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“Requirements for Consolidating Progress towards Transformation of Liberia”



By

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National Orator
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12

13 Thank you very much for that warm introduction. I am very happy to be back home on
14 the soil of Liberia – the Land of the Free – a country in which my navel string was buried.
15 Over the years, I have come to observe and realize that no matter where you are on this
16 Planet Earth, no matter who you are, and no matter what you have become over the
17 years, your heart still yearns for your natural point of origin and birth. And so, I am back
18 home and very thankful to Her Excellency President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf and the people
19 of Liberia for this great honor to serve as National Orator for this year’s July 26
20 Independence Day Commemoration. Times have changed as this instance demonstrates
21 how far our country has come as a nation. We live in a unique country as exemplified by
22 me, a simple and common man, standing at this podium to deliver what is one of the
23 most honorable orations in this country. That is why I thank you, Madam President and
24 the people of Liberia for considering me to speak to the nation and the world during this
25 Independence Day Commemoration. At this juncture, I would very much appreciate
26 were everyone to please stand so that we can observe a moment of silence for all our
27 compatriots who lost their lives, most especially for the death which has hit this
28 government in the last few days – Minister McClain’s passing.

29

30 Thank you!!!

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36 Madam President, HE Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf

37 Mr. Vice President, HE Joseph N. Boakai

38 Honorable Chief Justice and members of the Judiciary

39 Members of the Legislative Branch of Government

40 Members of the Cabinet of the Republic of Liberia

41 Members of the Diplomatic Corps and other Foreign Dignitaries Here Present

42 Representatives of the Mano River Union (MRU), Economic Community of West African

43 States (ECOWA), the United Nations (UN), and UNMIL

44 Officials and Leaders of Political Parties here present

45 The gallant people, sons and daughters of Liberia here at home and in the Diaspora,

46 People of Africa and Global human-collective

47 Ladies and Gentlemen

48

49 Exactly One Hundred and Sixty-Nine (169 years) ago, our founding fathers bravely

50 declared Liberia's independence to the whole world. As of this date in 1847, Liberia

51 became a sovereign nation, making Liberia the first independent democratic country on

52 the African Continent. History documents that Liberia was never colonized, nor occupied

53 by any European colonial power. Today we gather in this great Hall celebrating another

54 year into our existence as a sovereign nation. Men, women, and children in the villages,

55 in the towns and cities all over this country and in the Diaspora are celebrating this

56 historic day. Thus, we are gathered here mindful of the fundamental human principles

57 upon which this nation was created – that is: freedom, justice, liberty, and respect for

58 human dignity.

59

60 While I do not intend to lecture you on the History of Liberia, I nevertheless invite you to

61 take a brief reflection of the struggles and the yearnings of our founding fathers for this

62 nation. Freed or escaped from slavery, our fore-fathers returned for this beautiful and
63 peaceful land to establish a country of free men and women in the 1800s.

64

65 Encountering series of conflicts and their resolutions for peaceful co-existence, Liberia
66 was founded and our founding parents finally realized their dream of returning to their
67 Continent of origin, free from slavery, free from servitude, and free from
68 dehumanization in the Americas. From then on, we established a democracy and
69 embarked on building a nation that was envisioned to be a replica of the socio-
70 economic and political system of the United States of America.

71

72 Throughout our history, we are reminded of what occurred among us as people and
73 citizens of this nation. We witnessed series of conflicts between the “settlers” and the
74 aborigines – we partially resolved that. We went through a period of the struggle for
75 multiparty democracy – we made enormous progress at attempting to achieve it. We
76 experienced the military coup d’état of 1980 which trampled on the little democratic
77 footprints our fore-parents had established and this threw us backwards. Then came the
78 14-year civil war which rained death on the people and destroyed everything that this
79 nation struggled to build: the civil war destroyed our infrastructure, destroyed the fabric
80 of our society, destroyed precious lives, internally displaced our population, sent the
81 Liberian people into refugee camps and dispersed Liberians all over the world.

82

83 We thought all hope was lost, but when the last peace accord was signed and our
84 brothers and sisters stood at the Gabriel Tucker Bridge, laid down their weapons of civil
85 destruction and shook hands with each other, we once again regained our hopes and
86 acquired a renewed spirit, that resilient and passionate Liberian spirit which ushered in
87 the rebirth of our democracy in 1997. Then, in October 2005 Liberians boldly
88 demonstrated their will to bounce back again in a democratic election that produced
89 the first female democratically elected President in Africa – Her Excellency Madam Ellen
90 Johnson-Sirleaf.

91

92 As we gathered in this great Hall today, we should ask ourselves: after 169 years of
93 existence what have we done, what have we achieved, what accomplishment can we
94 make better, what could we tell our fore-parents if they were sitting in this Pavilion
95 today. You see, it took about a combined 142 year to build Liberia by ourselves without
96 any colonial master. Then, it took us as little as 10 years to destroy 142 years of hard
97 work. We inflicted maxim damage on ourselves in so short a time. So, how long do we
98 think it would take us to rebuild this country and bring it back to its pre-war status? Let
99 us think about it for a moment.

100

101 Did we make any PROGRESS? I pose the question in this way specifically highlighting
102 the word "PROGRESS", because I see the glass as half-full and optimistic about the
103 future of this country called "LIBERIA." Some may argue "YES" and some may say "NO".
104 To me, either answer is relative, because we have made some progress, yet still there is
105 a lot to be done in our democracy, in our educational system, in our health care system,
106 in our economy, on gender issues, and in many aspect of the lives of the Liberian
107 people.

108

109 On my way here to the great Republic of Liberia I met a young, bright fellow at the
110 airport in the Washington DC area. He lives and works in Liberia. While waiting to board
111 our flight to Brussels, I engaged in a candid dialogue about Liberia and its future. He
112 confirms that some progress have been made, but there are challenges.

113

114 Thus, when asked to speak on the topic, "Consolidating Progress Towards
115 Transformation", I quickly came to the realization that our discussion should not be
116 fixed in this direction. Instead, I rearrange the theme to open up a national dialogue
117 utilizing an upgraded topic "Requirements for Consolidating the Progress Towards the
118 Transformation of Liberia." I believe that by this, as a people emerging from a civil war,

119 we will set guidelines and benchmarks, and properly suggest practically approaches for
120 consolidation and transforming Liberia to meet the challenges of our time.

121

122 First let us look at from whence we recently emerged. For a long time, the Liberian
123 people have opted for a peaceful and non-violent democratic change transformation of
124 government when in April 1980 the military intervened and ruled the country for about
125 10 years. Then, in December 1989, a civil war was launched in this country that led to
126 the killings of over quarter of a million innocent people in Liberia and lasted for about 14
127 years. Did these events solve any problem or did they only create a vicious circle of
128 blood-shed, agony, despair, destruction of infrastructure and national set-back in our
129 onward advance to progress?

130 *

131 The guns have since been silenced, refugees have been returning home, and people
132 have been trying to rebuild their lives. As we can see, this country is on the path to
133 progress however steady the pace may be now. As one of the notable achievements,
134 every Liberian can undeniably point to the fact Liberians have lived in peace in the last
135 10+ years. Madam President, we whole heartedly thank you, the people of Liberia and
136 the international community for keeping the peace. Peace is what we needed. Peace is
137 that we cried for. Peace is what we got when our African brothers and sisters and the
138 international intervened.

139

140 Now that we have peace, we must strongly protect it as a precious commodity. We
141 cannot allow this peace to be threatened by anyone. That is why the Liberian people
142 must unite against individuals who will attempt to start another war in this country. In
143 River Gee, Maryland, Grand Kru, Grand Gedeh and Sinoe, we want no more war; in
144 Nimba, Bong, Lofa, Gbarpolu, and Bassa, we want no more war; in Montserrado,
145 Margibi, Grand Cape Mount, Bomi, and Rivercess, we want no more war. All we want is
146 peace. If you want to fight, then fight poverty, fight ignorance – let the pencils be our
147 guns and the papers our bullets; fight diseases – let the syringes be our guns and the

148 solutions be our bullets; fight corruption – let sincerity be our guns and honesty be our
149 bullets; fight against hatred – let love be our guns and peace be our bullets. Let us
150 encourage each other with progressive ideas so as to rebuild this country and once
151 again make Liberia the pride of Africa and envy of the world. This is the Liberia we must
152 continue to build.

153
154 The achievement of peace provides us an opportunity and at the same time imposes
155 upon us the obligation of rebuilding our democracy. In the process of raising this
156 country from the ashes of war, we have encountered numerous challenges as a nation.
157 These challenges are not a Unity Party challenge, these are not challenges of the
158 Congress for Democratic Change and these are not challenges for any of the opposition
159 parties alone, but these are challenges for all Liberians to brave and address so as to
160 uphold our institutions and maintain our national existence.

161 *

162 We are aware that throughout history, democratic nations have grown and societies
163 have survived, because they have been able to establish governing institutions and
164 strengthen their administrative structures.

165

166 One way to achieve this is by ensuring mutual respect. The rule of law must supersede
167 individual status in society or position; it must respect the rights of the common man;
168 tribalism and ethnic politics must give way to our common national interest; the role of
169 watch-dog groups must be increased. Institutions like the press, advocacy group, civil
170 society groups are all entities that have a critical role to play in sustaining our
171 democracy. The expression of free will and political demonstration should not take the
172 form of violence or of the destruction of the properties of innocent people and businesses.

173

174 As we discuss transforming the Liberian society for a better future, let us look at an
175 important indicator of development, the challenges we face, and how we can mitigate
176 them. One such challenge in our population is the very high illiteracy rate. UNESCO 2010
177 data show Liberia with a youth literacy rate of 54.5%, with 64.7% for males and only

178 44% for females. The adult literacy rate is 47.6% with 62.42% for male and 32.8% for
179 females. We know that low levels of literacy, and education in general, can impede the
180 economic development of a country in the current rapidly changing, technology-driven
181 world. We agree that the devastating civil war led to the destruction of educational
182 infrastructures and flight of trained teachers, thus contributing to the poor quality of
183 primary, secondary, and tertiary education in the country.

184

185 Far more concerning is the increasing gender gap, whereby the female gender in this
186 country is lagging behind. While international aid agencies may help to address these
187 problems, we cannot surrender our responsibility to these outside agencies. We should
188 establish programs that will address this situation. What we need is the requisite
189 financial and material support, and the proper accommodating atmosphere here at
190 home. This will attract highly skilled Liberian educators who are capable of performing
191 the identical task of educational reform so that this important aspect of our nation's life
192 is not dependent on aid agencies. We must ensure that the teachers who teach our
193 children are themselves well-trained to be in the class room. When trained, teachers
194 should then be given good incentives to keep them in the class rooms at their places of
195 assignments throughout the country. We have to invest in our Teacher's Training
196 Institutes.

197

198 The educational system must transition to producing graduates with employable and
199 marketable skills; it must also focus on vocational education. In this vein, I proposes the
200 establishment of a program that will recruit skilled Liberian educational experts from
201 around the world, provide them with incentives and bring them back home to work in
202 curriculum development, teacher-training, engage in teaching and the overall reform
203 and transformation of the Liberian educational systems to surpass its pre-war status.
204 Liberians are smart people. Whatever any foreign expert is brought in this country to do,
205 I believe that there are Liberians of equal or better expertise to perform similar duty.

206

207 Over the last century and a half, we have been bridled with a silent question about our
208 national outlook. We are Liberians and that I know very well. But, have we ever
209 discussed or thought about examining what our national identity is, that is what defines
210 us as Liberians? What really binds us together as Liberians? What can we point to as
211 that single most uniting force, principle, or philosophy that connects us to each other?
212 These are important questions that we must ponder over. At this critical juncture in the
213 national existence of Liberia, we cannot wait any longer on theories, instead we must
214 act and take practically steps in defining our national identity.

215

216 But allow me to suggest this if there is none that we can really point to, then we need to
217 mobilize around the spirit of "UNITY." For, we need unity more than ever before, as we
218 have recently emerged from a period of self-destruction during the civil conflict. I
219 believe that there is much more that unites us as Liberians or people of Liberian origin
220 than that which divides us. For if we are united, we can draw up enough strength, work
221 together to consolidate any progress we accomplish and build a viable nation that
222 generations to come will appreciate. My fellow countrymen and women, UNITY is a
223 required element and a driving force in the transformation of this society for a better
224 Liberia. So, let us unite!!!

225

226 Liberia and its growing democracy has come a long way. Significant strides have been
227 made towards the goal of consolidating a workable democratic process and culture that
228 the Liberian society is now experiencing. After the brutal civil war, we have had two
229 successive democratic elections, elections in which several political parties participated.
230 With over 20 political parties in a population of about 4.5 million people, Liberia can
231 literally boast of practicing multi-party democracy during the last 10+ years. This is
232 something we should be proud of and which demonstrates a notable achievement by all
233 Liberians.

234

235 In Liberia's political past, opposition political parties were seen as enemies and banned
236 from operating. Opposition leaders were often imprisoned or forced into exile. Today,

237 we are witnessing an emerging atmosphere and a period wherein political parties are
238 operating without fear of being banned. No democracy is prefect. What we now have is
239 working and can be built upon. Political parties and their leaders have to be committed
240 to democratic values to make Liberia's democracy better. Also, we must institutionalize
241 the core values of democracy and deepen its practice in order to avoid another
242 breakdown of our society.

243

244 We have to practice the kind of constructive politics that encourages the Liberian
245 people and allows for popular participation in national life. Therefore, fellow Liberians
246 let your voices be heard through the ballot box without resorting to violence. All of us
247 have the responsibility to consolidate and maintain the peace. The oppositions have
248 been doing well thus far, and there is a role and contribution of the media, civil society
249 and state political institutions in consolidating this democratization process for the
250 transformation of the Liberian society. I have hope that the interest of Liberia shall
251 prevail. Let us put Liberia first.

252

253 As I said previously, none of us can claim that our growing democracy has been all
254 perfect. Yet, let us come together and unite with the singular purpose of sustaining this
255 new democratic path to our future so that generations to come will treasure it. With all
256 the problems our democracy have experienced in the past, and what we see occurring
257 in other African countries today, let us take pride in the fact that Her Excellency Ellen
258 Johnson-Sirleaf respected the presidential term-limit of the Liberian constitution and did
259 not run for a third term. This single most important act by our current president did not
260 plunge this nation into a constitutional crisis as we are seeing in other African countries.
261 Instead, everyone is now gearing up for the next presidential and legislative elections in
262 2017, the third since 2005 at the end of the civil war. As the next electoral season draws
263 nearer, I caution all leaders of political parties against making inflamed statements that
264 have the propensity of leading to violence or intimidating the voting public.

265

266 Remember that you as opposition parties have a big role to play in nurturing our
267 growing democracy. Your contribution to the transformation of this country requires
268 opposition political parties to constructively critique the government, analyze
269 government policies without malice; you can criticize in a mature way, using facts and
270 evidence (not innuendos); you should also suggest practical solutions that will move this
271 country forward. This requirement is fundamental to consolidating peace and progress
272 in this country's transformation into a viable democracy.

273

274 Consolidating the democratic gains and transforming our society must go hand-in-hand
275 with good governance. Our governing structures must fully empower the Liberian
276 people so that the people are able to express grievances, seek justice and fair play, as
277 well as demand and shape better policies. Marching into the future, we must ensure
278 that public institutions are able to effectively and honestly manage public resources and
279 conduct public affairs in a manner that is free of corruption and abuses, and upholds the
280 rule of law. We must boldly hold leaders accountable for their actions as public servants
281 when they abuse their power or indulge in corruption. And that is exactly what the
282 Liberian people have witnessed in the last several weeks when the government initiated
283 legal actions in the Sable Mining Company Corruption Case that involved several
284 government officials. Both the Liberian people and the international community have
285 applauded the government for the actions taken in this case, demonstrating that no one
286 is above the law, and that Liberia belongs to all, not a few.

287

288 I applaud the efforts of our fellow Liberians who have returned home to help in the
289 rebuilding-process of this great nation. It takes sacrifices and love for country to leave
290 the luxury of Europe and America, Australia and other advance countries to come home
291 to contribute to the rebuilding-process of our country. You have endured and stood the
292 test of time. And for this I say thank you again. I also say thank you to other nationals
293 who have come to contribute to the rebuilding process of Liberia. To Liberians living in
294 the Diaspora, I admonish you to evaluate your individual circumstances and consider

295 returning home to contribute to the reconstruction and transformation of the country.
296 This is the one and only Liberia we have – a once peaceful and steadily prosperous
297 nations. Our skills and expertise in business, medicine, science and technology,
298 agriculture, education, law enforcement, etc. are needed to help propel Liberia through
299 the challenges we are faced with. As this is a two-way avenue, the government of
300 Liberia should play its part by creating the atmosphere and condition that will
301 encourage or incentivize Diaspora expertise to return.

302

303 This is not to say that the Liberian Diaspora has been neglecting Liberia. Far from that,
304 the Diaspora has played and continues to play a crucial role in supporting the
305 transformation of this country. Our efforts should be recognized for more than just the
306 monetary contribution to the Liberia economy through our remittances.

307

308 During the Ebola outbreak, for example, many Liberian organizations and groups came
309 together under the umbrella “Liberia Diaspora Emergency Response Task Force on the
310 Ebola Crisis” in order to help the country and the region fight the Ebola epidemic. We
311 collaborated with several international and local groups including philanthropic and
312 peace organizations and assisted Liberia and the sub-region with medical and relief
313 supplies.

314

315 I testified before the United States Congress on September 17, 2014 on behalf of the
316 Diaspora Task Force on the Ebola Crisis to mobilize material support for the Ebola-
317 affected region, advocated for the establishment of a Center for Disease Control and
318 Prevention in Africa (mainly in our sub-region) and advocated for a sustainable post-
319 Ebola recovery support. During the same time President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf sent out
320 an SOS call to the world. Through the combined efforts of the government and the
321 Diaspora, Liberia and the other ebola-affected countries received huge assistance from
322 the US, China, Cuba and other countries who committed either military and medical
323 personnel to help fight the Ebola outbreak in Liberia and sub-region; ultimately, the

324 Center for Disease Control and Prevention for Africa was established and situated in
325 Addis Ababa.

326

327 Diaspora medical and scientific expertise (including myself) worked with other scientists
328 and doctors during the PREVAIL Ebola vaccine clinical trials. We help to ensure that the
329 clinical trials were conducted within ethical and internationally acceptable standards.
330 We must applaud the Liberian government for its undaunted courage to participate in
331 the PREVAIL Ebola vaccine trials. This was an exceptional contribution to global health in
332 the search for a vaccine to prevent the Ebola virus disease. The people of this great
333 country Liberia and all those who were in the frontline deserve a big thank you for your
334 resilience and determination to defeat the Ebola virus disease. This is the Liberian spirit
335 that I know. This is the Liberia I know we must build.

336

337 But the Ebola virus is not gone away completely. We have seen some flare-ups in recent
338 months which were contained. We are also confronted with a multiplicity of other
339 infectious diseases in this country and the region – malaria, thyphoid, Lassa fever,
340 tuberculosis, HIV/AIDS, just to name a few. And we know that the Liberian health care
341 system still has many challenges, but is slowly recovering. That is why we also propose
342 that Liberia commit a lion-share of the national budget to health in general and financial
343 resources for the establishment of its own Center for Disease Control and Prevention.
344 We need to train public health professionals at least at the Master’s Degree level. We
345 should not be contended with these haphazard short-term 3-4 months training of
346 people in the field of public health. That is absolutely not sufficient. We need to train
347 Liberia’s own corps of scientists who will devote their time to the biomolecular studies
348 of infectious diseases, including Ebola, HIV/AIDS, Hepatitis, Malaria, Tuberculosis, Zika,
349 etc. etc. We need to closely collaborate with other countries in the region to conduct
350 effect infectious diseases surveillance and exchange vital public health information; we
351 need to develop our own rapid diagnostic capability for early diagnostic testing for

352 infectious diseases. We need to study the Ebola virus ourselves and study the survivals
353 of EVD ourselves.

354

355 Well, we do not need to look too far, for standing before you is your son, who has
356 invented a simple, rapid, and affordable test that can detect many infectious pathogens
357 and tell the differences between and among the pathogens at the same time in just 10
358 to 40 minutes. In consultation with my research Team, I am proud to declare that we
359 are prepared to make my invention and our technology available to Liberia, the Mano
360 River Union (MRU), and Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) to
361 invest in the development, production, and commercialization of my diagnostic
362 technology which will contribute to the fight against infectious diseases in Liberia,
363 Guinea, Sierra Leone, Africa, and the whole world. This government should act promptly
364 in working out the mechanism, for the diseases are not waiting on us, but can strike any
365 minute and cross international borders again. This is a practical path to contributing to
366 the transforming Liberia's diagnostic capability and that of the other countries and
367 improving the health care systems here in Liberia and the world.

368

369 As we celebrate this our 169th Independence Day today in this country, it will not be fair
370 if we ignore the concerns of our women. There is a situation of the challenging quality of
371 life of our female gender in Liberia. This is manifested in the form of educational
372 disparity and other uncountable problems. We have to collectively address these
373 problems. While government is charged with the responsibility of providing a
374 programmatic framework to address the gender question, government alone cannot
375 solve this problem. First, it has to start from the decisions made in the homes about
376 available opportunities, within the family unit which is the basic structure of human
377 society. In the family, parents will have to understand that girls have the right to
378 education just as boys. Girls must be given the same educational opportunities as boys.
379 We must remove adverse cultural practices that create barriers toward schooling for
380 girls, and reinforce the importance of investing in the future of our young women for

381 the benefit of the country and its future. Women can do anything that a man can do.
382 God did not make women to only be bear our children; why can't we still see that
383 woman can be ministers, doctors, lawyers, legislators, pilots and Presidents too. It
384 comes down as a challenge to our Liberian men to ensure that our daughters, our wives,
385 our sisters, our mothers, our aunties are first respected and provided the same
386 opportunities available for the male gender in our respective families. Women I am with
387 you all the way. Men we know each other...I will keep my radar on you.

388

389 Growing up in this country, we lived in multiethnic communities, played with and went
390 to school with children of other religions and Christian denominations. We saw the
391 Jehovah Witnesses distributing the "Watch Tower" booklets in our communities, we
392 also saw some of our friends of the Seven Days Adventist going to church on Saturdays.
393 We ourselves went to Church on Sundays. It did not affect anyone of us. Also, we saw
394 our friends and their parents going to the Mosque on Fridays for prayers. In Liberia,
395 marriages between Christians and Muslims are common. This relationship has been
396 peacefully accommodated by both sides over the years. And so, one virtue we have to
397 require ourselves is "tolerance". Our founding fathers were mindful of the freedom of
398 religion and separation of Church and State. This has worked for our democracy over
399 the years. Therefore, we should not invite or create a Christian-Muslim conflict that
400 does not exist in this country. In the interest of Liberia, let us advocate for a Liberia in
401 which our republic has no religious designation – not an Islamic/Muslim Republic and
402 not a Christian Republic, but the one and only Republic of Liberia.

403

404 When we look around us, we see other societies moving ahead and advancing in science
405 and technology. They are progressing so much that when you look at our situation, you
406 wonder what is holding us back. Thus what interest me recently is my interaction with
407 few of our educated friends on a social media, Facebook. There was a post showing an
408 Ethiopian weaving the traditional fabric using a weaver traditionally constructed made
409 of sticks or woods. From my observation, the reaction I posted in part was, "This

410 *traditional African technology needs to be modernized....*” Then I saw someone replying
411 to my comment saying, *“we don't need to modernize an authentic African tradition....”*
412 Then another person replied in support of the one who replied to my comments and
413 said, *“agreed! The authenticity of tradition remains "As Is". Although change is good, we*
414 *lose the richness of our heritage with modernization and upgrades.”* Well, I was totally
415 shocked about these two responses to my simple comments.

416

417 Then I quickly realized that our desire to progress as a society is sometimes held back by
418 the resistance of some members of society who do not understand contemporary need for
419 technological advancement. Here, I am advocating for technological advancement,
420 while two other educated people are promoting backwardness and stagnation. They
421 would want our children to use slates and chalk, instead of notebooks and pens; they
422 would want us to still be using typewriters, instead of computers; they would want us to
423 ride on donkeys and not in automobiles; and, they would want us to use telex, instead
424 of email. The interesting part of this is that these two persons were communicating their
425 messages using high-speed internet and computer to argue against advanced technology.
426 Nevertheless, we must continue to be innovative and determined to implement new
427 ideas that will promote the advancement of our society and country.

428

429 Madam President and people of Liberia, in order to be able to compete in almost every
430 aspects of global activities, we need to technologically equip our people. May the
431 government please continue the good efforts of rehabilitating the Mount Coffe Hydro
432 Plant (which is almost completed) and other electrification projects so that electricity
433 will be expanded to other areas of the country; please continue the hard work in the
434 pavement of the roads to extend them from Ganta to Maryland (Cape Palmas) and from
435 Bong to Lofa; In addition, the peace and democracy which have been achieved are
436 valuable assets that we must all protect. Let us take into consideration all of the outlined
437 requirements as enumerated in consolidating progress towards the transformation of
438 the Liberian society.

439

440 We have suffer for too long for this country. When I say we, I mean all the genuine
441 human rights and democratic advocates, student activists, journalists, leaders of
442 political parties in the 70's, 80's, and 90's and the progressives who played a major role
443 in the process for the democratization of Liberia over the years. For standing with the
444 poor and the oppressed people of Liberia, we were arrested, imprisoned, tortured,
445 exiled, and some of our compatriots executed. We have committed no crime other than
446 persecuting the struggle for socio-economic justice in Liberia and supporting the
447 liberation struggle of the Southern African countries from colonialism.

448

449 Progressives are advocates for the oppressed and for equal rights in society. We
450 dedicated ourselves to the struggle with passion. We made enormous sacrifices during
451 our time in the fight for democracy and social justice against the military dictatorship of
452 the 80's. We dedicated our lives for the attainment of fair play in this society. We put
453 our lives on the line day-in and day-out for a peaceful and democratic change of
454 government. Take a look at the current progressive trend in the Democratic Party of the
455 USA that has sharpened the debate on equality and social justice in America this year.
456 So, being a progress is something to be very proud of and nothing to be ashamed of or
457 apologize for. We did what was right and we will do it all over again for our people. Long
458 live Liberia, God bless Liberia and our people.

459

460 Thank you