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President Sirleaf Pre-Dedicates New Passenger Terminal, Runway at RIA

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Monrovia, Liberia: President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf said her government is fulfilling one of its key deliverables. She said the dedication of the new passenger terminal and runway will give the Robert International Airport (RIA) a new look and put Liberia on par with other international airports in the West African sub-region and the rest of Africa and world at large.

"In 2006, when we assumed the leadership of the country, we were faced with several hard choices; one of those hard choices was the RIA; we faced a runway constructed in the 1970s, with no periodic maintenance and therefore largely deteriorated - causing difficulties to landing planes. We also know that we had a terminal that had been destroyed and what was being used was really most in adequate for those coming to our country for various occasions. Then we looked to other needs of the country, schools, hospitals, payroll that needed to be met and met on time continually, power and water, all the things that came out of two decades of conflict and the destruction that resulted," President Sirleaf noted.

According to an Executive Mansion release, President Sirleaf made the statement on Monday, December 18, 2017 at the pre-dedication ceremonies of the RIA's Runway Rehabilitation, Upgrade and the RIA's New Passenger Terminal Building at the Robert International Airport in Unification City, Lower Margibi County. She used the occasion to pay tribute to the government and people of the People's Republic of China for their commitment and support to Liberia spearheaded by Ambassador Zhang Yue, Liberia's Ambassador to China, the Saudi Government, Thomas McKinley and the Legislature who contributed significantly, among others. She told the gathering her government remains committed to improving the infrastructure of the country despite the time left for the administration.

She expressed gratitude to Chinese Ambassador Zhang Yue, and through him to Chinese President Mr. Xi Jinping for the continued support provided Liberia and the partnership that "continues to grow stronger and stronger between China and Liberia." She stressed that China is always willing to demonstrate partnership. She also thanked China for bringing great relief to Liberia including the Ministerial complex and the Annexes at the Legislature.

The Liberian leader used the occasion to call on Liberians to embrace development and desist from hate and



false information and work together to be able to achieve adding: “It could not have happened if everyone involved did not play their part.” she said.

For his part, Chinese Ambassador, Zhan Yue said the RIA Airport project is a typical example of efficient cooperation and coordination among governments, financiers, contractors and supervisors in the process of approval and project implementation. Speaking further, he noted that with the rehabilitated runway, brand new passenger terminal building, Ministerial Complex and Annexes of the Legislature building, the Liberian government can provide better service to its people and improve capacity to facilitate the flow of passengers and goods. “I believe this can help usher in more airlines and inject dynamism to recovery of Liberia,” he added.

He congratulated President Sirleaf and noted that as a follow up of her visit to China and the Chinese Government and the EXIM Bank of China set up the new terminal building project in an unprecedented way.

In separate remarks, Ibrahim Al Sugair of the Saudi Fund for Development, Wil Bako Freeman, Managing Director of LAA thanked President Sirleaf for sustaining the peace and her commitment to development in Liberia and for the support. They expressed appreciation for the project and expressed the hope that the project will enhance the capacity of the government of Liberia.

The US\$50 million project is being financed by a loan from the China EXIM Bank and the construction is being undertaken by the China Harbor Engineering Company. Along with the construction of the passenger terminal, US\$30 million was earmarked for the rehabilitation of a runway which began in September 2016. That project is funded through loans and with financing from the Saudi Fund, the Arab Bank for Economic Development in Africa, and the Liberian government.

The ceremonies were attended by several senior government officials including Foreign Minister, Marjon Kamara, Justice Minister, Frederick Cherue, Finance Minister, Bioma Kamara, RIA Board Chairman, Gbehzongar Findley Information Minister, Eugene Nagbe Transport Minister, Samuel Wlue as well as international partners.







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