

**Remarks Delivered by H.E. President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf
At the Dedication of Gbarnga Justice and Security Regional Hub
Tuesday, February 12, 2013**

(As Delivered)

All Protocols have been duly observed.

Let me just say a special word to Ambassador [Staffan] Tillander; a special welcome to Ambassador [Guillermo] Rishchynski; to Assistant Secretary-General Judy Cheng-Hopkins; to all the members that have come from the Country Specific Configuration for Liberia and Sierra Leone.

We are pleased that our entire country will be covered through the five Hubs already identified by those who spoke before me. This landmark Hub initiative originates from the Liberia Peace-building Program, developed between our Government, the UN and national and international partners in November 2010 with the signing of the Statement of Mutual Commitment.

However, as was pointed out by Minister [Christiana] Tah, also by Minister [Blamoh] Nelson, in doing so we are doing much more than erecting and dedicating structures. The Hub Program is consistent with our new Agenda for Transformation and efforts to improve and reform the Justice and Security Sectors, while ensuring that the Government is prepared to sustain the peace in light of the UNMIL drawdown and transition.

The Justice and Security Regional Hub concept derives from the Government's initiative to decentralize these services through a regional and county-level approach. The Hub Program is proof that decentralization of our Justice and Security Sector is well under way, and that the security of the nation will be sustained, as more and more Hubs are constructed and become operational.

Each Hub is designed to increase citizens' access to justice and security by co-locating police, courts, and immigration services. The Hubs will also enhance Government's efforts to extend services from the Capital to outlying and previously underserved areas.

The opening of this first Hub, in the nation's heartland, is confirmation that we are committed about decentralization; we are committed to serving all over the country, ensuring all our citizens that Monrovia is not Liberia! The decentralization of governmental services to the people is another indicator of good governance. Citizens' access to justice and security lies at the heart of the rule of law, and is essential to political stability. Decentralization of public services is a key to extending state authority and ensuring that citizens have a stake in the governance of their country.

We know that, as part of the Liberia Peace-building Program – rule of law, security sector reform and reconciliation – one cannot exist without the other. In order for a

country to reconcile its differences, the people must first feel safe, and feel that they can rely on the security sector in time of crisis. The decentralization of security officers within a region to respond rapidly – one of the main services of the Hub – is exactly what provides that security.

However, as in other post-conflict countries, Liberia's institutions are still fragile. If peace is to endure, international support must be directed not only to traditional development sectors but also to ensuring access to justice and security service, thereby strengthening the rule of law and promoting national reconciliation.

In the case of rule of law, the idea is that funding from the Hub concept is being used to strengthen justice and security institutions within the region to effectively provide service to the people, and to also encourage a sense of collaboration and cooperation among the service providers, creating transparency and promoting accountability, thereby altering the perception of “us and them” in the Security Sector.

The Hub concept envisions justice and security in a holistic manner, whilst aiming to strengthen justice and security institutions that are a part of the criminal justice cycle – law enforcement, the courts, state prosecution and defense and corrections in terms of infrastructure and personnel capacity and to build interconnecting linkages between these institutions and the communities which they serve.

In closing, I want to thank our international partners. I want to thank the Liberia Country Specific Configuration, UN partners and bilateral donors who have worked tirelessly in mobilizing resources and providing technical support to make this concept a reality. The Hub benefits from financial support through the Peace-building Fund and bilateral donors through the Justice and Security Trust Fund (JSTF). Continued international financial support is consistent for achieving the goals of rebuilding our nation's security and rule of law institutions.

However, the primary responsibility for securing peace, for promoting reconciliation, for delivering development rests with us, Liberians, as a whole, in Liberian institutions which serve the people.

Let me also take this opportunity to thank the co-Chairs of the Justice and Security Board – the Minister of Justice, Cllr. Christiana Tah, who has championed this cause; the Acting Chief Justice Francis Korkpor, Sr., and Associate Justice [Philip] Banks for coming on board, for being there with us, for helping us to ensure that the criminal justice cycle is incomplete until there is an effective judicial system. We thank the DRSB for Rule of Law for partnering with them to make this a reality.

Ambassador Tillander, we accept your challenge of the progress that is to be made by 2014, when we expect you and your team – all of you – to be back to celebrate that progress.

Thank you.