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Africa's First Elected Female Head Of State Pays Tribute To

Liberian Market Women

NEW YORK, NY - Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, the first woman elected president of Liberia – and the first woman elected head of state in Africa – comes to New York City Wednesday, June 4 to pay tribute to that country's market women and the extraordinary role African women play in economic development by launching the Sirleaf Market Women's Fund's (SMWF) Adopt-a-Market Campaign.

The goal of the campaign is to bolster Liberia's economy and empower the market women and their families by building or reconstructing at least 10 more markets this year and up to 50 markets over the next four years.

According to President Sirleaf, herself the granddaughter of a market woman, "These women labor under very difficult conditions.... They feed the nation by farming, by storing the food, by selling the food sometimes under the most difficult of situations. Sometimes you go into the marketplace and see them in the sun and the rain. They sit there selling their wares to be able to put a meal on the table for their family at night, to be able to send their children to school."

The event will celebrate these remarkable women. President Sirleaf will be joined by Actress Cicely Tyson, and by SMWF Honorary Co-Chairs: the Honorable Mary Robinson,



Ellen Johnson Sirleaf

Former President of Ireland and Former High Commissioner of the UN High Commission for Human Rights, and Wangari Maathai, the 2004 Nobel Peace Laureate who founded Kenya's Greenbelt Movement. They will be joined by philanthropists Peter and Jennifer Buffett of the NoVo Foundation, supporters of the SMWF campaign; and two Liberian market women brought to New York especially for this event by the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM).

The evening will begin with a VIP reception and silent auction of items from the Eric Robertson African Art Galleries. This will be followed by a program, including entertainment. Ms. Tyson will speak about her experience visiting Liberian market women with President Sirleaf as a member of billionaire Robert Johnson's delegation to Liberia last year. There will also be a marketplace where quilts and other items made by Liberian women will be sold.

The gala is co-sponsored by the Sirleaf Market Women's Fund and the African Women's Development Fund-USA (AWDF-USA) in collaboration with the New York Society for Ethical Culture, and United Social Services, Inc. The event will take place at the New York Society for Ethical Culture, 2 West 64th Street in New York City.