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(WASHINGTON D.C., USA – Friday, February 27, 2015) U.S. President Barack Obama has described President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf as a friend and ally of the United States of America and committed his government to supporting Liberia with its post-Ebola Recovery Plan.

According to a Dispatch from Washington, D. C., the American President made the disclosure during a media stakeout with the Liberian leader at the White House before a private bilateral meeting at the Oval Office on Friday, February 27, 2015.

He noted that Liberia and the United States of America have an extraordinary bond of friendship.

President Obama recalled Liberia's brutal civil war that killed thousands of people and how the Sirleaf-led administration has worked to revive the once destroyed and ravished nation to an unprecedented level of progress, and that she came into office under some of the most challenging of circumstances.

He added that 2014 was a difficult year for Liberia, but that President Sirleaf's extraordinary leadership proved a difference in making the situation what it is now.

"Let express my condolences for the lives lost and the role of the leadership of Liberia, healthcare workers, community leaders, the Liberian people and international partners that have reduced the effect of the Ebola virus to about 95%," President Obama indicated, adding that the job is not done yet because Guinea and Sierra Leone still have more to do.

President Obama stressed that the courageous and extraordinary leadership of President Sirleaf averted a catastrophe that threatened the world and that the United States was proud of its overall involvement and the role of its military and other international health care workers, what could have been a devastating catastrophe has now been brought under control.

"Normal life has returned to Liberia. Children are back in school. Soccer matches are once again being played. Economic activities are resuming and businesses are reopening due to the progress made by President Sirleaf's leadership," the US President said; adding that he is proud of what Liberia has accomplished and proud of the Liberian Government and the President's leadership.

He assured President Sirleaf that he will work with her government to restart and strengthen the economy, build infrastructures and help implement previous development goals already set by the Sirleaf-led Government, He was also keen on knowing how the U.S. can be of help.

"We are looking at the return of the Peace Corps, ensure the process to reduce corruption, deliver basic services, etc. This is the kind of partnership we are concerned about," President Obama stressed.

He noted that the Liberian President has solidified democracy and worked to reduce corruption, For her part, President Sirleaf thanked President Obama for the kind words about her and the Liberian administration and indicated that she was in the U.S. to say thanks to President Obama, the U.S. Congress and the American people and institutions on behalf of the Liberian people.



President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf with President Obama at the white House

"I recalled when the United Nations Secretary General, Ban Ki-moon, called for world's action at a Special Meeting, President Obama and the United States was there for us. President Obama gave a global clarion call for the world to act and the world responded in no small way," President Sirleaf stressed.

The Liberian President said she understood the fear of the American society at the time because Liberian Government and the people themselves were also afraid because they were confronted with an unknown enemy; but in the end, President Obama was able to rally the American nation and people for action. She acknowledged the timely intervention of the U.S. military. "Thanks Mr. President for the role of the U.S. military. Their deployment raised the motivation and confidence of the Liberian people and strengthened the capacity of our own national army that can now build new infrastructures and impact the development process," the Liberian leader said.

President Sirleaf also praised the Liberian people and communities who she said took charge of the situation and vowed that they will not allow themselves to die from the disease. "They took responsibility and confronted the virus. Going forward, we must strengthen this asset and apply their experience in the post-Ebola era," she said.

She told U.S. President that she wants to see the partnership with the U.S. continue as Liberia rebuilds its economy and infrastructure during the post-Ebola period and stressed the need to look toward a regional approach to the crisis as well. "The partnership with the U.S. and President Obama has worked and is now a success story. Thanks for your leadership. We are proud of what has been accomplished with you and the American people," President Sirleaf noted.

Both leaders thereafter retired to private discussions at the Oval Office in White House.

President Sirleaf, also met with Secretary of State John Kerry, Secretary of Defense Ashton B. Carter, officials of the Department of National Health and Human Services, National Institute of Health and the Center for Disease Control, President of the World Bank, Dr. Jim Kim, and the Managing Director of The International Monetary Fund (IMF), Christine Lagarde. The IMF has provided Liberia with some US\$130 million of new financing and debt relief. This includes about US\$45.6 million from the Rapid Credit Facility and about US\$36.5 million of debt relief approved on Monday by the Executive Board. The debt relief was the first such assistance under the IMF's Catastrophe Containment and Relief Trust.

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