

**OPENING REMARKS BY HIS EXCELLENCY AUGUSTINE KPEHE NGAFUAN,
MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF LIBERIA AT THE SECOND SUBSTANTIVE
MEETING OF THE U.S.-LIBERIA PARTNERSHIP DIALOGUE
GABRIEL L DENNIS AUDITORIUM, MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS
MONROVIA, LIBERIA
TUESDAY, 4 MARCH 2014**

- Amb. Thomas Shannon, Counselor, U.S. State Department and Head of the US Government Delegation and other Members of the Delegation, including Her Excellency Deborah Malac, U.S. Ambassador to Liberia;
- Hon. Florence Chenoweth, Minister of Agriculture and Co-Chair of the Agriculture Working Group
- Hon. Etmonia Tarpeh, Minister of Education and Co-Chair of the Human Development Working Group
- Colleagues and Fellow Members of the Liberian Delegation;
- Members of the Fourth Estate
- Ladies and Gentlemen:

Just over a year ago on 15 January 2013 in Washington D.C., President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf and Former Secretary of State Hilary Clinton signed the landmark **Statement of**

Intent establishing the US-Liberia Partnership Dialogue. The Partnership Dialogue as a framework for greater strategic cooperation between our two countries has had the singular purpose of deepening the special historical ties between Liberia and the United States irrespective of the occupants of the White House or the Executive Mansion. It will also seek to promote diplomatic and economic cooperation between Liberia and the United States by engendering a flexible, non-binding mechanism to ensure sustained and high level engagement on issues of mutual interest. Through the Partnership Dialogue, our two countries will take a hard look at our relationship strategically, with a view towards the long-term, sustainable and broad-based growth in the areas of agriculture and food security, energy and power infrastructure, and human development.

In this regard, I am pleased to welcome you to Liberia, Amb. Thomas Shannon, and all other members of your delegation, for the 2nd Round of high level discussions.

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, I fondly recall the frank and fruitful deliberations held between our two Governments during the Inaugural Meeting of the Partnership Dialogue in Washington on 7 May 2013, whereby our two countries committed to continued collaboration to improve Liberia's policy enabling environment for food security and nutrition through laudable interventions including from the US Government's Feed the Future Initiative. In the area of energy and power infrastructure, we committed ourselves to closer cooperation in meeting Liberia's growing power generation, transmission and distribution needs, and building the capacity and transparency of the power and energy sectors.

While these initial commitments have laid the foundation for progress in the sectors, they still require careful and constant review and updating, with the view to making them relevant to current challenges and trends.. And it is our expectation that today's deliberations within Working Groups on Agriculture and Human Development, will lead to commitments on both sides with a clear and unambiguous roadmap for achievement, which would be jointly monitored in the intervening period. We shall also witness today the launch signing of the Power Africa Initiative between our two countries, an initiative which seeks to address Liberia's need for greater access to power as an avenue for sustainable economic growth and development.

The importance of human development and education in improving and expanding the quality of the human condition cannot be over emphasized. And whilst reforms are needed to address existing policy challenges and retool the sector to improve the quality of education that both enhances the human capacity and supply quality inputs to the ever expanding labor markets, we are equally mindful of the need for fresh investments in the sector to reduce the high rate of functional illiteracy, reduce school dropout (attrition rate), improve research in the sciences and engineering, as well as strengthen our universities and institutions of higher learning, especially those at the frontline of meeting the demands of the labor market.

Much progress has already been made since 2006 with the construction of over 200 primary and secondary schools, improvements in childhood and girls' education, opening of new community colleges across the country, and as well opening of new community

colleges as well as strengthening of our universities; but much more needs to be achieved. In this regard, we are grateful for ongoing U.S. support to the educational sector through the Peace Corps Program, through support for Liberia's Teachers Training Program (LTTP) and other worthy initiatives.

We in Liberia owe a depth of gratitude to the Government and people of the United States for the wide range of political, economic and humanitarian assistance we have received over the various epochs of our historic relationship. The United States has been a strong and reliable partner of Liberia since its founding nearly two centuries ago and has assisted immensely in its transition from war to peace and economic recovery.

We note with appreciation US support for the consolidation of the culture of democracy, the restoration of social services, the building of infrastructure, the rebuilding of public sector capacity, the improvement of public financial management, the cancellation of Liberia's huge debt burden and a host of significant interventions through the Millennium Challenge Corporation in which Liberia has been reselected to continue developing its compact proposals.

Most importantly, we can never fully express how grateful we are for the US government assistance in the rebuilding of the Liberian army and Coast Guard. We now have army that can secure our borders and protect our citizens against external threats. Most recently, your Government donated a tug boat for use by the Liberian Coast Guard and in 2013 provided logistical support and air-lifted Liberian soldiers bound for Mali as part of

international peacekeeping operations in that sisterly nation. Today, the responsibility of running the Army has been devolved to a Liberian in person of Brigadier General Daniel Ziahnkan, Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces of Liberia who on February 11, 2014 took the baton from Nigerian Commanding Officer in Charge Gen. Suraj Abdulraman. When the history of the Armed Forces of Liberia's successful transition is written, significant chapters would be written about the crucial and pivotal role played by the United States in this positive transformation.

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, after 14 years of a destructive civil war, the considerable progress we have made in the softer areas of democracy and peace consolidation, good governance and the rule of law, due significantly to longstanding U.S. support, has today necessitated a shift in our national focus towards the path of economic recovery, growth and development. Therefore, Liberia feels justified in this new focus on energy and power, agriculture and food security and human development as the most assured avenue towards accelerated national progress.

We welcome President Barack Obama's Feed the Future initiative and the early engagements that have occurred between Liberia and the United States under this initiative. We are also pleased with the African Development Fund and the Power Africa Initiatives, two critical areas in which Liberia seeks greater cooperation with the United States.

And as we breakup into Working Groups today, the leaders of the two sectors will have the opportunity to express their observation on how Liberia can maximize support under these initiatives, and how they can be retooled to meet key objectives. It is my hope, therefore, that through these and subsequent discussions and follow-up actions, the bulwarks of our partnership will grow from strength to strength.

Finally, on behalf of President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf and the Government and people of Liberia, I extend thanks to President Barack Obama, Secretary of State John Kerry and all members of the U.S. Government whose efforts have ensured two successful sessions of our Partnership Dialogue , I wish us all fruitful and deliberations and outcomes.

Long live U.S.-Liberia Partnership. Long live U.S.-Liberia Relations.

I thank you.