year civil war, and created conditions for deployment of the United Nations Peacekeeping Mission to Liberia (UNMIL), the establishment of a transitional government, and the democratic election of the first female President in Africa.

Consistent with our commitment to national recovery and postwar reconstruction, we have developed programs and policies specifically aimed at lifting Liberians to higher levels of productivity, reviving basic services, restoring infrastructure and re-establishing the rule of law. Overall, we are making progress on all of these fronts and building a more inclusive society where the full potential of all of our citizens can be harnessed.

In this endeavor, special emphasis has been placed on the empowerment of women and their participation in all aspects of national endeavor. A well crafted gender policy is enabling Government to address the concerns of women and girls. We consider the creation of the Gender Entity – UN Women to be an important positive development in the UN’s effort to promote women’s empowerment. Liberia pledges its fullest support for the success of this important UN body.

Cognizant that youths constitute the highest percentage of our population, we are committed to developing programs that will strengthen and empower them for future leadership. We hope that the action plan adopted by the recent UN-sponsored High-level meeting on Youths will garner international support for our youth programs.

Mr. President,

We are continuing to progress in our effort to reform our security sector. Special attention is focused on building the capacity of the Liberian National Police. However, we remain deeply concerned about events bordering on security in the Mano River Union Basin. This is why we are thankful to the UN Security Council for the extension of the mandate of UNMIL.

Liberia is pleased to have been placed on the agenda of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC). The Liberia Configuration of the PBC and the Peacebuilding Support Office have worked with the Liberian Government and other stakeholders in developing the Liberia Priority Plan (LPP), which focuses on security sector reform, strengthening the rule of law and accelerating national reconciliation.

I would like at this junction to thank H.E. Prince Zeid Ra’ad Zeid Al-Hussein, Permanent Representative of Jordan and Chairman of the Liberia Configuration and its members for their commitment and dedication. In the same spirit, I also commend H.E. Eugene Richard Gasana, Chairman of the Peacebuilding Commission and its members for their support to the Configuration.

We would be remiss if we did not acknowledge the significant role being played by ECOWAS in maintenance of peace and security in the subregion. ECOWAS Member States are contributing tangibly to peacebuilding in Liberia by strengthening capacity especially in technical areas. We are also collaborating as a subregion in addressing common problems of transitional organized crime, human and drug trafficking, and illicit trade of small arms and light weapons.

Mr. President,

Liberia is poised to conduct another democratic election on October 11, 2011. It will test our commitment to democratic governance and peaceful co-existence. Every action is being taken to ensure that the elections are free, fair, transparent and credible. We invite the participation of the international community to observe and monitor these elections.

Mr. President,

Despite the significant gains made in improving conditions of living of our people, we realize that far more needs to be done to fully meet their aspirations. However, negative economic forces continue to hamper global growth. This situation has had repercussions for all countries. Although the resulting effects have impacted developing countries generally, those most affected are in Africa where the crippling effects of external debt, deteriorating terms of trade, decline in investment and capital flows are debilitating. Post-conflict countries are even more severely affected. This is why we have particular appreciation for the outcome of the Fourth Conference on the Least Developed countries (LDCs) convened by the UN in Istanbul last May. We have the hope that the Istanbul Action Programme will bring real change for the LDCs.

Food security remains a concern for many developing countries. The World Bank estimates that 44 million people have slipped into poverty since June of this year because of rising food prices. This unfavorable situation should be addressed with urgency. We must act now, effectively and cooperatively, to roll back the adverse impacts of rising food prices and protect communities.

Our government is responding to the current rise in food prices with immediate action under the policy "Ending Hunger in Liberia," which aims to strengthen the entire agricultural chain, from securing quality seeds for farming in wet environments to connecting farmers to local markets and onward to regional and global ones. Simultaneously, we are deepening our partnership with the FAO and other UN bodies for long-term investments in mechanized agriculture to achieve food security in Liberia.

While we seek food security, we are equally mindful of the need for health security. Liberia is among countries with the highest maternal and child mortality rates in the world. This is due primarily to the lack of skilled health workers, poor health delivery systems and inadequate medicines and supplies. This is why we welcome the new initiative of the Secretary-General aimed at improving the health of women and children.

Mr. President,

I wish to state my country's position on some of the prevailing situations which threaten peace and security, and international cooperation in our world.

The unresolved riddle in Somalia presents a strong challenge to the United Nations in relieving the Somali people of the tragedy and crudity they have endured for many years. The phenomenon of famine has exacerbated the situation in Somalia and affected livelihoods in the Horn and East Africa. These circumstances constitute an urgent call for action.

The question of peace in the Middle East has lingered around this world body far too long. Liberia believes that whether deliberations take place in the Security Council or the General Assembly, dialogue between the parties remains the most viable option for ending the stalemate for an independent Palestine. We therefore call on Israel and Palestine to concretely demonstrate a commitment to engaging each other in a constructive dialogue that will achieve the desired two-state solution.

Suppressive actions by Governments to frustrate the desire of their people for democratic reforms must never be countenanced as they

undermine international peace and security. Coherent and concrete actions by the Security Council are critical in addressing these situations.

Liberia welcomes the new leadership of Libya under the National Transitional Council. After more than four decades of suppression, the Libyan people have high expectations for the restoration of their freedom and liberties. We encourage the NTC to move quickly to restore Libya to normalcy by establishing an inclusive transitional Government that will organize democratic elections.

As the UN grows in membership and experience, Liberia joins other nations in calling for a more democratic Security Council that reflects realities of the 21st century. Africa expects to have greater representation in a reformed Security Council. More broadly, we encourage the Secretary-General's continuing effort to modernize the organization.

Finally it is my hope that Member States will work together to advance the cause of our common humanity, and make the world a better place to live.

I thank you