

**SPEECH DELIVERED BY EDDIE D. JARWOLO**  
**Keynote Speaker for the 67<sup>th</sup> Armed Forces Day Symposium**  
**Tuesday, February 6, 2024**

Distinguished ladies and gentlemen, honored guests, veterans, active-duty service members, My fellow defenders of Democracy and fellow citizens,

Good morning,

It is both an honor and a privilege to stand before you today on this auspicious occasion, as we gather to celebrate and honor the incredible men and women who serve and have served in our armed forces. Arm Forces Day is a momentous occasion that allows us to express our deepest gratitude and appreciation for the sacrifices made by those who have dedicated their lives to defending our civil and political freedoms.

As we come together today, let us reflect on the remarkable journey that has shaped our armed forces into the formidable guardians of peace and security that they are today. Our military personnel, past and present, have demonstrated unwavering commitment, bravery, and resilience in the face of adversity, especially during elections and campaign periods.

The new branding of the **AFL: coined the “Force for Good”** has answered to the call to duty, leaving behind the comforts of home and family to stand on the front lines, ensuring the safety and prosperity of our nation.

This celebration is not just an opportunity to recognize the bravery of our armed forces, but also a moment to express our gratitude to the families who stand strong on the home front. The spouses, children, and parents who endure the challenges of separation, providing unwavering support to their loved ones in uniform, deserve our utmost respect and appreciation.

Behind every service member is a network of strength that enables them to carry out their duties with dedication and purpose.

**This 67<sup>th</sup> symposium theme is Sustaining Our Democracy: The Roles and Responsibilities of the AFL.**

As I prepared this speech, I could not help but reflect on your key strategic priorities as the AFL which is centered around, **Defense & Law Enforcement**; protection (land, air, water) against internal/external

threats; **and Peacekeeping Operations. Engineering;** Construction, Road rehabilitation, and other civil works projects, and **Disaster Management;** Conducting Search and Rescue Operations.

Let me reemphasize that these strategic priorities are key to defending, protecting and sustaining our democracy.

As the AFL, you have the statutory responsibility to ensure the protection of Liberia's national interests, territorial integrity, protect the citizens and residents within the borders of Liberia from internal and external aggressions, and to respond to natural disaster.

Uphold you undivided allegiance to the Republic of Liberia and to the people of Liberia no matter what, perform your duties in accordance with democratic values and human rights, exhibiting a non-partisan approach to duty in ways that command citizens' respect and confidence; exhibit political neutrality always, and all times obey or comply fully with International Humanitarian Laws (IHL) and the laws of Armed Conflicts, including the Geneva Conventions and other protocols; etc.

Liberia made history for a second peaceful democratic transition in 80 years and the election of President Joseph Nyuma Boakia Sr. placed on him the obligation to uphold and sustain Liberia's democracy, as the Commander in Chief and Head of State. We call on the Commander in Chief to prioritize the Armed Forces of Liberia should and should be provided the needed support and logistics to uphold its constitutional responsibilities and enhance its roles in sustaining and defending Liberia's emerging democracy.

The offensive is the most important role of the military. Hunting the enemy, observing the enemy, getting intelligence from the enemy, and ultimately killing the enemy and their supporters.

**My question to you all today will be “Who are our enemies? Who are the enemies that are posing threats to our democracy and state security? get them before they get us “**

People from around the world have identified the basic principles, which must exist to have a democratic state. While all of these principles are important, few of them are worth every moment of our time today because they are a threat to our democracy.

**CITIZEN PARTICIPATION** - One of the most basic signposts of a democracy is citizen participation in government. It is not only their right,

but it is their duty. **Citizen participation may take many forms including standing for election, voting in elections, becoming informed, debating issues, attending community or civic meetings, being members of private voluntary organizations, paying taxes, and even protesting. Participation builds a better democracy.**

**EQUALITY** - Equality means that all individuals are valued equally, have equal opportunities, and may not be discriminated against because of their race, religion, ethnic group, gender or sexual orientation. In a democracy, individuals and groups still maintain their right to have different cultures, personalities, languages and beliefs.

**RULE OF LAW** - In a democracy, no one is above the law, and everyone has equal protection before the law in keeping with Article 11 of the 1986 Liberian Constitution. It means that everyone must obey the law and be held accountable if they violate it. Democracy also insists that the law be equally, fairly, and consistently enforced. This is sometimes referred to as "due process of."

**POLITICAL TOLERANCE** - This means that while the majority of the people rule in a democracy, the rights of the minority must be protected. People who are not in power must be allowed to organize and speak out. Individual citizens must also learn to be tolerant of each other

**ACCOUNTABILITY** - In a democracy, elected and appointed officials have to be accountable to the people. They are responsible for their actions. Officials must make decisions and perform their duties according to the will and wishes of the people, not for themselves.

**TRANSPARENCY**- For the government to be accountable the people must be aware of what is happening in the country. This is referred to as transparency in government. A transparent government holds public meetings and allows citizens to attend. In a democracy, the press and the people can get information about what decisions are being made, by whom, and why.

### **REGULAR FREE AND FAIR ELECTIONS**

One-way citizens of the country express their will is by electing officials to represent them in government. Democracy insists that these elected officials are chosen and peacefully removed from office in a free and fair manner. For free and fair elections to occur, most adult citizens should have the right to stand for government office. Additionally, obstacles should not exist which make it difficult for people to vote.

**CONTROL OF THE ABUSE OF POWER** - Democratic societies try to prevent any elected official or group of people from misusing or abusing their power. One of the most common abuses of power is corruption. Corruption occurs when government officials use public funds for their own benefit or exercise power in an illegal manner. Frequently the government is structured to limit the powers of the branches of government: to have independent courts and agencies with the power to act against any illegal action by an elected official or branch of government; to allow for citizen participation and elections; and to check for police abuse of power.

**ACCEPTING THE RESULTS OF ELECTIONS** -In democratic elections, there are winners and losers. Often the losers in an election believe so strongly that their party or candidate is the best one, that they refuse to accept the results of the election.

The consequences of not accepting the result of an election may be a government that is ineffective and cannot make decisions. It may even result in violence which is also against democracy.

**HUMAN RIGHTS** -All democracies strive to respect and protect the human rights of citizens. Human rights mean those values that reflect respect for human life and human dignity. Democracy emphasizes the value of every human being. Examples of human rights include freedom of expression, freedom of association, freedom of assembly, the right to equality, and the right to education.

These principles of democracy, if adhered to, will enhance and sustain our democracy.

Finally, our democracy can make life better for all of us, but it will take a lot of hard work. There are lot of resources out there; unfortunately, not much of it works for the good side of the good. But when passionate people like us get together and get organized, we can make our democracy stronger and more responsive to the needs of the people. This contributes to democratic dividend: rewarding citizens for their participation in democratic processes.

Long live the Armed Forces of Liberia, Long Live the People of Liberia, and Long Live our dear country Liberia.

Thank you, and may God bless our armed forces and the Republic of Liberia.