

**ADDRESS BY THE CHAIRMAN OF COUNCIL PROFESSOR JONAS A. S.
REDWOOD-SAWYERR AT THE FORMAL OPENING OF THE 58TH ANNUAL
COUNCIL MEETING IN MONROVIA LIBERIA ON TUESDAY MARCH 23,
2010**

Your Excellency, the Vice President of the Republic of Liberia

Honourable Ministers

The Lord Mayoress of Monrovia

Your Excellencies, Members of the Diplomatic Corps

The Vice Chairman of Council

Chief Government Nominees

The Registrar to Council

Other Members of Council

Members of the Board of Trustees of the Endowment Fund

Heads of National Office

Staff of Council

Parents and Guardians of Awardees

Recipients of Awards

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen

It is my pleasure to join the Mayoress and the Registrar to welcome you to this glorious occasion of the formal opening of the 58th Annual Meeting of The West African Examinations Council. I consider it a rare privilege to register our gratitude to Her Excellency, Mrs. Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, President and Commander-In-Chief of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Liberia, who has deemed it worthwhile to do honour to our organization by accepting our humble invitation to

personally declare open the 58th Annual Council Meeting but who, because of international commitment as host to the ECOWAS meeting, is represented by the Vice President, Dr. Joseph N. Boakai. Mr. Vice President, I welcome you most warmly on behalf of Council and wish you success in all your endeavours.

It is a joyful celebration for me, and I am sure for all delegates, that it has pleased God Almighty to make it possible for us to sit together once again in this beautiful city, in an atmosphere of peace, to deliberate on issues affecting the future of our youth in the West African sub-region. I must congratulate the President, and her visionary government, on the heart-warming peace and progress that have been recorded in Liberia since she assumed leadership of this great nation. I must also commend you, Mr. Vice President, for the supportive role you have played in the realisation of the vision of Her Excellency, the President.

The Council Meeting is an annual event which pulls together delegates from all the five member countries of the Council namely, The Gambia, Ghana, Liberia, Nigeria and Sierra Leone. Delegates from each of these countries include the Government nominees and the representatives of Universities, Conference of Principals of Secondary Schools and other interests.

'Council' is the highest decision-making organ of The West African Examinations Council. Council meets once each year to review the activities and operations undertaken by the five National Offices in the member countries during the preceding year. It receives and considers reports from its International Committees, which have responsibility for overseeing various aspects of its operations, and ratifies the decisions taken on its behalf by these Committees in the year under review. It considers action plans by its Offices and Committees and sets the Agenda for the successful execution of its mandate in the year ahead.

The mandate given to this organization fifty-eight years ago is to determine the examinations required in the public interest in the five Anglophone West African Countries, to conduct such examinations and award certificates of international standard. I am confident to say that with the support of member governments and the cooperation received from stakeholders in education, Council has so far carried out these functions creditably in the member countries.

Council's responsibility increases each year in scope and intensity in the sub-region. Our examinations were successfully conducted for 2,548,071 candidates in 2007, a total of 2,775,506 candidates in 2008 and 2,811,757 candidates in 2009. These examinations include the international examination – West African Senior School Certificate

Examination (WASSCE), the national examinations and the examinations conducted on behalf of other examining boards.

As part of its commitment to the development of education, Council produces copious statistics on the results of the various examinations, which are made available for public information and academic research purposes, as well as for policy planning and implementation by government departments and agencies. It provides other forms of feedback mechanism, such as the Chief Examiners' Reports on individual subjects, to facilitate appropriate efforts by the stakeholders in education.

Your Excellency, Distinguished Guests, Council invests heavily on research activities and provides consultancy services using the good quality human resources available at its National Offices within the sub-region. Unfortunately, member governments, stakeholders and organizations in the member nations are yet to take full advantage of the opportunities that have been provided by these research efforts and consultancy services for about six decades. I want to use this forum to further extend an invitation to you all to visit Council's Offices and websites and discover the opportunities and services that are available for tapping beyond the conduct of examinations.

The Management and staff of this organization strive to fulfill the dreams of its founding fathers by ensuring that the provision of

examination services remain sacrosanct and the strong ties among the governments and peoples of the member countries remain unbroken. The Council has thus positioned and presented itself as a reference point in service delivery and sub-regional co-operation. Council continues to appeal to its member governments to institute more responsive budgetary mechanisms to empower Council in meeting its challenges as it continues to provide its flagship service of quality examinations of international reputation that member countries will be proud of.

In reinforcing an earlier statement made by the Registrar, Your Excellency, the evil of examination malpractice has remained a formidable threat to education and human resource development in our member countries. A situation where some member countries record as high as between 14% and 20% involvement of the total candidature for an examination in examination malpractice calls for serious concern and introspection by all member nations. The implications of this persistent negative trend are grave for the future of the youth and the quality of manpower in the entire sub-region, and even pose a worrying threat to the continued international recognition of our examinations. Council continues to encourage its member states to exercise more vigilance and punitive deterrents through national legislation to curb this shameful practice.

The Council has been proactive and dynamic in its service provision and delivery. It has continued to deploy ICT to gradually phase out the era of manual operations in the member countries. All the National Offices now capture entries and release candidates' results electronically. The time frame between the end of an examination and the release of its results has continued to reduce. I have no doubt in my mind that sooner than later the Council will add to its service delivery systems, electronic testing of candidates in some specific subjects that are responsive to such technologies. I am confident that this will lead to further reduction in the time of the release of results.

I cannot end this address without expressing my sincere appreciation to Madam President, her government and indeed all the people of this great nation for accepting to host the 58th Annual Meeting, which is unique to me personally for two major reasons. Firstly, the hosting of the meeting in Monrovia will afford me the opportunity of a whole week's stay in Liberia, where several of my blood relations migrated since the sixties. Secondly, and probably more relevant to this gathering, is the fact that this 58th Meeting is the first to be held under my Chairmanship, having taken on the mantle of leadership at the 57th Meeting in March 2009 held in Freetown, Sierra Leone.

Your Excellency, Ladies and Gentlemen, the West African Examinations Council will today, under the auspices of its

Endowment Fund, celebrate excellence by presenting the WAEC Excellence Awards to three candidates – Master Frank Adu-Poku, Miss Maame Afua Otua Ofori and Miss Fathia Karim – for their outstanding performance in the May/June 2009 WASSCE conducted in the sub-region. Similarly, the honour of 'Distinguished Friend of Council' will be conferred on an illustrious citizen of Liberia, Mr. Jefferson D. Lewis, for his contribution to the success of Council's work.

I congratulate these award recipients and members of their families. To the students, your achievements have made you icons of emulation. Continue to strive for excellence in all your endeavours. WAEC will maintain links with you as you carve out your various careers. To the Distinguished Friend of Council, your contributions to the success of WAEC have by this award been etched in its annals for posterity.

I also congratulate another eminent Liberian, Dr. D. Evelyn S. Kandakai, on her impressive and erudite delivery of the 15th in the series of WAEC Endowment Fund Lectures titled *The West African Examinations Council: Pan-Africanism, Gender and Development*, on Monday, March 22, 2010. WAEC is challenged by the recommendations and will strive to seriously consider them for policy formulation.

I thank Madam President for finding time to receive Council's delegation that paid her a courtesy visit on Monday the 22nd instant. I also thank the Honourable Minister of Education and the Mayor of Monrovia for warmly receiving our delegation and the engaging and productive deliberations held during all of these meetings.

As we continue to celebrate partnership in education delivery, let me on behalf of Council wish the government and people of Liberia continued prosperity and success in its national strategic plan in responding to the needs of its people and on a wider context the commitments of the sub-region.

I thank you all for your attention.