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Message from H.E. Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, President of the Republic of Liberia, Accepting the UNIFEM Global Leadership Award 2006

President Johnson Sirleaf delivered a video message at the UNIFEM 30th Anniversary Gala Dinner, 13 May 2006, in which she accepted the UNIFEM Global Leadership Award. The following is a transcript.

Greetings to my friends at UNIFEM, Goodwill Ambassador Nicole Kidman, Executive Director Noeleen Heyzer, Mr Terry J. Lundgren, and all the distinguished guests gathered tonight to celebrate UNIFEM's 30th Anniversary.

I am so sorry not to be there with all of you. I want to send my warmest greetings to Executive Director Noeleen Heyzer. Noeleen and I have travelled many long roads together to raise the banner of women's equality and political participation, and to sound the alarm about violence, abuse and injustice.

I want to thank UNIFEM for recognizing me with its first Global Leadership Award. I know that this honour is shared by many women throughout my country who struggle to achieve democratic governance, who strive for economic and physical security.

UNIFEM is a long-standing and trusted friend. The organization stood with Liberia's women in the lead-up to the election, supporting, contributing, encouraging. The help it gave to Liberia testifies to the importance of a strong women's fund at the United Nations. I occupy my current position because women successfully mobilized to support my candidacy, and I thank UNIFEM for being a partner in this effort.

Women, my strong constituency, tell me that they want the same chances that men have. They want to be literate. They want their work recognized. They want protection against rape. They want clean water that won't sicken and kill their children.

They have their dreams and ambitions, and so do the men of Liberia. So many men are tired of war. They want to reclaim their lives — return to school, to the farm, to business.

As president, I face the challenges that come to me from all my people, and now I face the responsibilities that come with governing. We need to build a government that is accountable to its people, a government that might serve as a world role model: One that values justice and does not tolerate corruption. One that invests in education for both girls and boys. One where women do indeed have the same chances as men, and where women actually live a life free of violence.

I pray this can happen. The women of Liberia and the women of Africa from all walks of life share their trust and confidence in our ability to succeed. I know that UNIFEM will be there for the long journey. I know that Liberia needs the continued and increased support of the international community. And I know that Liberia and its women count on you to stand with them in whatever way you can.

Thank you UNIFEM. Thank you all.

See also:

- [UNIFEM 30th Anniversary Gala Dinner](#)