

Remarks at Investiture Ceremony for

Ambassador Attilio Pacifici

H. E. Excellency Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, President of the Republic of Liberia; the honoree, outgoing Ambassador of the European Union Delegation to Liberia

H. E. Attilio Pacifici; the Leadership and Members of the Legislature here present; the Chief Justice and Members of the Judiciary; Members of the Cabinet; Members of the Diplomatic Corps and our Development Partners; Members of Civil Society; Members of the Press; Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen:

I would first like to thank you, Madam President, for holding this investiture ceremony for one whose outstanding service to Liberia is undoubted and unforgettable.

I first met Ambassador Pacifici in 2009, early during my tenure as Minister of Planning & Economic Affairs. He had just arrived in Liberia, to meet a National Authorizing Office that fell short of the standard of a full Embassy in terms of staffing and capacity. At that time, our country's engagements with the European Commission were limited because we did not have a full EU Delegation in Liberia; and more importantly, the EU Delegation in Cote D'Ivoire was performing the duties of the National Authorizing Officer for Liberia, in managing the European Development Fund allocation for our country because our NAO powers had been revoked during the war. We met, and decided that our first goal as counterparts was to restore country ownership of EU development interventions, so that Liberia could optimally benefit from EU's support to our national recovery and development agenda.

Our first milestone was the signing of a Financing Agreement that would inject EUR 20 million into our National Budget as grant for macroeconomic stability. This was a tremendous display of support from the EU, as well as a demonstration of their confidence in Liberia's ability to efficiently and transparently absorb development assistance into our country systems. Ever since then, through his advocacy and commitment to Liberia, we have witnessed a gradual increase in direct budget support amounting to EUR 40 million and EUR 35 million in budget support for the health sector from the European Union.

This EUR 75 million constitutes support provided through our budget, and is only part of the total EUR 161 million we have received through the 10th EDF as support to the health, education, agriculture, infrastructure, fisheries and forestry sectors; and to capacity building for the General Auditing Commission and the Bureau of Customs and Excise.

In early 2013, we signed the Voluntary Partnership Agreement signed between with the EU whereby Liberia can export its forestry materials to EU at no cost. This agreement spans a six year period, from this year 2014 to 2020, during which we expect substantial revenue and job creation as we gain access to international markets for our natural resources.

With Amb. Pacifici's leadership, we are assured of the strong continuity of this level of support from the EU, as substantive investments were made in terms of financial and technical support to build the capacity of the NAO which manages the EDF and ensures transparency, mutual accountability and optimal allocation toward viable, impactful projects and programs. Having supported us in building a credible and competent NAO, we can now look forward to the next envelope of EU support in the amount of EUR 279 million, which constitutes the 11th EDF, set for

implementation from early next year up to 2020. This represents a 73 percent increase in the EDF allocation for Liberia.

The significance of this support lies not only in the substantial amount of funds provided solely as grant, but also the EU's exemplary commitment to pioneer in implementation of the New Deal on Development Assistance wherein bilateral and multilateral partners have committed themselves to channeling their support through country systems.

This is part of Amb. Pacifici's legacy in Liberia.

Another immensely important part of his legacy is the swiftness and impact of the EU's support to Liberia at a time when we needed all of our friends the most – when the Ebola Virus invaded our country. Ambassador Pacifici responded quickly by advocating strongly with the EU Headquarters in Brussels for increased budget support for Liberia. As a result, we have received more than US \$35 million as grant directly into our budget from the European Union, since the beginning of the crisis.

And finally, a happier memento by which we can all remember him lies in the construction of a permanent Office of the National Authorizing Officer, located on the Executive Mansion Grounds just a stone's throw away from here, totally financed by a grant from the European Development Fund. That building was dedicated just two days ago.

Ladies and gentlemen, Ambassador Pacifici was not only a partner, but he is a friend, a dependable friend and a true advocate for Liberia. And, as he leaves, I know that he will take us with him, continuing to advocate for and support us from afar. And as we stay behind, we remain committed to ensuring that his hard work and dedication pay optimal dividends and we build upon his work in Liberia.

Ambassador, we wish you and your family every possible success as you move on to your next assignment.