

# Liberia: UN welcomes new President's inauguration as key milestone on country's road to success

22 January 2018 – George Weah was inaugurated on Monday as the new President of Liberia, where the United Nations is set to close its peacekeeping mission in a few weeks after a successful 15-year presence in the West African country.

The new Liberian President took office at a ceremony in the packed SKD stadium in the capital, Monrovia.

"I have spent my life in stadiums, but I have never felt like this," said the former football champion who is succeeding outgoing President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf in the first peaceful democratic transition the country has known over the past 70 years. Ms. Johnson Sirleaf led the country from 2006 to 2018.

"With the help of our regional partners and of the United Nations, we chose democracy as our best choice," underlined the new Liberian President in its inaugural speech.

Leading the UN delegation at the event, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for West Africa and the Sahel, Mohammed Ibn Chambas, congratulated the Liberian people for the "credible and peaceful election which, for the first time in Liberia, is ushering one elected civilian Government to take over from another civilian Government."

"This is a remarkable achievement for Liberia," said Mr. Chambas who, between 1991 and 1996, participated in the Economic Community of West African States ([ECOWAS](#)) mediation efforts in Liberia during the country's first civil war. "We are all rejoicing with the people of Liberia. We wish President George Weah all the success that he deserves," added the UN envoy.

In his inaugural speech, President Weah thanked the UN Mission in Liberia ([UNMIL](#)) for its efforts in reestablishing peace and security in a country that experienced two civil wars spanning over 14 years between 1989 and 2003.

According to the UN, civil war in Liberia, the African continent's first independent State, claimed the lives of almost 250,000 people – mostly civilians – and led to a complete breakdown of law and order.

Along with ECOWAS, the Nations Observer Mission in Liberia (UNOMIL) and the UN Peace-building Support Office in Liberia (UNOL) made several interventions during the conflict to bring peace.

After the signature of a peace agreement in August 2003, the Security Council authorized the deployment of a UN peacekeeping mission in Liberia. The first peacekeepers arrived in the country in October of the same year.

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“The United Nations peacekeeping mission has ensured unbroken peace within our borders for more than a decade,” said President Weah.

After almost 15 years of operations, UNMIL has successfully completed its mandate, which encompassed civilian protection, supporting reform of rule of law and justice institutions, the protection and promotion of human rights, and the promotion of sustainable peace through a public information radio broadcast run by the peacekeeping mission.

“This is a very happy day for the UN, to witness this success story of Liberia with the efforts of the international community over the past 14 years,” said Farid Zarif, the UN Special Representative for Liberia and Head of UNMIL.

“This is the culmination of all the efforts and works in building the capacity of the Liberians and also strengthening their democratic experiment, for them to reach a point where they can all come together and celebrate the success as one nation.”

Starting 31 March, UNMIL will be replaced by a UN country team in Liberia. “I can assure you that the United Nations will remain committed and engaged and on the side of the Liberian people going forward,” underscored Mr. Chambas.

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