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(UNITED NATIONS HEADQUARTERS, NEW YORK – Saturday, September 28, 2013) The Union of Liberian Associations in the Americas (ULAA), the umbrella group of Liberians and their various organizations in the Americas, has expressed their willingness to work with President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf and her government to accelerate the development of the country.

According to a dispatch from United Nations Headquarters, in New York, the delegation assured President Sirleaf of this commitment when the leadership of ULAA paid her a courtesy call at the offices of the Permanent Mission of Liberia to the United Nations on Friday, September 27.

Speaking on behalf of the leadership, its National President, Mr. Gaye Sleh, Jr., thanked President Sirleaf for affording them the audience and said they were delighted by the gesture. He said, “We feel that we in the Diaspora are the ‘16th county’. One way to do that is to strengthen the relationship between the government and people in the Diaspora, especially those of us in the United States.”

Mr. Sleh appealed to the Liberian leader to provide his organization office space in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to coordinate its activities and strengthen ties with the government. The immediate former President of ULAA, now Public Policy Advisor in the Office of the Vice President, Mr. Anthony V. Kesselly, has been appointed to coordinate the affairs of the Association in Liberia.

Mr. Sleh informed President Sirleaf about the organization’s advocacy for dual citizenship and the right of Liberians outside the country to vote. Last December, ULAA hosted a conference in the United States where a resolution was adopted and presented to Ambassador Jeremiah Sulunteh for onward transmission to the government about their intention to advocate for dual citizenship.

The Association also informed President Sirleaf that ULAA officials who visit Liberia find it difficult to meet with government officials, and it made an appeal for such officials to be more accessible to them.

Projects which ULAA intends to undertake in Liberia, Mr. Sleh informed President Sirleaf, include the acquisition of library space in Monrovia, and will adequately furnish a public library for the benefit of Liberian students; the shipment of a 20-foot container of books and computers, which has arrived at the Freeport and for which ULAA seeks duty-free privilege in order to release the container; the construction of a state-of-the-art playground and recreational center for the youth; and the construction of a number of bus stops.

In response, President Sirleaf welcomed the group’s campaign for dual citizenship, and said she favors such advocacy. She also welcomed ULAA’s offer to collaborate and work with the government in developing the country, adding, “The government welcomes ULAA as a strong partner and having a strong relationship, not only in terms of organization to organization but organization to government.”

President Sirleaf, however, urged ULAA, if they have not already done so, to settle the squabble within the organization that had undermined the role which they had played traditionally. “I hope that the new leadership will resolve your internal problems and that you can become strong again,” she said. She welcomed ULAA’s



intention to establish an office in Monrovia.

Representing ULAA at the meeting were: the National Chairman, Mr. Sleh; National Vice President, Mrs. Margaret M. Jones; Eastern Regional Vice President, Mr. Vamba Fofana; Senior Advisor, Mr. Charles Stevens; Mrs. Oretha Bestman-Yates; Chairman on the Scholarship Committee, Dr. Leroy Boakai; former ULAA President, Mr. Emmanuel Wettee; and the immediate past President, Mr. Anthony Kesselly.

Also on Friday, President Sirleaf held meetings with the Unity Party leadership in the United States, and with several representatives of non-governmental organizations; and granted interviews to The Financial Times and Foreign Policy Magazine.



President Sirleaf, at the flag post, Minister Ngafuan, to her left, and Ambassador Sulunteh at the left extreme, Pose with ULAA President Sleh, to her right, and other ULAA leaders



President Sirleaf, Minister Ngafuan and Ambassador Sulunteh meet with ULAA President Sleh and other ULAA Leaders

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