

Keynote Address
Delivered By
Ambassador Joseph Nyuma Boakai, Sr.
Vice President of the Republic of Liberia
On Behalf of
President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf
at the Launch of the
Youth Entrepreneurship and Employment Project (YEEP)



Saturday, August 19, 2017
Kakata, Margibi County, Liberia

Speaker Nuquay and Members of the National Legislature;
Minister N'Tow & Officials of the Ministry of Youth & Sports; Other
Members of the Cabinet Present; Superintendent Buway and the
Margibi County Leadership; Representative of the African Development
Bank; The Lord Mayor and Other Municipal Authorities;
Representatives of Other Development Partners; Our Dear Youths of
Liberia; Members of the Press; Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen:

Let me first of all thank the Almighty God for the gift of life and the years
of peace we have enjoyed as a people under this Government.

It is now becoming customary that Kakata plays host to historic events
involving our youth. This same City was the birthplace of the youth's

KAKATA DECLARATION--that solemn affirmation made by Liberian youths over a decade ago, in 2005.

Back in March of 2013, we were here again for the great occasion of the launch of the LIBERIA YOUTH EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM (LYEP). This very good program that put thousands of youth at the service of city corporations of 26 of our cities around the country.

Had it not been for budgetary constraints that stifled such good initiative, several youth would have by now been more productively employed, empowering them to make greater contributions to nation building.

It was not a good feeling to see that Program, which was run under the supervision of the Steering Committee that I chaired, abandoned due the global financial squeeze that negatively impacted our ability to sustain it. And so, as I join you this morning in representation of President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, I want to thank all and each of you for your role played in making this country peaceful.

Each of us has a role in keeping the peace and security of our country even as we draw closer to our general elections. This should mean very much for the youth of the nation, that segment that makes up the bulk of our national population, whose future we need to secure and protect.

Facts will show that Youth Empowerment has always been a focus for this Government since its inception. It remains cardinal for our overall national development, peace and security. In the past several years, we have taken numerous important initiatives to empower our youth through employment opportunities.

This Government launched the Youth Employment Skills project in 2010 with support from the World Bank. This project benefited over 58,000 youth across the country.

As noted earlier, in 2013, we launched the Liberia Youth Employment Program, for the first time as a national program, targeting 20,000 youth across the country. Also, the National Youth Service Program, with support from the UN—specifically UNICEF and UNFPA--benefited

over 1,000 volunteers who participated in the program and thousands more in the receiving communities.

We have had chains of cadets benefiting from the National Cadet Program sponsored by the Government and Mercy Corps respectively. More than 600 young graduates have benefited from this job readiness and skills development through mentorship and on the job coaching. Some of these young people are currently serving in prominent positions through our civil service.

Earlier this year, on January 9, 2017, I launched the Youth Opportunities Project (YOP) at the Paynesville City Hall. That project is targeting 15,000 vulnerable youth across the country.

All these should sufficiently evidence the fact that the Unity Party-led Government of President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf places premium on not only in empowering our youth, but also ensuring that all Liberians are provided with job opportunities.

Today, we are here to officially launch the Youth Entrepreneurship and Employment Project (YEEP). The main goal of this Project, I understand, is to contribute towards youth employment in Liberia. This will be achieved by strengthening the capacities of selected institutions, to enable them design and deliver entrepreneurship and employment generation programs.

These will in turn improve youth skills, thereby enhancing the ability of the economy to absorb them as productive entrepreneurs and/or skilled workers. The select institutions are the Booker Washington Institute in Kakata, the Nimba County Community College in Sanniquellie, and the University of Liberia in Monrovia.

At the Booker Washington Institute, this project will support the design of a course content and training modalities of selected disciplines in agriculture, auto-mechanic, construction and electrical. The new course content will include skills in entrepreneurship and job readiness and 15 TVET Instructors will be selected based on an agreed criteria, to undergo an intensive training of trainers program, which will include field visits and industrial attachment.

At the University of Liberia, this project will support graduating students by making them work-ready in terms of awareness and experience in the corporate world, as well as information of job market requirements. A Training of Trainers (ToT) for at least 10 lecturers will be conducted at the beginning of the program, and thereafter, the lecturers will undergo an on-going training to the end of the project.

At the Nimba County Community College, the project will focus on three interventions, Development of an Entrepreneurship Centre and Course, Development of graduate entrepreneurship program, and Business Incubation and Growth.

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

The launch of another major youth employment and empowerment program this year, should send a strong message to the Liberian people that this government is determined to empower the youth of our country. It is also meant to send a clear and strong message that, our country is on course and bouncing back very strongly, in spite of the ravages that faced us from the Ebola epidemic.

Finally, as we launch the Youth Entrepreneurship and Employment Project today, I want to thank all of you for your support and contributions. Particularly, I want extend my special thanks to our development partners; mainly the African Development Bank, through the African Development Fund Transition Support Facility (TSF PILLAR III), and the Fund for African Private Sector Assistance (FAPA) that provided the funding for this project.

In closing, I want to be humble and thankful to the Liberian people for your continue support and participation in government initiatives over the years. I urge you to take ownership of this project because, it is only through your involvement and ownership that this project will achieve its intended objectives.

Let me thus, on this 19th day of August 2017, take the honor and pleasure to officially launch the Youth Entrepreneurship and Employment Project,--re-echoing our call to duty, and reaffirming our

social contract with our people, especially our youth. We do this launch with great optimism and hope that it will yield its desired objective in the supreme interest of the generation we prepare to take over from us.

Surely success will be the outcome if we THINK LIBERIA, LOVE LIBERIA, AND BUILD LIBERIA!

I thank you all!!!