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President Sirleaf Reaffirms End to Days of Imperial Presidency

(MONROVIA, LIBERIA – January 5, 2012): President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf on Thursday, January 5, launched the National Participatory Governance, reaffirming

her pledge, made six years ago, that the days of an imperial presidency, domineering and threatening Chief Executive are over in Liberia.

The President said the launch of the program is meant to send a determination to ensure that they are active partners with government in the governance of their communities and counties. An Executive Memorandum that the launch is also meant to send a strong message that Liberia is the country's participatory democracy.

Speaking in Salala, Bong County, where the program was officially launched, she highlighted measures taken over the last six years toward decentralization. These include the Social Development Fund, the Social Development Fund, community health centers, among others.

Decentralization, the President however reminded Liberians, is a long process, but noted that the program laid out would be pursued in phases. The first phase, the President said, would involve the continued delivery of public services out of Monrovia to county centers in an efficient and coordinated manner, while the second phase would be based on the sharing of limited political authority with local governance institutions. This measure, the President pointed out, would involve the election of superintendents and local councils who will be vested with authority in a manner that does not encourage fragmentation and retard development.

The President disclosed that the Governance Commission and the Ministry of Internal Affairs, with support from the Ministry of Planning and Economic Affairs, have already begun relevant studies to craft appropriate local governance law that would be submitted to the National Legislature, after proper vetting and executive approval.

Earlier, the Chairman of the Governance Commission, Dr. Amos Sawyer, providing a brief history of the Commission, expressed confidence that if properly implemented, the decentralization program being proposed would help spur national development across the country. Dr. Sawyer said it is important that all institutions involved with the implementation of the program play their respective roles to ensure that it succeeds. The Ministers of Finance and Planning, as well as the Chairman of the Superintendents Council, Grand Bassa Superintendent Julia Duncan Cassell, all spoke highly of the decentralization policy and pledged their institutions' fullest cooperation to ensure its success. Other speakers included Bong County Senior Senator Jewel Howard Taylor, World Bank Country Manager Dr. Ohene Nyanin, Ambassador Attilio Pacifici of the European Union, and UNDP Country Director Dominic Sam, among others.

Signed: _____



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