



Monrovia

**Speech of H.E. Urban Sjöström, Ambassador of Sweden, at the
Ceremony of Presentation of his Letter of Credence to H.E. George
Manneh Weah, President of the Republic of Liberia on 3 September 2021.**

Your Excellency, President George Manneh Weah,

I have the great honour and pleasure today to present to Your Excellency my Letter of Credence from His Majesty, Carl Gustaf XVI, the King of Sweden. I wish to extend to Your Excellency and to the people of Liberia, warm and friendly greetings from His Majesty, from our Government, and from the people of Sweden. I would also like to present the repel letter from my predecessor.

Sweden and Liberia enjoy excellent and long-standing bilateral relations based on friendship and mutual understanding, as well as common views on many international issues, democracy and human rights. We share the interest to promote international peace and stability and both countries stand firm in our adherence to the United Nation's Charter. We also share a common interest to work together towards enhanced development in the world.

Your Excellency,

Sweden and Liberia jointly share the commitment on the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). We congratulate your administration for the adoption of the Pro-poor Agenda for Prosperity and Development and we strongly support a robust implementation since this will enhance the standard of living and improve investment and trade. Sweden was happy to support Liberia's accession to the World Trade Organization membership which is an important prerequisite for the strengthening of your developmental efforts, not least in the private sector.

The relations between our countries go quite some time back; LAMCO and its mining activities are still a strong reference in Sweden among the generation of

my parents and I received many congratulation's to my new posting from this specific group of Friends to Liberia.

Sweden was also actively engaged in the UN peacekeeping operation UNMIL and contributed with a mechanised rifle company of 240 persons as well as civilian police officers in the mission.

The relationship between our countries has grown stronger over the years and my task in assuming this position is to make sure that they become even stronger and broader.

Mr. President, we strongly appreciate your leadership as a champion for gender equality and we fully support you as Feminist in Chief. As you know Sweden has a Feminist Foreign Policy and we believe that the rights of women are fundamental for sustainable peace and development. We strongly welcome the gender responsive budgeting policy and we encourage strong implementation of this policy as well as the critical commitments Liberia has made to gender underpinned by Liberia's National Gender Policy.

We are therefore looking forward to continued cooperation in strengthening the rights, resources, representation and respect for women and girls as well as promoting positive masculinity in Liberia. It is therefore a great honour, Your Excellency, to serve in Liberia, and to know that I, in you, have a fellow Feminist.

Africa is a continent of young people, and Liberia is not different from other African countries in this respect. Young people hold the future in their hands – and their aspirations and ability to fulfil their dreams will make the difference for the Liberia of tomorrow. Sweden is very grateful to you, Mr. President, for the strides in this direction and we are looking forward to cooperating to give voice and opportunities to young girls and boys to shape their lives and contribute to a prosperous Liberia.

Your Excellency,

We are delighted that Liberia is one of seven countries which is a member of the Friends in Defence of Democracy. Other countries include Georgia, Mongolia, Portugal, Uruguay, Tunisia, and Sweden. At this forum, we share common concerns for the challenges facing democracy, human rights and the rule of law around the world. We hope that Liberia will ensure its full participation and influence at this global forum, which will serve as a beginning of a new

partnership in Defence of Democracy and human rights, especially during these difficult periods in the world.

The Liberia Configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission is an important mechanism to continue the support for sustainable and inclusive peace in Liberia. Sweden, through the Permanent Representative of Sweden to the United Nations, is the Chair of the Configuration and this constitutes therefore a very useful mechanism for close cooperation between our countries to raise common areas of relevance to enable strengthened peacebuilding support to Liberia. We are looking forward to continuing this cooperation.

In December 2020, the Swedish Government approved and adopted Sweden's new development cooperation strategy with Liberia from 2021 – 2025. The value of the new strategy agreement is SEK 1.85 billion (approximately 200MUSD) – which constitutes a 40% increment from the previous strategy. The strategy will contribute to the achievement of thirteen (13) of the SDGs in Liberia and we are looking forward to strengthening our cooperation, coordination and alignment with your Pro-poor Agenda for Prosperity and Development.

Let me say a few words on our cooperation in the area of development:

We are engaged in the funding of the up-coming elections; we strongly support the consolidation of inclusive peace; we are supporting the strengthening of rule of law; we are making a significant contribution to the building of feeder roads, including wider implications for job creation and local governance; we engage in sustainable agriculture as well as the renewable energy and we are a committed partner in your decentralisation programme, in particular as regards the creation of County Service Centres; we support the Liberia Land Authority and its development; Public Finance Management and civil service reforms are also supported by Swedish funds.

A new portfolio in the new strategy is within environment and climate. We look forward to developing this cooperation closely with your administration to enable sustainable management and use of natural resources, including biodiversity, greater access to renewable energy as well as reduce climate impact and increased resilience to climate change.

Mr. President, your country is challenged with some key human rights issues. We commend you for the step taken in declaring rape a national emergency, at the same time we encourage the Government of Liberia to provide the relevant resources to ensure that rape and all forms of Sexual and gender-based violence are alleviated in Liberia. Corruption in both the public and private sectors needs

to be continuously addressed to ensure that resources are re-invested in healthcare, education, and infrastructure in line with the pro-poor agenda. We welcome and support your leadership and we stand as a close partner in these efforts.

Finally, sustainable and inclusive peacebuilding is a long journey for every country which has experienced the horrors of violent conflict. Liberia has started the process, but the remnants and legacies of the civil conflict still haunt your country. Sweden is fully committed to support Liberia to find its own paths to healing and national reconciliation and we welcome an inclusive process to enable nation building and sustainable peacebuilding.

The consolidation of peace and the improvement of the living standards for Liberians is clearly your agenda, Mr. President, and as mentioned many times earlier – Sweden is a long-term partner and friend of Liberia. The current COVID-19 pandemic has created a lot of challenges globally as well as for Liberia. However, we believe that this virus will be defeated. Sweden, together with the EU, will continue to support Liberia's efforts to reduce the effects of this virus as well as other deceases.

Mr. President,

During 2008-2009 I was responsible officer for Liberia at the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) in Stockholm, and I had the opportunity to visit Liberia several times. I am therefore very grateful to be back in this beautiful country and I look forward to further strengthening and widening the ties between Sweden and Liberia. With this in mind, I have the honour to most respectfully present my Letter of Credence.

I can assure Your Excellency that I shall constantly and to the best of my ability work to intensify the contacts at all levels and in wide range of areas for a continued strong friendship between our countries.