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## President Sirleaf On Maintaining Peace in Africa

### **Liberia Government** (Monrovia)

NEWS

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Monrovia

Liberian President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf says Africa must take responsibility for maintaining peace on the continent. The President said, long gone are the days of the non-interference, when Africa countries stood by while conflicts engulfed their neighbors. The events of recent years, President Johnson Sirleaf observed, have proven that if provided adequate support, Africa could ably tackle conflict situations on the continent.

According to Presidential Press Secretary, Cyrus Wleh Badio, who traveled with the President to Freetown, the Liberian leader made the remarks when she addressed local and foreign journalists on the outskirts of the Sierra Leonean capital, following bilateral talks with the British Prime Minister, Tony Blair.

President Sirleaf lauded Prime Minister Blair for the stance taken in the Sierra Leonean conflict when that country intervened to stop the carnage five years ago. Sierra Leonean President, Tejan Kabbah was also full of praises for the Outgoing Prime Minister and his country's assistance in helping Sierra Leone recover from years of destruction.

Mr. Blair concurred with the two Mano River Union leaders, saying his country's intervention helped stop those he referred to as gangsters, criminals and terrorists, who raped women and created mayhem in the country. "Had we fail to intervene" the Prime Minister argued 'the impact would have been grave not only for this country or the region but for the world.' No matter how tough and detrimental the decision is, the British Prime Minister said, it is better to intervene than wait until a conflict spills out of control.

Mr. Blair said, he shared President Johnson Sirleaf's view that Africa must take responsibility for peace on the continent. Developed countries, the British Prime Minister said, must however, provide funding, training, equipment and logistics to ensure the mission's success.

He praised the level of progress taking place in Liberia and Sierra-Leone and urged the West to step up and support ongoing initiatives. On Sierra-Leone, the Prime Minister acknowledged the challenges facing the country, but said much progress has been made compared to what obtained five years ago when the country was being taken over by gangsters. "Politics is all about making a difference, and I believe a difference has been made in Sierra-Leone."

The meeting with the British Prime Minister, by President Johnson Sirleaf, is the latest round of discussions with leading members of the G-8, ahead the Group's upcoming meeting in Germany in June. Liberia is seeking the waiver of its multi-lateral debt owed the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the African Development Bank.

The President last week held talks in Berlin with the German Chancellor, Angela Merkel and the new French President Nicholas Sarkozy. President Johnson Sirleaf returned to Monrovia Wednesday evening following the discussions with Mr. Blair.

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