

STATEMENT BY

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DELIVERED AT AN OPEN DEBATE OF THE UN SECURITY COUNCIL ON:

"PEACE AND SECURITY IN AFRICA: EBOLA"

NEW YORK, USA

SEPTEMBER 18, 2014

Madam President and Distinguished Members of the UN Security Council,

Mr. Secretary General

Dr. Margharet Chan, Director General of the World Health Organization (WHO);

Dr. David Nabarro, Special UN Coordinator for Ebola;

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen:

I bring you greetings from H. E. Mrs. Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, President of the Republic of Liberia, as well as from Liberians both at home and abroad.

Liberia commends you, Madam President, and other members of the Security Council for elevating the Ebola crisis onto the agenda of this august body and bringing into sharp focus the urgency of international action. We hope that today's deliberations will spur a response from the global community to commensurate with the speed and intensity of the Ebola challenge.

Until March 22, 2014 when the Ebola Virus Disease (EVD) invaded our country and began to wreak havoc in Foya, a small city that sits along a tri-state area of Liberia, Guinea, and Sierra Leone, the Liberian people, with the unswerving support of UNMIL had been enjoying the dividends of peace achieved in 2003, following fourteen years of bloody civil conflict. During these years of calm, we had succeeded in institutionalizing the democratic culture, and begun to take some strong steps, with the support of the UN and other international partners, to address the legacy of socio-economic devastation that the protracted Liberian Civil War had bequeathed.

Since the Ebola outbreak, the Government of Liberia has taken a host of measures including the heightening of awareness and prevention campaigns to address the crystallized denial and the deeply rooted traditional practices that create fertile ground for the

spread of the disease. We also declared a state of emergency and are continuing to dedicate significant amounts of our own paltry resources to the fight. We have also enlisted the constructive involvement of our people in this battle as we constantly review and revise strategies to accommodate the evolving nature of the crisis.

In spite of our own efforts, buttressed by those of our international partners, prominently the WHO, MSF and the US Centers for Disease Control, the Ebola Virus Disease continues to sprint faster than our collective efforts to contain it; and has now extended its deadly embrace to nearly 2,800 persons in Liberia, leading to the loss of 1, 500 precious lives. One hundred and seventy (170) of our small community of health care workers have already been infected, out of which eighty (80) have lost their lives. Unfortunately, given that women constitute the bulk of our health care workers and are traditionally the ones who care for sick members of the family, nearly 70% of all those infected by the EVD in Liberia are women.

The huge toll Ebola has taken on health care workers and our general health system has seriously undermined our ability to adequately respond to routine illnesses such as malaria, typhoid fever, measles, and diarrhea; and an increasing number of pregnant women are dying while trying to give life.

Even before the Outbreak, we were grappling with herculean challenges. They include finding productive employment for a significant number of our people, especially the youth, some of whom are ex-combatants; strengthening the rule of law, and implementing measures for security sector reform. We were fully involved in various peace-building and peace consolidation activities through Liberia's engagement with the Peace-building Commission. And we were making valiant efforts to comply with regional protocols aimed at curbing the spread of small arms and light weapons and transnational crime. The Ebola outbreak has distracted our attention from these national priorities and gravely undermined our ability to address the challenges, with the attendant risk of adversely affecting peace and security in our country and our region.

The impact of EVD has been multidimensional. It has negatively affected all sectors of our economy and effectively arrested the progress of the nation. Preliminary assessment points to an estimated decline in real GDP growth of 3.4%, plummeting from an earlier projection of 5.9% to a low of 2.5%. The mining, agriculture, and services sectors are expected to bear the greatest brunt of the crisis. As we mourn daily the loss of a family member, a friend or a fellow citizen as a result of Ebola, we are getting increasingly concerned about the long-term socio-economic difficulties that the Ebola Virus Disease will occasion.

Madam President, Members of the Security Council,

Liberia expresses its profound appreciation to the Secretary General for his many initiatives including his announcement today of a new UN Mission (UNMEER) to scale up the response and mobilize the international community to deliver urgently needed support in a coordinated manner. We thank the wider international community, including the African Union for all the effort and the resources (financial, human, and material) that have so far been dedicated to the fight against Ebola.

The Liberian Government and people offer deep gratitude to President Barack Obama and the people of the United States for the heart-warming announcement that the US Government will take a host of bold and concrete initiatives, including the deployment of engineers, military and medical personnel and equipment to our region to establish new treatment units and to train national staff. As a major power, the United States has made a major move; and it is our hope that new, additional and complementary contributions will be forthcoming to our region in true expression of international solidarity.

Madam President,

While we commend some members of the international community for lending hands of solidarity and empathy to us as we grapple with this virus, we are shocked and remain concerned by the actions of others in imposing travel and other restrictions on Ebola-affected countries. These actions, which run counter to advice from WHO, ICAO and other experts, border on blanket stigmatization and have now started to seriously undermine humanitarian efforts in our countries. We therefore call upon the concerned member states to reconsider their policies in light of the expert advice provided by the specialized international agencies.

Madam President,

The experts have put out a very gloomy prognosis for what would happen in the next few weeks or months if the global community fails to take bigger, bolder and timely action to disrupt the further transmission of Ebola. Just three weeks ago, the WHO estimated that 20,000 persons run the risk of being infected, half of whom may come from Liberia alone. Two days ago, President Obama, while appropriately declaring the Ebola epidemic a potential threat to global security, expressed fears that, if the current trend continues, hundreds of thousands of people may be infected with the virus.

The global community cannot remain passive and allow these apocalyptic predictions to come to pass. We cannot sit idly and watch, as we would do watching a movie on our TV screens. The

sobering reality is that we are not watching a pre-recorded movie with a pre-determined climax. We, Ebola affected countries, as well as countries, institutions and individuals of good conscience across the globe, are all actors in this evolving plot and can affect the ultimate outcome based on what we do or fail to do. It would be tragically shameful if we failed to act quickly, robustly, and concertedly in putting an end to the spread of this deadly disease.

We therefore thank the Security Council for the forward-looking resolution adopted here and encourage all member states to support the resolution through concrete actions. Let us all join in the "Act Now" campaign against Ebola.

I thank you.