

Ship Report

20 January 2006 | Monrovia, Liberia



Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf inaugurated as president of Liberia

Liberians lined the streets of Monrovia, dressed in their best clothes and filled with a quiet anticipation and excitement. Around the city, market stalls were empty, and only a few cars dotted the normally-crowded streets.

People's attention was elsewhere. Their country—mainly known, over the past two decades, for its civil war—was, on that day, home to the world's biggest and most hopeful news event.

On Monday, 16 January, Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf took the oath of office, becoming president of this nation of more than three million people. She represents the people's hope for a new Liberia—a nation once known as Africa's most stable country, but more recently recognized only for its devastation.

Mrs. Johnson-Sirleaf, the first female ever to be elected as head of state in Africa, has plans to change that view of her country.

The inaugural ceremony was held on the Capitol grounds, overlooking the Liberian government's legislative, judicial, and executive buildings. Mrs. Johnson-Sirleaf

shared her vision with a crowd of about two thousand Liberians and an international delegation that included Nigerian president Olusegun Obasanjo, South African president Thabo Mbeki, American First Lady Laura Bush and Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, and dignitaries and representatives from nearly thirty other nations.

She opened her six-year term with a powerful inaugural address that included promises of change and hope for the people of Liberia: *"We pledge to live up to your expectations of relating a government that is attentive and responsive to your needs, concerns, and the development and progress of our country. We know that your vote was a vote for change: a vote for peace, security, and stability; a vote for individual and national prosperity; a vote for healing and leadership. We have heard you loudly, and we humbly accept your vote of confidence as a mandate."*



She continued: *"My fellow citizens, my presidency shall remain committed to serve all Liberians, without fear of favor. I am president for all the people of the country.... We will be inclusive and tolerant, ever sensitive to the anxieties, fears, hopes, and aspirations of all our people, irrespective of ethnic, political, religious affiliation and social status. By their vote, the Liberian*

people have sent a clear message: they want peace, they want to move on with their lives.... We are a good people, we are a kind people, we are a forgiving people, and we are a God-fearing people.

“So let us begin anew, moving into a future that is filled with promise, filled with hope. When union is strong, success is sure. We cannot, we must not, we will not fail.”

