

Liberia National Symbol



gaborone declaration
for sustainability
in africa

KEYNOTE ADDRESS BY THE MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

H.E. AUGUSTINE KPEHE NGAFUAN

ON THE

GABORONE DECLARATION FOR SUSTAINABILITY IN AFRICA

ROAD SHOW TO MONROVIA, LIBERIA

18TH AUGUST 2015

Hon. Amara M. Konneh,

Minister of Finance and Development Planning

Hon. Anyaa Vohiri,

Executive Director of the Environmental Protection Agency

(EPA) of Liberia

Siene Al-Baki

Technical Director of Conservation International

Mr. Carlos Manuel Rodríguez,

Former Minister of Environment, Costa Rica & Policy Advisor

Conservation International,

Director of Environment Representative

Mr. Jaco Venter

Senior Technical Director-Conservation International,

Distinguished Participants, Ladies and Gentlemen;

I am exceedingly honored by the privilege accorded me to serve as keynote speaker at this august occasion, which

marks the Gaborone Declaration Road Show to Liberia. It is also my profound pleasure to welcome all those who are visiting our shores for the first time and /or those who are returning for the first time since we were declared Ebola free in May this year. It is my expectation that you will enjoy the unique Liberian hospitality and the many scenic and historical views our city and country proudly boast of.

I am deeply humbled to be a part of this very historic meeting on the Gaborone Declaration of Sustainability in Africa, not only because it is an economic and social development initiative that seeks to transform economies on the continent thorough “Sustainable Development,” but also because the Road Show is intended to provide the platform and the opportunity to discuss the vision and framework for following up on the commitments of the Gaborone Declaration in Liberia.

I am particularly excited that the Road Show is in Liberia because of my personal belief in the fact that the issue of unsustainable development can no longer be treated as an issue of the future; it is a threat of today and the longer we take to act as a

people, the bolder and more horrendous people who do not believe in preserving the environment become in the their uncontrolled quest to advance their interest at the expense of the earth.

The government of Liberia continues to be grateful to the government of Botswana, Conservation International and other development partners for hosting the Summit of Sustainability in African in 2012, which resulted in the Gaborone Declaration.

Liberia has been a part of the Gaborone process from the very inception. I can recall that in 2012 H.E. President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf led a delegation including myself and the Minister of Lands, Mines and Energy to Botswana to participate along with nine other African countries in the signing of the Gaborone Declaration. Our signing of the Gaborone Declaration in March of 2012 showed our unity of purpose to safe our continent and the world. We recommitted ourselves to all international instruments including the RIO t20 and its principles.

In Gaborone we were concerned that:

1. “The historical pattern of natural resources exploitation has failed to promote sustained growth, environmental integrity and improved social capital;
2. Economic growth and human well-being in Africa will be threatened if we do not undertake concerted action to halt and reverse the degradation and loss of healthy ecosystems and biodiversity, and to enhance society’s ability to adapt to climate change and environmental risks and scarcities;”

The Declaration is a welcome development because unlike other initiatives, it specifically addressed sustainable development and how to harness Africa's potentials. I am glad that the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has embarked on an awareness campaign to ensure practical steps are taken towards achieving the Gaborone Declaration platform in Liberia.

Ladies and gentleman,

The African continent is endowed with huge proportions of the world’s natural resources, both renewable and non-renewable. These include among a wide range of other endowments mineral reserves, agro-biodiversity, forests, wildlife,

and marine and fresh water fisheries among others. However, our natural resources are rarely taken fully into account through economic signals in markets, or in day to day decisions by businesses and citizens, nor reflected adequately in the accounts of society.

Our natural resources have always proven to be the bedrock of the mostly extractive industries driven economies of the continent and continue to represent a significant source not only of revenue generation but for the development of its people. Here in Liberia for instance , Agriculture, including forestry, is critical to the economic development of Liberia and is the source of livelihood for approximately 70 percent of the population. In addition to rubber exports, the economy is also historically dependent heavily on iron ore, palm oil, Cocoa and Coffee.

Without ready alternatives and careful management of our resources, there may be a sharp disequilibrium between what we demand and what the environment can supply leading not only to economic but social crisis. The fact, that even arable land which

we once thought was so vastly in supply is now becoming scarce due to large swathes of land being used as wind fields, and for the cultivation of soy beans and other inputs for experimental fuels in some places, should draw our attention to need for a fundamental shift in the way we manage our natural resources.

A shift in the way we manage our natural resource endowments would require a change in the way we consume these resources. It will require a totally new attitude toward the environment and will require adequate and predictable financing to address build capacity, and adapt and transfer new technology.

Liberia has made strides to align our national development policies with the Gaborone Declaration.

- In 2014, the government issued an Executive order No. 068 which established a task force for the management of Beachfronts, waterways and wetlands. The order was put in place to ensure sustainable use and maintenance of eco-systems.

- We recognize that responsible mining is core to sustainable development, and have therefore partnered with Conservation International to ensure that local communities share the economic benefits of mining activities, and are also empowered to protect the natural resources they rely on. This is being done through conservation agreements with local communities living around the East Nimba Nature Reserve

We are pleased to be part of this new approach to sustainable development and commend all the stakeholders for their efforts in putting in place effective and coherent coordination structures, mechanisms and systems with a view to creating synergies. We look forward to learning best practices from other Gaborone Declaration countries. Our commitment as a Government and a people at this critical stage is supported by our believe that the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals will remain a far-fetched if we do not properly manage our natural resources.

We in the executive will continue to work with our

colleagues in the legislature to provide all the necessary support that is needed to ensure the successful domestication and implementation of the Gaborone Declaration and want to state that Liberia remains fully committed to the Declaration.

Finally, let me say that our national development platform the "Agenda for Transformation" is itself a Sustainable Development tool meant to lift our people out of poverty. Therefore, as we deliberate today, let us keep in mind that the decisions we make here will not only affect us but will have far-reaching implications for the realignment of our natural resource policies in the immediate and medium terms and for posterity in the long term.

As we strive to promote development without destruction and depletion, it is my hope that the natural environments in all countries on the continent are integrated into national development policies and that the conservation of the environment is considered a key priority of government all across the continent.

Let me conclude by commending the Environmental Protection Agency for all its efforts in promoting not just the awareness but the implementation of the Gaborone Declaration in Liberia.

At the level of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, we want to recommit ourselves to working with relevant Government functionaries to ensure the domestication of the Gaborone Declaration for effective governance and equitable distribution of our nature resources. Let me inform this body that, in few weeks, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in collaboration with the Secretariat of the African Union High Level Panel in Liberia, will be presenting the Sustainable Development Goal, which has incorporated the Gaborone Declaration, to the cabinet for endorsement and mainstreaming into every national policy document.

I will want to assure you all that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs will work with the EPA and all relevant local partners in taking all the appropriate next steps to ensure the full implementation of the Gaborone Declaration in Liberia.

Again, I say thank you for this.