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Addis, Ababa, Ethiopia: President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf has delivered her final address at the 29th African Union Assembly as Liberia heads for democratic elections in October.

President Sirleaf described the upcoming polls in Liberia as the first in decades in an environment that has witnessed eleven years of uninterrupted peace. She, on behalf of the people of Liberia expressed profound appreciation for the regional and sub-regional support that brought Liberia to where it is today.

“Much is owed to ECOWAS, to our African Union brothers and sisters and the United Nations Mission in Liberia for contributing to peace-building and consolidation with our economy largely restored; our debt sustainable and our nation full of hope and promise,” she noted.

According to a dispatch from Addis Ababa, the Liberian Leader made the statement at the closing ceremony of the 29th Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the African Union on Tuesday, July 04, 2017 at the African Union Headquarters in Addis Ababa. Her closing remarks were characterized by standing ovation from African leaders and host of international guests.

She acknowledged the African Union’s support in the fight against Ebola. “In challenging times when we were faced with the Ebola virus, the solidarity of the African Union was phenomenal,” she graciously acceded. She also highlighted the role played by the some 855 African health workers from various countries across the continent who provided support in the three most affected countries including Liberia, Guinea and Sierra Leone. She recalled with joy the warm welcome by the then Foreign Minister of South Africa Dr. Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma who, along with other women escorted her to the first Summit in January 2006 in Khartoum. President Sirleaf said it as a privilege to be a part of the AU, which has grown from strength to strength in exploring strategies and tackling the challenges to accelerate development.

President Sirleaf expressed deep appreciation for the opportunity to give closing remarks and speak to the distinguished AU body for the last time in her capacity as President of the Republic of Liberia.

She then extended heartfelt thanks and appreciation to His Excellency Mr. Hailemariam Dessalegn, the Government and people of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia for their hospitality and kind courtesies during the hosting of sessions of the AU.

During the closing ceremony, two Commissioners of the African Union Commission were sworn into office. Those sworn in were H.E. Ms. Agbor Sarah MbiEnow Anyang of Cameroun who was elected to the post of Commissioner for Human Resources, Science and Technology and H.E. Mr. Victor Harrison of Madagascar who was elected as Commissioner for Economic Affairs. In addition, three members were elected to the African Union Advisory Board on Corruption while 4 also elected as members of the African Commission on Human and



People's Rights.

In his concluding remarks, Guinean President, Alpha Conde and current Chairperson of the African Union, urged Member States to execute the agreed additional 0.2% tax on imported items so as to ensure financial autonomy of the AU in line with the agreement reached earlier.

President Condé also stressed the need for Member States to implement the First Phase of the continental Free Trade Area by the end of 2017 while addressing the issue of tariff barriers.

The two-day summit reviewed reports on AU reforms, current peace and security on the continent, implementation of Agenda 2063 and the 2018 AU budget, among others. The 29th AU Summit agreed that the AU would be tasked with ensuring economic independence by generating job opportunities for Africa's youth who have become affected due to illegal migration.

Meanwhile, the African Union Assembly endorsed in conformity with Article 11 (2) of the PSC Protocol, the recommendations made by the Chairperson of the Commission regarding the appointment of the new members of the AU Panel of the Wise. The Assembly accordingly appointed - for the Western Africa Region, Mrs. Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, President of the Republic of Liberia and 2011 Noble Peace Prize Winner as well as Dr. Speciosa W. Kazibwe of Uganda, Mr. Armah Moussa of Egypt, responsible for Eastern and Northern Africa Regions. Also appointed were Mrs. Catherine Samba-Panza from Central African Republic who was named on behalf of Central African Region and Mr. Hifikepunye Pohhamba, former President of Namibia for Southern Africa Region and will serve a three-year tenure.

The Assembly further decided that the outgoing members of the Panel of the Wise shall become members of the Group of Friends of Panel in line with the Assembly's decision (AU/Dec (XV) and the related report of the Chairperson of the Commission. The AU requested the Chairperson of the Commission to ensure that the required support is placed at the disposal of the AU Panel of Wise to enable it fully discharge its mandate, particularly through proactive preventive engagement among others. President Sirleaf and delegation returned home on Wednesday, 05 July 2017. Some Pictures:

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President Sirleaf addressing 29th AU Assambly in Addis Ababa.

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Interior view of AU Assambly Hall

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