

Special Remarks

Delivered By

**H.E. Joseph Nyuma Boakai, Sr.**

President of the Republic of Liberia

at the Graduation Ceremony of the

**At-Risk Youth Empowerment Program (AR-YEP)**

Thursday, April 11, 2024

EJS Ministerial Complex,

Congo Town, Liberia

**Honorable Members of the National Legislature Present;  
Minister Bangalu & Officials of the Ministry of Youth & Sports  
The One United Nations Family;  
Our Others Partner Institutions;  
Officials of the Ministry of Health;  
Official of the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection;  
Other Members of the Cabinet Present;  
Representatives of our Development Partners;  
Our Dear Youths of Liberia;  
The Media;  
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen:**

I can only say, "To God be all the glory" for yet another day when we are set to record success in our endeavor to reposition our country and people, especially the youth.

We are here to meet and inspire our partnership people who are ready to help us lift this country unto a new and nobler platform. And in so doing I remind all that we welcome people not merely based on the merit of capacity, but more importantly on ability, motivation, willingness and character that has propelled them to answer to calls of nation building, community development and family enrichment.

It is in pursuit of these noble ends that we found it imperative to highlight Drugs and Substance Abuse as a key priority intervention for the Rescue Mission's First Hundred Days in Office.

Under our Hundred Days Deliverable, we have this plank under Objective No.4, where we set ourselves the task of:

1. Making the issue of illicit drugs and substance abuse a national emergency;
2. Enhancing the existing program and creating additional programs that remove disadvantaged youth and drug addicts from the streets;
3. Rehabilitating, refurbishing, and providing drugs to mental health hospitals and clinics; and
4. Ensuring that rehabilitated youth receive income-generating skills and are reintegrated into society.

***My Dear Graduates!***

I cannot but doff my hat to you for your conscious decision to alter the path you were on in search of change in life for the good. I see you as heroes of your time and circumstance. We salute your courage and celebrate the boldness of your positive thoughts.

You did not only choose to escape from the fetters of induced addiction, you took advantage of the opportunity to reclaim your future. Thank you for making the choices you made. You deserve to be celebrated. Congratulations!

I opted to be here in your midst personally today because I value your resolve and seek to partner with you in accessing greater opportunities that will make your life meaningful and fulfilling.

Looking deep in your faces, I see Presidents, Senators and Representatives. You are the great women and men Liberia is waiting for to rise again above our present conditions.

You made the right choice. And the choice you each made has given us the platform to help you get it better.

- >>It is a right choice to reclaim your future
- >>It is a right choice to seek for better livelihood and professional skills
- >>It is a right choice to prepare for and seek a job or start profitable business;
- >> It is a good thing to start a family and create the space to serve your community.

This is what I call humanity. This is the purpose of compassion and a call to duty, giving our people the opportunity to make the right choice.

These young people are here because they each made the right choice. I should hence assure them all that we stand duty bound to help them realize the dividends of their good reasoning. This is why I am here today. Our ARREST AGENDA is all about you.

### ***Good folks,***

Irrespective of your status in life, you young people are the life-wire of our country and our most reliable potential for nation building. This is why I want to put on notice dealers in drugs who have taken an unsavory career in tempering with and polluting the vulnerable minds of our youth and children that they have us to contend with.

As they persist in their nation-breaking venture of destroying our youth, which amounts to tampering with the future and destiny of this nation, we will equal their challenge by leaving no stone unturned in making life miserable for them by disrupting their criminal enterprise.

And so we can say without hesitation that this is war. Let the drug lords understand they are in the same skin as heartless criminals, committing crimes against humanity by decimating the future of the nation's future generation. I say loud and clear therefore that we assure them that, from this moment forward, they should expect us to fight them with every legal tool and means available to us. They must be seen as enemies of our people who deserve no place in this nation. We will let them have no rest.

### ***Partners; Officials of Government; Distinguished Guests:***

On the flip side of this scourge of drug abuse, we cannot let our guard down. While we fight the supply side, we vow to pay no less attention to the demand side. We will invest in both rescuing the victims and supporting moves that go to reducing drugs demand. We will spare no resource in our endeavor to confront the enemies and reclaiming our youth at risk.

In furtherance of Deliverable Objective 4, we plan to shortly engage the National Legislature and other stakeholders to facilitate our campaign of mobilization against drugs and substance abuse in Liberia. We will lift and run with this program, doing it with commitment to its objectives, modalities and strategies aimed at getting it right. Even more so, we will rally support for it locally and internationally. Collectively, we have to make it work.

***So My Dear Graduates;***

The Government of Liberia is here to prove you right. Considering the proud decision, you made to go through this positive change, I hereby declare you "Pioneer Beneficiaries" of the Liberia front-line patriots on the war against drug lords. By your dare to make the right choice, you are Ambassadors of the Rescue Mission.

Right on from here, we will ask you to lead our tour of Kush Joints and Ghettos in Monrovia and out of Monrovia. Our tour is intended to reach out to your friends (our daughters and sons), so as to strengthen them to build the courage to follow your steps. I want to encourage them to join this new community of youth that you have just created today. Indeed you now make up the Community of Reclaimed Youth. Thank you for your leadership.

Sincerely speaking, this is why I sought the opportunity to serve my country and people as the President of our cherished Republic. It is heart-warming to meet people like you. Many of you, my fellow citizens and compatriots, are on the move in one direction or another but without that genuine help, you are left without what it takes to push you forward.

Let me reiterate that our emergency intervention to this campaign against drugs and substance abuse only strengthens the current At Risk Youth Program borne out of the GoL and the One UN Joint Concept Note. This will not be limited to 100 days, after which we then roll back to "status quo ante."

God forbid. I recognize that so much has gone into this. I want to assure our UN and development partners that we shall not be wasteful and unmindful of resources, innovation and sacrifices made. We will strive to remain a responsible government.

And before I close, let me affirm here that I owe it to the Joint Steering Committee, the Program Management Unit of the At Risk Youth Program and the supportive private Service Providers to say thank you.

Your work with these young people and the love you showed them have given us this privilege. You have done a very great job. We stand grateful to you as we urge you on to even more rugged terrain to rescue our precious youth.

Leave you with prayers that I say so frequently that my presidency will be all about the rescue and advancement of every segment of our population. From this day, I want you to go forward with the commitment on your part to always "Think Liberia, Love Liberia, and Build Liberia."

Thank you so very much.

God bless us all and guide and save our State.

