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Washington, D.C. – March 30, 2017: On March 24, 2017, a luncheon to celebrate the retirement of Dr. Johnnetta Betsch Cole, Director of the Smithsonian National Museum of African Art, was held at the historic and imposing Smithsonian Castle in Washington, D.C. The well-attended and impressive event started with a military ceremony by the Smithsonian Institution Honor Guard. Liberia's Minister of Gender and Development, Hon. Julia Duncan-Cassell, represented President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, who was invited as a special guest due to the long-standing relationship between the President and Dr.



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Cole. Minister Duncan-Cassell said President Sirleaf was delighted to receive the invitation to attend the retirement event because of her long-standing relationship with Dr. Cole, and because of Dr. Cole's contributions to the cause of Liberia, Africa and humanity in general. Dr. Cole has been personally connected to Liberia and Africa from the time she did her field studies in anthropology in Liberia and Nigeria several decades ago. The first of her children was born in Liberia. Before serving as Director of the Smithsonian National Museum of African Art, Dr. Cole had a long and distinguished career as an educator and humanitarian. Through her work as a college president, university professor, as well as her published works, speeches, community service and consultations with corporations and not-for-profit organizations, she consistently addresses racial, gender, and all forms of inequality. Dr. Cole served as President of Spelman College and Bennett College for Women. She is the only person to have served as president of these two colleges historically Black colleges for women in the United States. In her remarks, Minister Duncan-Cassell said, in recognition of her meritorious services to Liberia, Africa and humanity in general, the Government of Liberia will honor Dr. Cole during the celebration of the 170th independence anniversary of the Republic of Liberia this July. Minister Duncan-Cassell was accompanied by Hon. Gabriel I H Williams, Minister Counselor for Press and Public Affairs, who temporarily served as Charge' d'Affairs at the Embassy. Dr. Cole was appointed the Director of the Smithsonian National Museum of Art in March 2009. Some pictures follow:





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