

# Liberia independence day

## Liberia moves forward to a phase of peace, stability

Youngor Telewoda  
AMBASSADOR OF LIBERIA

Liberia is again blessed with a year of peace and stability following decades of problems including the civil conflict that tore our nation apart. We have emerged from the catastrophic situation and are determined to do all in restoring our country to a united and whole nation again. As we celebrate the 164th independence anniversary, we consider this year's Independence Day a very special one because it takes place at the commencement of the 2011 presidential and legislative elections campaign.



Liberians embarked on an electoral journey six years ago that set the nation on a path of a peaceful political transition following the 14 years of conflict and destruction.

We defied the pessimism of cynics who doubted the capacity of the resilience of the Liberian people to hold a peaceful, democratic and transparent election. As a result of our defiance, we successfully elected

Africa's first female president, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf. Under her able leadership, Liberia has achieved successful results of considerable degree. The dividends of the peaceful state of affairs that have prevailed in our country for the past six years are clear: negative perceptions about Liberians by the outside world have since given way to international respectability; investors are coming in numbers beyond our most optimistic estimates and expectations.

The \$4.9 billion debt that strangled the country for two decades has been wiped clean. Liberia has reached the completion point for heavily indebted poor countries (HIPC) due in part to the level of international cooperation garnered from multilateral institutions.

Economic reconstruction has begun. Power has been restored to some parts of Monrovia, while the government is making every effort to rehabilitate the damaged hydroelectric plant that previously supplied the entire capital. Selected roads and bridges are being repaired with World Bank assistance. The international airport near Monrovia has seen some improvement



**Nature: Montserrado County in Liberia is home to many streams and rivers.** EMBASSY OF LIBERIA

and the following international airlines have resumed regular flights to Monrovia: Air France, Delta, Royal Air Maroc, Brussels Airlines and Kenya Airlines. Damaged facilities at the two major seaports, in Monrovia and Buchanan, have both been restored.

There has been major improvements in telecommunications. Currently, there are more than five mobile phone companies that have successfully been doing business in Liberia and in the last couple of years subscriptions have risen to over 500,000.

With the help of our development partners, more schools, hospitals and clinics have been built, water and sanitation facilities have been restored, multibillion dollar concession agreements for mining, agriculture and forestry have been signed.

Liberia has a free enterprise system and concrete steps have been taken to create an enabling environment for private-sector investment. According to the Liberian Investment Incentive Code of 1973, which is still in force today, special incentives are available to investors

in the following priority areas: manufacture or assembly of finished or semi-finished goods; agriculture, forestry and fishing; mining and quarrying; building and construction; electric, gas and water; transport and communications.

The government welcomes investors to respond to the numerous opportunities that are available in Liberia.

The government is committed to a market economy in Liberia and has made a policy decision to privatize state-owned enterprises. Potential candidates for privatization include the Liberian Electric Corp., the Water and Sewer Corp. and the Telecommunication Corp.

On behalf of the people and government of Liberia, let me seize this opportunity to reiterate our support for the people of Japan following the March 11 disaster. We pray that the people of Japan will continue to find strength, fortitude and their characteristic resilience to overcome their grief. Liberia attaches importance to the friendship and bilateral cooperation that has existed between Japan and Liberia for over 40 years.

Liberia feels deep sympathy

with the Japanese people for the loss of loved ones and widespread destruction caused by the earthquake, tsunami and nuclear disaster.

Japan stood by Liberians throughout their period of crisis by providing emergency humanitarian assistance. It has since engaged in Liberia's post-conflict reconstruction in very significant and substantial ways, including assistance toward the achievement of the United Nations' MDGs (Millennium Development Goals) rehabilitation of the Japanese-Liberian Friendship Hospital in Monrovia to help reduce maternal and child mortality rates, fight HIV/AIDS and malaria control.

Liberians admire the courage and resilience of the Japanese people. We are not surprised that Japan started to embark on its massive reconstruction. The government is prepared to make its modest contribution toward this massive undertaking.

Our country has an abundance of natural resources that it is ready to put to the disposal of Japanese companies as a source of supplies for reconstruction.

The government is inviting Japanese companies to exploit the rich timber and vast forests of Liberia for Japan's reconstruction and furniture making.

Japan's engagement in this area would help forge stronger links between the two econo-

mies and help deepen the existing cooperation between the two countries.

## Congratulations to the People of the Republic of Liberia on the 164th Anniversary of Their Independence Day



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