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# Liberia Shines Again as President Sirleaf Becomes New Chair of ECOWAS; Sets Peace, Security and Institutional Reform as Priorities

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Dakar, Senegal – June 4, 2016: President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf has been elected on ‘white ballot by her colleagues at the 49th Ordinary Session of the Summit of the Authority of Heads of State and Government in the Senegalese capital Dakar where she immediately set out key priorities aimed at peace consolidation, security architecture, conclusion of negotiations and legal actions, the transformation of Vision 2020 and the improvement in financial stability. According to a dispatch from Dakar, Senegal, President Sirleaf’s election as Chairperson of the regional body comes on the heels of multifaceted challenges facing the Community ranging from terrorism, global economic meltdown, coupled with the recent Ebola outbreak. In her acceptance speech, president Sirleaf described her election as an indication of the progress and peace Liberia enjoys, which would not have been possible without the tremendous sacrifices and solidarity of the ECOWAS community. She commended her Senegalese counterpart, President Macky Sall, whose extraordinary leadership guided the work of the organization in the past year, paid tribute to Dr. Kadre Désiré Ouadraogo for the able manner in which he managed the affairs of the Community as President of the ECOWAS Commission, and congratulated his successor, His Excellency Marcel Alain de Souza and team as they assume their responsibilities. The Liberian Chief Executive historicized the 48th Summit of the Authority held in Abuja, marking the 40th Anniversary of ECOWAS, thus noting the achievements during the last four decades across all sectors – including the harmonization of macroeconomic policies, trade integration, regional infrastructure, peace and security, regional institutional development, democracy and the rule of law. President Sirleaf said as we move towards the achievement of such lofty goals, we are reminded that the Community faces both challenges and opportunities; such as the sharp reduction in commodity prices and the effect of epidemiological outbreaks which have resulted in a decline in investment and growth. Beyond financial difficulties, she indicated that growth is affected by terrorism, drug and human trafficking, piracy in the Gulf of Guinea and the impact of climate change. President Sirleaf indicated that it was important to take pride in the high potential of the ECOWAS Community for a vibrant integrated market which is currently estimated at the equivalent of US\$1.3 trillion produced by a wide range of activities in agriculture, commerce, industry and services. As President Sirleaf jump-starts her new post as Chairperson of the ECOWAS Authority, she laid out the consolidation of peace and security architecture, as guided by the Mechanism and other Protocols, and the need to work even harder as Member States to stem terrorism, strengthen intelligence capacity and enhance coordination with the African Union, the United Nations and other partner institutions. President Sirleaf extended sympathy to citizens of the Community victimized by the disastrous attacks and stressed the need to ensure that there will be no expansion of terrorism in THE sub-



region, as recently experienced in Burkina Faso, Mali and Cote D'Ivoire and A NIGHT AGO in Niger. She added that ECOWAS must also, through collective and determined efforts, ensure that Boko Haram is totally defeated. President Sirleaf called for the conclusion of negotiations and legal actions to enhance trade integration, but warned that failure to close the negotiations could lead to differentiation among Member States. She also called upon the remaining countries, which have not ratified and commence the enforcement of the Common External Tariff (CET) thereby deepening the potential for trade and productive integration in the Community to do so. Thirdly, the new Chairperson of the Authority of Heads of State proposed the ardent need to achieve transformation of Vision 2020 through agriculture and infrastructure adding, the impressive success of several ECOWAS countries in value addition in agriculture can be expanded and trade integration enhanced through the acceleration of the several ongoing regional projects in roads, energy, and railroads. She pointed out that during her tenure, the imperative will be to holistically improve financial stability through existing protocols and mechanisms, which call for financing the Community through contributions of the Community levy by Member States in order to meet the operational costs of the institutions and to respond to security emergencies such as those faced by peacekeeping troops in Mali and Guinea Bissau. She observed that recent financial difficulties imposed by global conditions have affected ECOWAS' ability to meet commitments despite tremendous efforts but however joined colleagues in commending His Excellency President Muhammadu Buhari for the relief brought by his recent expressed commitment to continue Nigeria's support to the community levy - stressing yet, we can do more. She further pointed out that there is space for cost saving through continued rationalization and reduction in the multiple activities and high benefits of community institutions for which she commended President de Souza for the important steps he has so far taken to achieve this objective. "We must institute A Call to Action to finalize the ongoing review of the restructuring of Community institutions", she underscored.

**Point to photo to read caption**





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