



**Remarks by USAID Acting Director, Carolyn “Teddy” Bryan
Joint Press Conference NEC-USAID-IFES
Oct. 27, 2009
National Election Commission Headquarters
Sinkor, Monrovia**

Protocol:

- James Fromayan, Chairman, National Elections Commission (NEC)
- Elizabeth Nelson, Deputy Chairwoman, NEC
- Mr. Bill Sweeney, President of the International Foundation for Elections Systems (IFES)
- Mr. Almami Cyllah, Regional Director for Africa, IFES
- Distinguished Members of the Commission
- Members of the press

Today USAID is re-affirming its long term commitment to the democratic process in Liberia by announcing this ambitious, five-year, \$17.5 million election support program in collaboration with IFES and the National Election Commission.

During Secretary of State Clinton’s visit to Liberia in August this year, she made reference to this program, and today, USAID is launching the comprehensive package of assistance to help ensure that free, fair, credible, non-partisan elections are the rule in Liberia.

USAID and IFES have partnered in democracy promotion all over the world since 1987. In Liberia this partnership goes back to the elections of 1997, and includes significant support to the 2005 elections, witnessed the world over, as President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf made history by becoming the first elected women head of state on the Africa Continent.

I am pleased that IFES President Bill Sweeney and also IFES Africa Director Mr. Almami Cyllah can both be here today. These are proven friends of Liberia and the Liberian people. I also want to recognize the IFES Liberia staff and their contribution to this work.

Today we celebrate this record of success by re-affirming the United States Government’s commitment to Liberia. USAID’s support to the elections process is comprehensive. Let me highlight just a few aspects of USAID support to the NEC through our partner, IFES.

- USAID's overall goal for this project is to **Build Sustained Election Management in Liberia**. It is not simply helping to manage the 2011 elections. It is about helping put in place sustained operational systems and capacity so the NEC and the Government of Liberia can conduct highly complex and technical work without the support of international partners. This is what we mean by sustainability and it is the keystone of USAID support.
- USAID and IFES will provide support to the NEC to conduct the constituency boundary de-limitation exercise as soon as a threshold bill is passed.
- USAID and IFES will provide the NEC technical and material support to completely re-design the entire voter registration system in Liberia to meet the highest international standards for reliability and integrity.
- USAID and IFES will provide significant enhancements to the 19 regional magistrate offices so the officials running the offices have the resources they need to fulfill their critical role in the election process.
- USAID and IFES will support the NEC to hold a constitutional referendum when required for election reforms
- USAID and IFES will also support the NEC with comprehensive and continuous technical training for all NEC officials over the next five years. Continuing professional training is important in such a technical field where the technology is always changing and the public and political party expectations of the Commission are high.
- USAID and IFES have already provided financial support for the upcoming Senatorial by-elections here in Montserrado County in partnership with the UNDP.

Finally, I am very pleased that Chairman Fromayan has convened a high-level, multi-donor coordination group that meets monthly here at the NEC to discuss coordination and collaboration among the international community. I would like to add, though, that a successful election process requires every branch of government, including the legislative branch, to do its part as well. To that end, USAID joins other international partners, and notably the UN representation, in encouraging consensus on the Threshold Bill as soon as possible so these election-related reforms can be swiftly implemented.

Chairman Fromayan, members and staff of the Commission, on behalf of the American People, we look forward to this new phase of collaboration. Building a new democracy takes time, perseverance, patience and commitment. I firmly believe that Liberia has all these vital ingredients, and USAID and IFES are committed to seeing the process through until Liberia benefits from all the fruits of a prosperous democracy.

Thank you.