

very warm welcome from the Liberian people, from our young people, from our students, who lined the route and waved and showed flags. We're just so pleased and honored. Thank you, President Bush, for making this trip.

*President Bush.* Madam President, thanks. I've been looking forward to coming here ever since you extended the kind invitation to me. I do want to thank the people of Liberia for the warm welcome that we have received. I loved all the smiles and the enthusiasm along the route.

Most importantly, I want the people of Liberia to know, Madam President, the United States stands with you. We want

to help you recover from a terrible period. We want you to build lives of hope and peace. And under your leadership, that's exactly what's happening. It is my honor to have presented you with the National Medal of Freedom. It's the highest civilian award a President can give, and I did so because of your courage and your leadership. And we are so excited to be with you.

Thank you.

*President Johnson Sirleaf.* Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:23 a.m. at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

## Remarks at a Lunch Hosted by President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf of Liberia in Monrovia

*February 21, 2008*

Madam President, I want to make sure I've got the following correctly: Here they call you the "Iron Lady," and here they call you "Ma." And I call you friend.

We are honored to be here. Laura and I are thrilled to be here with our delegation to end what has been a very productive trip to the continent of Africa. I can't think of a better place to finish than in—with our dear friend, Liberia.

It is easy to destroy a country; it is hard to rebuild a country. And I—Madam President, I want you to know that the United States of America supports you as you rebuild your country. We share a special his-

tory with Liberia. It's a history that is deep, and I want the people of your beautiful country to know that our help is just beginning.

And so, Madam President, I propose a toast to you and the strength of your leadership and the quality of your character. And to the good people of Liberia, may God bless.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:54 p.m. in the Executive Mansion. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of President Johnson Sirleaf.

## Remarks During a Visit to the Barclay Training Center in Monrovia

*February 21, 2008*

Madam President, you're right: We have met four times, and every time, I'm the better for it. [*Laughter*] I appreciate the

warm welcome we've received from the people of your beautiful country.