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President Sirleaf Joins Clinton Global Initiative Event with Focus on Investing in Prevention

Embassy of the Republic of Liberia in the United States , Wed, Sep 30, 2015

(NEW YORK, U.S.A. – Sunday, September 27, 2015) On the margins of the United Nations General Assembly, President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, on Sunday, September 27, 2015, joined several global leaders at a special event organized by the Clinton Global Initiative that focused on many issues confronting the world today.

At the event held at the Sheraton Hotel in New York, representatives of governments, private sector, civil society, international organizations, discussed a wide range of issues including refugees, disease outbreaks, slavery, trafficking of women and children, terrorism, education, among many others.

According to a dispatch from New York, President Sirleaf and the Chief Executive Officer and Board Chairman of Merck & Company, a vaccine company, Mr. Kenneth C. Frazier, in sharing a panel moderated by former U.S. President Bill Clinton, specifically to discuss the topic: “Taking the Long View: Investing in Prevention,” with emphasis on the outbreak of infectious diseases around the globe and effort to prevent them.

Introducing the panel discussion, former U.S. President Bill Clinton told his audience that the United States of America has a special responsibility to Liberia because the country was created by free slaves from America and has had a longstanding traditional relationship and friendship.

He praised President Sirleaf for putting the country back on track after the devastating Ebola crisis; thanking her also for the declaration of Liberia as an Ebola free nation.

The Liberian President thanked former President Clinton and others who took the risk to visit Liberia during the Ebola crisis. “You took a very serious risk by coming to Liberia when the disease was still raging and I want to sincerely thank you for that,” she told former President Clinton.

She reflected on the bitter experiences Liberia faced as a result of the Ebola outbreak including the downturn of the economy, closure of schools, and the impact on the health and well-being of the people.

unknown nature of the disease.





President Sirleaf, however, pointed out that with the defeat of the virus and a declaration of freedom from the Ebola virus disease by the World Health Organization, Liberia is trying to rebuild and recover.

"Thanks to all who helped us to overcome the Ebola virus disease," she said, adding, "We can now put the pieces back together because already, investors are returning, contractors are back, children are back in school, etc.

She said government is committed to fixing the healthcare system, reforming the educational sector, fixing the infrastructure and investing in agriculture. "These are four basic pillars of our recovery program," President Sirleaf indicated.

The Liberian leader urged the world to support initiatives that strengthen healthcare systems and will address infection and ensure the prevention of diseases by ensuring there are no outbreaks in the first place.

President Sirleaf sees partnership, community involvement and leadership as key to the global effort to prevent infectious diseases. This, she said, involves training of community members, healthcare workers, including doctors and nurses. She also welcomed initiative by many institutions including Merck & Company towards the production of vaccines for many diseases, including Ebola.

The CEO of Merck & Company, Mr. Kenneth Frazier said his company invests about US\$7 billion annually on disease prevention programs, but noted that it requires 15 to 20 years to develop the drug. This, he said, makes their investment risky and urged the world to supplement companies such as his by investing in prevention and building primary healthcare systems. He announced that the company's Ebola vaccine program still requires further trials to be confirmed; but the down turn of the current outbreak makes more trials impossible.

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