

(As prepared)

**Statement by
H.E. President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf
At Symposium on Human Security
5th Tokyo International Conference for African Development
Yokohama, Japan
Sunday, June 2, 2013**

Excellencies;

Ministers;

Ladies and Gentlemen:

Human security is first and foremost about people feeling safe, secure and able to live to their full potential. Freedom from fear, a life without fear from violence or any sort of threat is the cardinal condition for human development second only to the right to live.

In Liberia, we have learned, in the hardest way, that without a sense of security, everything else is remote. In August of this year, we will celebrate ten consecutive years of peace. This has enabled us to put our economic and financial house in order, build a new army, restore a limited level of basic services and start building the institutions which provide justice, accountability and freedoms in an open society.

Yet, we cannot claim to be fully at peace, for we continue to be in a state of fragility recognizing that peace is more than the absence of war. Progress in achieving externally driven reforms is necessary, but insufficient requirement for sustained peace.

Poverty and unemployment, access to basic healthcare and access to education are as threatening to human security as other forms of institutional violence.

Countries, particularly those with conditions like my own must continue to stress that human security one that is about freedom from want, through empowerment and equity. It is about ensuring that all people have access to a full range of basic services; that they can find a livelihood and have a voice in determining the way they live; that their concerns are addressed and their priorities respected.

Human security is not just a moral issue for our times; it is also a potential imperative, the cornerstone of social stability and human development.

Human security is about reducing the level of poverty, the same basic principles – protection and empowerment – were keys to the United Nations Secretary General High Level Panel’s approach and are clearly articulated in the vision to “end extreme poverty in all its forms in the context of sustainable development and put in place the building blocks of sustained prosperity for all.”