

**Opening Statement by H.E. President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf & Chair  
at the Launch of the High Level Panel on Fragile States  
ROYAL Grand Hotel, Monrovia  
Monday, September 2, 2013**

President Kaberuka;  
Ministers and Members of the High-Level Panel;  
Representatives of Governments, Civil Society, and Donor Agencies;  
Distinguished Guests;  
Ladies and Gentleman:

Greetings and welcome to Liberia. A particular welcome to those Ministers from outside of Africa, such as Minister Pires, and to our institutional partners. I hope that you have already experienced the great hospitality of the Liberian people. We are all here today to promote the spirit of optimism and the commitment through our work to enhance the efforts of states which are cultivating an environment that ensures growth, which is sustainable and inclusive, where capacity development, justice, equity and security are the building blocks.

It is an honor and pleasure for me to serve as Chair of this distinguished High-Level Panel and to host the formal launching of a process already well advanced in research, analyses and consultations aimed at formulating recommendations that will address the causes of continued fragility in too many countries, particularly in post-conflict states.

The analyses to date show clearly that fragility is rooted in poverty and that poverty is complex and multidimensional, reflecting a lack of access to financial resources and the essentials of well-being.

The analysis is equally clear that there are special circumstances of fragile states that need to be addressed: that sustainable development and inclusive growth, which take into account population dynamics, must support job creation; ensure healthy, skilled and educated individuals; provide greater fairness in access to natural resources; promote better equity among our youth and women; reduce inequalities; and increase social protection for the most vulnerable.

We do not accept the Brookings prediction that “that a third share of the world’s poor which lie in fragile states today will increase to half in 2018 and nearly two thirds in 2030.”

We do not accept that fragile states will continue to lack the capacity or the political will to achieve sustained growth thereby reducing the level of their volatility.

The new framework advocated by the New Deal on Fragile States calls for stronger Ownership, Harmonization, Results and Mutual Accountability as a response to that prediction. The AfDB is a signatory to this framework which establishes peace-building and state-building as a crucial foundation for progress in reducing the vulnerabilities of fragile states.

Similarly, the Report of the UN Secretary-General’s High-Level Panel on the Post-2015 Global Agenda argues that the gains in poverty eradication need not be irreversible. It calls upon the world to endorse “a vision and responsibility to end extreme poverty in all its forms in the context of sustainable development to put in place the building blocks of sustained prosperity for all. It promotes a global, people-centered and planet-sensitive agenda to address the universal challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century: promoting sustainable development, supporting job-creating growth, protecting the environment and providing peace, security, justice, freedom and equity at all levels.” Through the concepts of global partnership, the Agenda would place roles and responsibilities on government, civil society and the private sector.

The African Development Bank and particularly you, President Kaberuka, decided several years ago to take on the responsibility to provide the institutional leadership in addressing the special circumstances of Africa’s fragile states which are home to some 200 million people. You set the overall objective of forging new collaborations with international and national partners to better support integrated county transition compacts that address key linkages between peace-building, state-building and governance.

This objective goes beyond the conventional growth-driven poverty reduction by identifying interventions normally considered taboo such as support for the security sector.

We also want to thank you, Dr. Kaberuka, and the African Development Bank for your commitment to a transformative process through linkages across borders. The Mano River Union is a case in point. Because of our inter-related tradition and history, a national conflict quickly generates into a regional conflict with devastating consequences. Liberia and the three other countries – la Côte d’Ivoire, Guinea, Sierra Leone – all fragile states, have all faced some form of conflict.

We are pleased, in Liberia, that we are celebrating ten consecutive years of peace and that our overall region is now at peace. However, the risks to this peace continue as we are all in different stages of transition from post-conflict emergency reconstruction to long-term sustainable growth and development. We therefore believe that a regional fragile state intervention aimed at addressing the significant gaps in transportation and energy infrastructure, which have constrained an economic transformation, would create, at each national level, the value added and the employment, particularly among the youth, thereby accelerating the fight against poverty.

Dear Colleagues:

We have a full day ahead of us to discuss, through frank and honest exchanges, the many issues before us – whether they derive from the thought-provoking papers that will be presented today, or from general reflections. This will provide us a better understanding of the key challenges that poor nations face. More importantly, we should be able to identify some viable steps that will help to eliminate poverty.

The AfDB has taken the first bold step to reverse the entrapment of fragile states in poverty. The New Deal Agenda provides the new paradigm for achieving this objective. Our report, which must be bold, which must also identify the internal workings of the African Development Bank that need to be changed, must convince governments first to re-examine their role as a possible source of fragility. Our report must convince partners of the AfDB, both official and private, that their support is the right thing to do.

I thank you for listening.