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President Sirleaf Lauds U.S. For Its Assistance in Containing the Ebola Outbreak; Ambassador Malac Urges Liberians to Find That Collective Spirit to Build a Better Country

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President Sirleaf Lauds U.S. For Its Assistance in Containing the Ebola Outbreak; Ambassador Malac Urges Liberians to Find That Collective Spirit to Build a Better Country (MONROVIA, LIBERIA – Thursday, July 2, 2015) President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf has lauded the United States Government for the deployment of 4,000 U.S. army boots to Liberia, a move that brought confidence; thus renewing a commitment that portrays America as a true friend. According to an Executive Mansion release, the Liberian leader was speaking Thursday, July 2, 2015 at programs in observance of the 239th Independence of the United States of America at the Executive Pavilion in Monrovia.



She expressed thanks and appreciation to the Government and people of the United States of America whose vigorous response in the fight against Ebola helped to calm anxieties and restore hope. The presence of U.S. troops, who were deployed strategically at various locations and building a state of the art mobile clinic to care particularly for health workers, reinforced this confidence, Liberians breathe a sigh of relief, President Sirleaf said.

She acknowledged the immediate dispatch of Centers for Disease Control and Prevention experts days after the outbreak, coupled with the arrival of Director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Dr. Tom Friedman, who came on a fact finding visit to better appreciate the situation on the ground.

President Sirleaf also expressed appreciation for the role of the National Institute of Health (NIH) that has been partnering with the CDC in the tough fight against Ebola. Needless to say, Madam Sirleaf acknowledged Liberia's deep appreciation to President Barack Obama and the Congress who authorized the support received from a wide range of U.S. institutions and individuals.

On the resurgence of Ebola, she said as reported by the Incident Management System (IMS) on the most recent confirmed cases in the New-Donwien Community, the situation remains a matter of concern. "We always knew that until all three affected countries are Ebola free, we were not completely out of the woods," President Sirleaf stressed, adding, "Notwithstanding, we have full confidence in the capability of our Incidence Management Team to deal promptly with this problem. We therefore call on our people to go about normal duties as there is absolutely no need to panic."

She then urged all Liberians and foreign residents alike to continue to adhere to all preventive measures outlined in the health safety guides and urged community volunteers to continue their service that had made them the

fortress of our gains.

President Sirleaf informed her audience that next week, leaders of the Mano River Union will participate in an international conference called by UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon to review and mobilize support for the Regional Post Ebola Recovery Plan. "I say post-Ebola because we are determined to contain this virus." She encouraged the United States to give support to this conference.

Speaking on the just released U.S. State Department Country Report on Human Rights Practices, President Sirleaf said she did read the Liberia 2014 Human Rights Report and have taken note of both the many positive things and the several shortcomings in her Government's performance.

She indicated that there is no lack of political will to address these shortcomings; "so we ask for your continued partnership and support to do so." She expressed the wish that given the likelihood that much of the comments in the report are based on local media reports, and taking into account comments in the report on the media, that the U.S. would adopt a policy of review and consult before such reports are issued.

The Liberian Chief Executive recounted the visit to Liberia on May 4th, by former President Bill Clinton, which she underscored signified the depth of our relations and the strong support of the United States in our recovery and the gains made before the Ebola outbreak in Liberia.

She stressed the recent return of five out of the 108 Peace Corps Volunteers evacuated during the Ebola pandemic, and the visit of a high level delegation from the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) Compact Team demonstrate the resolve of the American people to re-engage in areas that are critical to Liberia's recovery.

"We look forward to the return of more Peace Corps Volunteers, and to the 3rd Edition of the U.S.-Liberia Partnership Dialogue to review bilateral cooperation in the five areas of our Post-Ebola Economic Recovery Plan – Health, Education, Agriculture, Infrastructure and Security, focusing on UNMIL transition, she emphasized.

Said President Sirleaf: "Madam Ambassador, I cannot say enough for the strong personal role you have played in strengthening the special relationship between our two countries, and the manner in which you coordinated the assistance rendered our country during the Ebola crisis."

She praised Ambassador Malac for being truly great and her administration would be glad if Ambassador Malac still have several months with us; adding, "If this were no longer out of vogue, I would spread a lappa at your feet."

Concluding, the Liberian leader said, "As we celebrate this historic day with you it is our hope that the people of the United States will continue to enjoy the blessings of peace, prosperity, and continued economic growth and development. It is the prayers of all Liberians that the bond of friendship, solidarity, and cooperation subsisting between our two countries will be further solidified for the mutual benefit of our two peoples."

She later proposed a toast to the good health, long life and happiness of President Barack and Michelle Obama; the prosperity and well-being of the American people; and to the bonds of friendship and cooperation between the Republic of Liberia and the United States of America – wishing them 'Happy Independence Day, on the Fourth of July'!

Speaking earlier, U.S. Ambassador Malac, who is celebrating her last U.S. Independence Day in Liberia, recalled U.S.-Liberia relations in good and bad times.

She highlighted Liberia's fight against the Ebola virus disease, which she noted was an unexpected and unprecedented emergency that hit a region with few resources to address the threat. Ambassador Malac also praised the Liberian President. "Thanks to you, to the hard work of your government, and, most of all, to the grass roots efforts of community organizers, contact tracers, health workers, and the Liberian people – you kicked Ebola out of Liberia!"

Ambassador Malac said dealing with this extended emergency stalled the Government of Liberia's broader efforts to improve life for Liberians.

Reviewing what she believes are notable successes over the last three years that may have been obscured by the Ebola response, the U.S. Ambassador highlighted press freedom, organizing multiple successful elections, maintaining peace and stability, and Government's Agenda for Transformation plan that is making substantial progress.

"Long-term success will require the continued development of Liberia's governance institutions, with transparent

accountability, to ensure that the many needed infrastructure, energy, education, and public health projects stay on track, are sustainably funded, and regularly maintained,” Ambassador Malac emphasized.

She said just as she has seen progress during her three years in Liberia, it is her hope that even more positive developments are imminent, adding, “The United States stands ready to help Liberians help themselves.” To those who are impatient about the pace of change, Ambassador Malac offered these reminders – change is hard work, but many hands make light work. “Development, consolidation of democratic governance, and reconciliation are all processes that take time, but by working together, valuing differences and committing to the greater good progress comes more quickly,” she said.

She said, as in Liberia, the United States has had many ups and downs in its history: haven’t often failed to live up to its ideals, but they have never given up in their quest to overcome those shortcomings nor abandoned their collective commitment to look optimistically to the future; noting that noisily, publicly, and sometimes tragically, they have learned and are still learning to embrace their differences and to build on the strength of their diversity. “I hope that Liberians, too, will accelerate their own efforts to pull together in pursuit of their dreams, to provide better lives for their families and future generations,” she hoped, adding that Liberians must be confident in their own future and not expect that it will be “delivered” to them by a government or a partner. “The capacity is there; we saw it during the past year of Ebola. I urge you to find that collective spirit again to build a better Liberia,” Ambassador Malac urged.

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