



WELD LIBERIA GRADUATION

July 20, 2013

GRAND BASSA COMMUNITY COLLEGE

KEYNOTE ADDRESS

Axel M. Addy

MINISTER

MINISTRY OF COMMERCE & INDUSTRY

REPUBLIC OF LIBERIA



***“EMPOWERING OUR YOUTH THROUGH DEMAND DRIVEN TECHNICAL
VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING (TVET) A MAJOR
CONTRIBUTION TO ENSURING INCLUSIVE GROWTH IN LIBERIA”***

Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Republic of Liberia

Remarks by

Honorable Axel M. Addy

Minister

July 20, 2013

Grand Bassa Community College

Buchanan, Grand Bassa County, Liberia

Madam Superintendent of Grand Bassa County,
President Pro Temp, Senator Findley and other members of the Grand Bassa Caucus,
Officials of Government,
Members of the traditional council,
The GBCC Family,
The UNIDO Family and our other partners present,
Members of the Private Sector,
Our Distinguished Graduates of the WELD-Liberia Program
Members of the Fourth Estate,
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen.

Good morning and thank you for your presence here today.

I am honored to be here today to join you all in celebrating the result of your hard work and commitment in participating in the WELD-Liberia program.

We commenced this journey in 2012 when a needs assessment for job placement in the industrial sector was conducted. The results of the assessment revealed a high demand for a TVET program in the areas of welding, heavy-duty mechanics and other technical fields. Survey result indicated that 85% of those employed in the industrial sector, particularly mining were foreign nationals. However, employers seem very interested in

identifying and recruiting Liberians with capacity to equally serve in those areas. The demand for skilled welders, heavy-duty mechanics appear to be very high.

Recognizing this demand, we commenced discussions with UNIDO to assist with designing a program that will begin to provide some basic training for our youth in these high demand areas. Thanks to the support of the Japanese Government, the WELD-Liberian program was launched targeting the training of 300 youth in welding, heavy-duty mechanics and other fields. Thanks to the GBCC leadership, Grand Bassa is one of the primary beneficiaries of the WELD Liberia Program. I am happy to be here today to say thanks to all of you who made this a possibility.

Ladies and gentlemen, the road called transformation is not an easy one. The challenges for our small country are immense. However, these challenges present the greatest opportunity for innovations. We are fortunate to have a dynamic, compassionate and committed leader in Her Excellency Ellen Johnson Sirleaf to lead our walk down this very very difficult road.

Today we live in a Liberia where the majority of our population is under 25. We live in a Liberia where it is cheaper to import commodities than to produce it here because of the very high cost of energy. We live in a Liberia where our farmers spend their time and energy to produce the food we need only for them to experience huge post harvest losses because we lack the adequate roads to transport what they grow to the markets. The Liberia we live in is traumatized, where our young and old languish in abject poverty and despair.

Ladies and gentlemen, distinguished graduates, these challenges among others pose a unique opportunity for us to look within ourselves and to paraphrase the words of US President John F. Kennedy, ask not what Liberia can do for us, but what we can do for Liberia. Today we celebrate your answer to that very question. Today we celebrate your waking up every morning to make it to class, your attentiveness to your lessons, your teachers' commitment to getting their messages across, holding your hands to new discoveries.

Today as you sit here as graduates wondering what's next, do not forget what you have done for Liberia – you went out and got an education, a training that opens up opportunities for you in ways you can only imagine. I encourage you to dream and dream big as our President would say, let your dream scare you. Remain committed to

improving your skills, go knocking on doors, there may be hundreds of NOs, but remain committed because it will only make the ONE YES more rewarding. As in the African proverb, it is by trying many times that the monkey will learn to jump from the tree. So never give up.

We will be there with you. We are committed to promoting you to our many concessions and manufacturers. We are finalizing a directory containing the names and information of all of you to share with the private sector to encourage them to use your services. Some of you may go into business for yourselves. We will do our best to promote you through our Micro Small and Medium Enterprises Division.

Ladies and gentlemen, despite the many challenges in our economy, we are beneficiaries of huge foreign direct investments and good will. It is our sole responsibility to ensure that as we experience growth in our economy, that growth is inclusive. Therefore as a government we remain committed to the execution of demand driven TVET programs that will ensure that our people, particularly our youth, would benefit from this growth in our economy. As in the words of US President Franklin D. Roosevelt, once faced with the tremendous challenge of youth unemployment, “we cannot always build the future for our youth, but we can build our youth for the future.”

Ladies and gentlemen, the Liberia we dream to live in the future lies in what we do in the Liberia we currently live in. Our youth today is our hope for that brighter future tomorrow. We must continue to invest in them and build them for the future.

Let me again extend my thanks and appreciation to the UNIDO family, the government of Japan, our private sector partners, the County Leadership, the Ministry of Commerce and Industry team and most importantly the teachers and graduates of the WELD Liberia program.

Thank you. God Bless You and God Bless Our Republic.