

Speech by Madam Paulita C.C. Wie, Deputy Minister for Urban Affairs, Ministry of Internal Affairs, marking the birth anniversary of the late President William V.S. Tubman. Harper City, Maryland County

Thursday, November 29, 2018

Hon. Superintendent and his cabinet, Officials of Government, our traditional leaders and governors, market and rural women, chiefs, students, the business community, members of the Press, Fellow Citizens of Maryland County, Distinguish Ladies and Gentlemen.

I bring you greetings from His Excellency, Dr. George Manneh Weah, President of the Republic of Liberia, Hon. Varney Sirleaf, Minister of Internal Affairs, and in my name and family.

Today, as we mark the 123rd birth anniversary of Liberia's longest serving President, William V. S. Tubman, it is imperative that we pay attention to his many achievements, the reason for which his birthday was declared a National Holiday by an act passed by the 42nd Liberian Legislature in 1971.

Regarded as the father of "Modern Liberia",

President Tubman during his Presidency made two very important achievements: He attracted enough foreign investments that ultimately led Liberia to economic prosperity and massive infrastructure development, as well as introducing a policy of national unification, something that initiated the bond between Indigenous Liberians, and Americo-Liberians. Despite his ancestral links to free-slaves from the United States, a young Tubman whose father was a straight disciplinarian always aimed for higher heights; putting Liberia at the center of all his career pursuits. He represented his beloved Maryland County in the Liberian Senate; holding the record as the youngest Senator in Liberia's history. He fought for the rights of indigenous tribal groups. Young Tubman served Liberia in many capacities; Legal Adviser to Vice President Allen Yancy, Lawyer representing Liberia at the League of Nations and Associate Justice of the Supreme Court of the Republic of Liberia. After diligently serving in many capacities, William V.S. Tubman became President of the Republic of Liberia in 1944. Liberia owe much of its international recognition today to the late President William V. S. Tubman. Under the Tubman regime, and with his developmental agenda known as the "Open Door Policy," Liberia experienced significant economic growth. In fact, during the 1950s, Liberia had the second highest rate of economic growth in the world; only second to the United States of America. Our nation's GDP was higher than that of Japan which is today one the nation with the highest economic growth. Liberia under President William V. S. Tubman had the highest commercial trade in the world, it was the world's largest exporter of rubber, and the world's third highest exporter of iron ore. By the time President Tubman died in 1971, he had attracted more that US\$1 billion in direct foreign investment, a record for a small West African Country. Although there were some who disagreed with President Tubman Authoritarian style of leadership, however, Liberia owe its modern infrastructure development to the Tubman regime. The Tubman regime saw the construction by then of one of Africa's largest referral Hospital; the John F. Kennedy medical Center; roads and bridges were constructed and connected many parts of Liberia that were cut off from the nation's capital, seaports were built which boosted the Liberian economy

to a great extent, new buildings eclipsed the Monrovia skylines, while a vibrant private sector through mineral and manufacturing companies, and private investments was built. While we can boast of President Tubman's economic achievement endlessly, the real point in celebrating his birthday is his quest in reconciling Liberians through his "National Unification Policy."

Under President Tubman National Unification Policy, the divide and differences that existed between Indigenous Liberians and Americo-Liberians were terminated. For the first time, women were permitted to vote, while indigenous people who had been sidelined in Liberian Politics for ages were also accorded the right to vote. President Tubman was the progenitor of what many of us indigenous Liberians enjoy today. Because of President Tubman's Unification Policy, we had our first native President (Samuel K. Doe) in 1985, and up to today, we have not just a native son as President, but a great and brilliant son from the Southeast Region in person of His Excellency, President George Manneh Weah aka the country giant. A son who I served as Peace Ambassador and brought peace, proud and unity to mama Liberia and Africa.

President Tubman opened doors of opportunities for many indigenous Liberians; famously appointing Mr. Momolu Dukuly as the first native Liberian to the post of Foreign Minister. He broke barriers by bringing Native and Americo-Liberians to the same dining table. President Tubman empowered many native Liberians and injected them into the governance structure of the country. He gave a new meaning to unity, and validated the world cooperation. In President Tubman's eyes, there were not two types of Liberians; all Liberians were Liberians. In remembrance of the celebration of this day, it is important for all of us Liberians to take cue from the late Tubman, President Weah and many great Liberians reconciliatory and unifying approaches.

A country that still has many challenges in all sectors, adequate solution to our many problems can only be done through a collective approach and with peace and stability; that approach calls for unity. Let us avoid divisive rhetoric that will sink our country into an abyss of disunity, and focus more on working to move our country forward by supporting President George Manneh Weah Pro-poor Agenda for Prosperity and Development. It is a fact that we cannot all have the same political ideologies and principles. President Barack Obama once said, and I quote, "We all, Democrats and Republicans want the same thing for America, but we just express our ideas differently." Like President Obama, I am saying here today that we all want the same thing for Liberia, but we just have different ways to express it. In fact, diverse political views is the foundation of a working democracy. However, our democracy will be threatened and weakened if we continue to make divisive utterances. Despite our political, social or religious background, we are all dwelling under the umbrella called Liberia. Only a strong united country can foster national development. If things are scattered internally, it would be impossible to effectively compile all the ideas that are needed to drive the country forward.

This call for unity and reconciliation is not just a call for the national level. This has to start from our families, neighborhoods, local government and onward transfer to national government. It is time that we just don't sit and talk unity. It should be seen in our actions. Let unity be portrayed in our towns, villages and cities. Let unity be shown among Chiefdoms and Klans. Let unity be shown among Town Chiefs, Mayors and Superintendents. Let unity be shown in our schools and

churches. Let Unity emerge in the markets, among pen-pen boys; let is flow from the beautiful shores of Cape Palmas, to the lovely view of Lake Piso. It is only with genuine unity and reconciliation we can succeed as a nation. Let all of us put our hands around this government and support President Weah to make sure that Liberia get on a forward march to prosperity. It is not about political supremacy; it is about Liberia. Let us all keep the legacy of President Tubman flowing. He was a uniting force. Like the late President Tubman, President Weah has taken the baton of reconciliation. Let us support his efforts in that regard. President Tubman left a legacy. Let us all live his legacy. God bless you all. God bless President Weah and God bless mama Liberia. Thank you for selecting me as your keynote speaker, I'm humbled, grateful and remain committed to this county. God bless the people of Maryland County and mama Liberia. Thank you and blessed November 29!!!!