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CELEBRATION OF THE 2017 INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY: ECOWAS HONOURS HER EXCELLENCY MRS. ELLEN SIRLEAF- JOHNSON IN LIBERIA

In commemoration of the International Women's Day celebrated annually on 8th March, ECOWAS is hereby invited to participate in the Second Edition of the International Women's Colloquium organized by the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Liberia. In tandem with this Colloquium, the ECOWAS Commissioner for Social and Gender Affairs, Dr Fatima Dia Sow, will meet with the President of Liberia and current Chairperson of ECOWAS, Her Excellency Mrs. Ellen Sirleaf-Johnson, in Monrovia, on 7th March 2017, to hand over a scroll with an inscription of a Declaration in her honour.

Her Excellency Mrs. Johnson-Sirleaf has been recognized as the first African woman to have been invested with her country's highest Executive Office and, above all, has made a significant contribution to the promotion of equal rights between women and men, development and peace as well as Human Rights, particularly for women in conflict situations in Africa, including Rwanda, Liberia, Sierra Leone and Côte d'Ivoire. Thanks to her excellent leadership in several political and international organizations, she has, among other things, promoted the exercise of women's right to vote and the Gender in Development Agenda.

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The Declaration in honour of H.E. Mrs. Ellen Johnson Sirleaf was signed by the Council of Ministers of Gender and Women's Affairs of the fifteen ECOWAS Member States, namely: Benin, Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, The Gambia, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Senegal and Togo, as well as the ECOWAS Commission, present at the last periodic meeting of Gender Ministers held in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, on 10th February 2017. It is a testimony of ECOWAS Member States' recognition of the exceptional political career, as well as the significant contribution of Mrs. Johnson-Sirleaf to democracy in all its ramifications and to the promotion of Women's rights in Liberia, ECOWAS Member States, and throughout Africa.

In retrospect, the objective of the Meeting of ECOWAS Ministers of Gender and Women's Affairs held in Abidjan was to identify priority actions to be conducted in the implementation of the Supplementary Act on Equal Rights between Women and Men in relation to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the 2063 Agenda of the African Union, through the adoption of a roadmap. Three other key documents relevant to the achievement of the ECOWAS Vision 2020 and targeting the implementation of programmes that would have a direct impact on the peoples of the sub-region, were also adopted. These include the ECOWAS regional Action Plan for the control of Obstetric Fistula in West Africa; the ECOWAS Strategic Framework for Gender and Elections and its Action Plan; and the 2017-2020 Action Plan for the Women, Peace and Security Component of the ECOWAS Conflict Prevention Framework.

Following this 7th day of March dedicated to the presentation of a Statement in honour of H.E. Mrs. Johnson-Sirleaf, Dr. Sow was also invited to participate in the International Symposium on Women in Monrovia, on 8th March, 2017. The 2017 edition of this Symposium will provide an opportunity to reflect on the progress made so far on women's rights and formulate concrete strategies designed to achieve the gender equality goal in Africa, against the backdrop of Sustainable Development.