

REMARKS BY HIS HONOR FRANCIS S. KORKPOR, SR.
CHIEF JUSTICE, SUPREME COURT OF LIBERIA
AT THE DEDICATION CEREMONY OF THE EIGHT JUDICIAL
CIRCUIT COURT COMPLEX, SANNIQUELLIE, NIMBA COUNTY

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 2, 2017

Her Excellency Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, President of the Republic of Liberia;
My Colleagues of the Supreme Court of Liberia;
The Co-chairman and other Members of the Nimba Legislative Caucus;
Mr. Minister of Justice;
The DSRSG for Rule of Law, UNMIL;
Judges of Courts of Record and Non-Record;
Madam Court Administrator and Staff of the Judiciary;
Mr. Superintendent and other County Officials;
Chiefs and Elders;
Members of the Press;
Distinguished Ladies & Gentlemen:

It is my pleasing duty, on behalf of the Supreme Court and the Judiciary, to welcome all of you to this dedication ceremony of this judicial complex. I thank you for honoring our invitation with your physical presence.

Madam President, in November 2015, when I invited you to the groundbreaking program for the construction of this court complex, I did so knowing fully well that you are a person who is not so keen on groundbreaking; you rather dedicate a project as a sign of real, tangible development. But I assured you at the time that this project was real, and that it would be completed on schedule. I furthered assured that you would be invited to dedicate this project before you leave office

at the end of your administration. So here we are today, ready to open the facility for public use.

We thank God Almighty; for without Him our plan and dream would not have come through. And we thank you, Madam President, for the support your administration has given to the Judiciary over the years, especially to the rule of law programs. Funds for the construction of this complex were provided exclusively by the Government. This is a practical demonstration of your administration's commitment to ensure that the Judiciary is empowered so that it will always remain that Branch of Government on which our democracy is firmly anchored.

This judicial complex houses the Eighth Judicial Circuit Court, Nimba County. This is where we are now, holding this program. You will see, during a guided tour, that this main building also houses the Debt Court, the Traffic Court, the Tax Court, the Revenue Court and the Magistrate Court, all of Sanniquellie. There are offices for the County Attorney, the Public Defenders and City Solicitors. There is an area for the petty jury and the grand jury. The area for the petty jury is divided into sections, one for male jurors and the other for female jurors.

Also on this compound is a separate structure that houses Criminal Court "E". This is the court that deals with sexual gender based violent cases. These are mostly rape cases. We also have a separate structure that serves as living quarters for the resident circuit judge of this county and the assigned circuit judge who will preside here.

We in the Judiciary are exceedingly delighted today to dedicate this beautiful court facility. This facility will afford judges, staff of the judiciary and other stakeholders in the rule of law sector the opportunity to work in an improved environment that should enhance their productivity. The availability of many courts and offices in one central location will make it easy for party litigants to come to the court of their choice; it will make it easy for judicial actors to coordinate activities for the disposition of cases; and it will provide easy access to justice as contemplated by the law. The ultimate intent is to ensure speedy and quality service in the dispensation of justice.

Moreover, this facility promotes the concept of judicial independence. It is time that the Judiciary, an independent branch of government, is housed in its own facilities throughout the country, conducive for work and free from outside influences.

We should note that the scope and size of each judicial complex we construct depend on the case load of the particular judicial circuit. Nimba County is a very large county with fast growing population and caseloads. It therefore deserves a large judicial complex, such as the one we are dedicating today. The building that was used to house the Eighth Judicial Circuit Court, Sanniquellie, Nimba County does not belong to the Judiciary and was never intended as a court facility. As such, it lacks the required space and accommodation for judicial actors. Other subordinate courts in Sanniquellie were also being operated not only in less than suitable facilities, but they were in properties rented from private individuals who are potential litigants before the courts. This practice has the propensity to

compromise the independence of the Judiciary. Furthermore, with the construction of this court complex, Government will now be relieved from the burden of continually paying rentals for private properties that housed the many subordinate courts in this area.

Madam President, my Colleagues, distinguished ladies and gentlemen, we feel proud to say that this is the fifth judicial complex we now have within the Judiciary. Of course, the first and most elaborate judicial complex is the Temple of Justice in Monrovia. It houses the Supreme Court and many subordinate courts and contains offices for several judicial actors. The main building was constructed in 1965 and over the years additional court facilities were built on the premises to cope with the rising demand in caseloads. We have a judicial complex within the Security Hub in Gbarnga, Bong County that houses the Ninth Judicial Circuit Court in Bong County; there is a judicial complex in Bopolu, Gbapolu County; another one in Greenville, Sinoe County; and today we are dedicating this complex here in Sanniquellie, Nimba County.

There is a judicial complex nearing completion in Tubmanburg, Bomi County; I am informed that it could be ready for use in October this year. And there is another judicial complex nearing completion in Zwedru, Grand Gedeh County which could be ready in December this year.

Besides the judicial complexes, we are also constructing magistrate courts throughout the country. On February 27, 2017, we dedicated a new magistrate court in Karnplay, Nimnba County. This is one of the four magistrate courts constructed with funds provided by the Swedish Government through the Justice

and Security Trust Fund. The other three magistrate courts are nearing completion in Botota, Bong County; Vahun, Lofa County; and the OMEGA Tower Area, Paynesville City, Montserrado County. Under the Quick Impact Program of UNMIL, a new magistrate court has been completed in Todee, Montserrado County. It will be dedicated soon. We will not relent until all judicial circuits have judicial complexes, and all magisterial districts have magistrate courts. In this way, the rule of law will truly be accessible to all across the country.

Let me place this caveat! The Judiciary purchased a total of four acres of land for the construction of this court complex; we have a valid title deed for this property. But the entire four acres were not enclosed in concrete fence; about an acre of land remains behind the concrete fence that has been enclosed in mesh wires. We warn the public of any encroachment. If anyone claims ownership to this land or any portion thereof, let that person take us to court and he/she will be accorded full due process. But we will not permit criminal trespass on these premises. We sound this warning in light of past experience when land purchased by the Judiciary for court purposes was encroached upon by unscrupulous persons during the war years in this county.

Finally, as we move into this magnificent court house to administer justice, I call on those concerned to truly do justice to the litigants that will come before them. As I have said time and time again, it is not the beautiful building that we celebrate at such a program. It is the presence of the rule of law that we celebrate. May the rule of law take root and flourish in this judicial complex. May God endow those

who will work here with the wisdom and fortitude to always do the right thing. And may He bless the Judiciary and save our country.

I THANK YOU.