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President Sirleaf Calls for Long-Term Recovery Plans for Ebola-Affect Countries

(NEW YORK, UNITED STATES OF AMERICA – Friday, July 10, 2015) President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf has emphasized that an effective long-term response to the Ebola virus disease will rest in plans and strategies for economic recovery and support for the transformation goals of the three countries worst-affected by the epidemic.

According to a dispatch from New York, the Liberian leader spoke Friday, July 10, 2015, when she delivered the Mano River Union (MRU) Recovery Plan at the International Ebola Recovery Conference at the United Nations Headquarters in New York. The conference was hosted by United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki Moon.

Speaking on behalf of the three countries worse affected by the Ebola virus disease (Liberia, Guinea, and Sierra Leone) President Sirleaf said in furtherance of the goal for long-term recovery, the 3rd Extraordinary Summit of the MRU, held on June 28, in Conakry, Guinea, adopted the sub-regional Post-Ebola Socio-Economic Program, as well as the institutional and financing framework to ensure an effective implementation of the plan.

The Liberian leader stressed that the MRU plan is clustered into two levels: Level One which is estimated at US\$1.76 billion, focuses on health, water, sanitation and hygiene, governance, peace and security, agriculture, fisheries and food security, gender, youth and social protection, among others; while Level Two focuses on sub-regional roads, energy access, information and communication technology estimated at US\$2.24 billion.

President Sirleaf renewed calls to the international community for the cancellation of the debt of US\$3.16 billion and also for direct budget support to the three worst-affected countries. "We also re-echo our call on the World Bank, the African Development Bank, and the United Nations System to support the establishment of a Special Delivery Unit within the MRU Secretariat, backed by a project preparation facility for the preparation of bankable projects for effective implementation of the program," she urged.

She pointed out that in terms of aggregate cost, the financing gap is estimated at US\$7.2 billion, of which US\$4 billion will finance the sub-regional plan.

The Liberian leader observed that while the resources required are significant, a strong Mano River Union can be a formidable force for recovery and resilience in the sub-region, which will attract private sector investment and capital in natural resources for sustainability and positive impact on regional stability and world trade.

She said the world as a whole has a great stake in how to respond together in this global threat, noting that the world is connected together than before, and that virus and diseases, just like terrorism, know no boundaries.

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