

**Opening Remarks By  
H.E. Augustine Kpehe Ngafuan  
Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Liberia at the First Liberia-  
Japan Business and Investment Dialogue  
Monrovia, Liberia  
3 July 2014**

H.E. Mr. Naoto Nikai, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Japan

Mr. Sachio Kaneki, Senior Vice President and Deputy Regional Chief Executive Officer (CEO) for Europe and Africa of Mitsubishi Corporation

Cabinet Colleagues

Private Sector Participants from both Japan and Liberia

Excellences;

Distinguished Guests;

Ladies and Gentleman:

Let me on behalf of the H.E. Mrs. Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, President of the Republic of Liberia and the Government and people of Liberia, extend the warmest of greetings and welcome to you, Amb. Naoto Nikai, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Japan accredited to Liberia and to Mr. Sachio Kaneki, Senior Vice President and Deputy Regional Chief Executive Officer (CEO) for Europe and Africa of Mitsubishi Corporation as well as to all members of the high-powered business delegation from the Japanese private sector.

Today marks a milestone and a major turning point in our drive for Economic and Development Diplomacy. This engagement here today, in a sense, represents the formal launch of the Japan-Liberia Partnership Dialogue but with a special focus on business and private-sector cooperation. In a sense we are getting down to business with a focus on business. We have come to concretize our

commitment to building a vibrant private sector in Liberia. We are here to discuss how to deepen bilateral trade through practical presentations and exchanges of ideas to foster trade and investment in Liberia. This dialogue is critical to the restoration of direct trade and investments between the two countries, and will serve as a fulcrum for people-to-people relationship as well as business to business partnerships.

This emphasis on the private sector at this inaugural edition of the Dialogue dovetails with one of the main strategic approaches contained in the Yokohama Declaration of 2013, which emphasizes the promotion of private sector-led growth as way to spur economic development in Africa. This business forum is also in line with our own Agenda for Transformation (AfT) which recognizes the centrality of win-win private sector investments and partnership to the achievement of Liberia's growth and development targets.

This Dialogue is a key outcome of the official visit of Her Excellency President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf to Japan from June 1-3 2013 during which time she and Japanese Prime Minister, Shinzo Abe met on the side-line of TICAD-V and agreed to further strengthen Japanese-Liberian economic and political ties.

The June 2013, TICAD V Summit under the theme "Hand in Hand for a More Dynamic Africa" brought forth the Yokohama Declaration 2013 and the "Yokohama Action Plan 2013-2017", which rolls out a roadmap for action-oriented initiatives built around the following:

- Achieving private sector-led growth
- Accelerating infrastructure development for growth
- Transforming farmers into main actors for growth
- Promoting sustainable and resilient growth
- Creating an inclusive society for growth

- Realizing a peaceful and stable continent and generate hope for growth.+
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Our distinguished delegates, as we begin this forum, I urge all of us to focus our discussions on relevant issues that will increase bilateral cooperation, increase trade volumes and make Liberia a strategic trading partner to Japan. The Dialogue should open a new chapter in Japan-Liberia relations and pave the way for expanded cooperation in trade and investment.

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

Japan is Liberia's longest standing bilateral partner in the Asian region; and Japan was one of the first countries to resume diplomatic ties with Liberia after the cessation of hostilities in 2003 and the restoration of democracy in 2006. Our sincere thanks go to the Japanese Government and its people, for the level of support to development initiatives through bilateral and multilateral support through JICA and TICAD that have immensely benefited Liberia and Africa. Liberia is very grateful to the people of Japan for their enormous contributions in the following areas:

- Energy:** Liberia was beneficiary of 15,000 metric tons of petroleum products through the Petroleum Non-project Grant that was monetized at 13 million USD for development initiatives. Currently, the Government of Japan is contributing to 10 megawatt power supply for Monrovia which is going to be completed 2015. The 10 megawatts of power is anticipated to reduce energy cost for businesses operating in Liberia.
- Road:** The Somalia Drive road project which costs upwards of US\$45 million will, upon completion, be one of the success

stories of the Administration of Her Excellency Mrs. Ellen Johnson Sirleaf. The construction work has begun and the people of Liberia are very much grateful and excited.

- c. **Agriculture:** The Japanese food aid remains one of the vibrant donor revolving fund programs that are financing major projects in the country including the paddy rice project, the ELWA community infrastructure project and bridge project in Grand Cape Mount.
- d. **Health:** The Liberia-Japanese Friendship Maternity Hospital at the JFK is one of the major health infrastructures that is immensely contributing to reduction in infant and maternal mortalities in Liberia.
- e. **Youth and Women Empowerment:** We continue to receive support from the people of Japan through UNIDO for women and youth empowerment through technical vocational training across Liberia. Liberia supports His Excellency Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's "Womenomics" policy aimed at creating a "society in which women shine". Our President, Her Excellency Mrs. Ellen Johnson Sirleaf is the champion of women empowerment and gender mainstreaming. Therefore, we can assure you that Liberia will stand by Japan in support of this effort at multilateral levels including the United Nations.

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen:

We hope that this Dialogue will create opportunity to promote cooperative dialogue between businesses and government through public-private partnership (PPP). We need to explore ways that Japanese firms will engage our state-owned enterprises in expanding market for our basic social services including telecommunications, energy, and water. We want to encourage Liberian and Japanese business executives to identify areas of

common interest and activities within the framework of business and investment promotion.

Lastly, in further cementing our cherished relationship with Japan, we look forward to and are working assiduously for the promised **reopening of the Japanese Embassy in Monrovia**, which will further bolster the friendship and cooperative ties between Liberia and Japan, ease the problem of acquiring visas, and boost trade and investment between our two countries.

Before I take my seat, I again want to thank every one of you, our distinguished guests and delegates from both Liberia and Japan, for your presence here; and I wish all of us **a productive and successful Meeting.**

Thank you!