Statement by H.E. President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf
at the African Union Summit
on the High-Level Panel on Fragile States
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
January 30, 2014

His Excellency President Abdel Aziz, Chairman of the African Union;
Her Excellency Dr. Zuma, Chairperson of the African Union Commission;
Distinguished Colleagues of the Assembly and Heads of State and Government;
Ladies and Gentlemen:

I wish to thank our hosts – the Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, and the African Union – not only for the hospitality accorded, but also for the opportunity to brief you on the report of the High-Level Panel on Fragile States.

All of you now have the final report, titled *Ending Conflict and Building Peace in Africa: A Call to Action*, which recommends bold steps to reverse the entrapment of fragile states in poverty, while promoting the spirit of friendship and partnership, embodied in optimism and commitment throughout all of our nations.

The Panel conducted a robust, year-long consultative and deliberative process with African governments and civil societies whose responses noted that fragility is a universal problem; that all nations directly or indirectly are at risk, and must work to collectively address this risk; that countries that lack robust institutions, diversified economies and inclusive political systems are the most vulnerable. Fragility, therefore, comes about when internal or external pressures become too great for national institutions and political processes to manage, thereby creating a risk of violence.

The analysis clearly shows that fragility is rooted in poverty, and that poverty is complex and multidimensional. It determined that there are special circumstances of fragile states that need to be addressed through sustainable development and inclusive growth, which take into account changing population dynamics for job creation; ensure healthy, skilled and educated individuals; promote better management and equitable access to natural resources; reduce inequalities, especially among our youth and women; and increase social protection for the most vulnerable.

Managing the underlying drivers of conflict require adequate policy responses to some of the most disruptive social, economic and environmental changes; that building resilient states and societies, through stronger links of institutions, and partnerships at the national and regional levels, the private sector and civil societies, are paramount to our continent's survival.

The report endorses the findings of The New Deal on Fragile States, which calls for stronger ownership, harmonization, results and mutual accountability; that broad-based and participatory country leadership and ownership of all actors, including government, civil society and the private sector, all are pre-conditions for sustained and irreversible gains.

The report, which is based on the themes of managing change and forging partnership, recognizes that Africa is changing at extraordinary speeds, and that the values of peace, security and justice are central to development. These changes pose certain risks. For these reasons, fragility is seen not as a category of states, but as a risk inherent in the development processes in every country and region, and on every level.

If we are to build resilient and legitimate states, address the potential drivers of conflict and effectively meet the challenges of change that will inevitably come, there is need for inclusive and pro-active policies to be implemented by all African countries, regional and continental institutions, as well as development partners.

It shows that fragile states can build resilience through regionalism and linkages across borders; that the greater the density of regional or intergovernmental agreements, the greater their resilience will be to conflict and fragility. There is a need for cooperation to be led by Regional Economic Communities that operate within the political context of the African Union. The report calls for even greater involvement of our continental institutions, particularly the African Development Bank, which has championed this cause, to intermediate among all stakeholders of the society, including the private sector, to ensure the end of fragility through resilient states.

The report calls for policies implemented going forward to be done under the framework of five recommendations, which stipulate:
1. increased focus on potentially disruptive economic, social and environmental change. To be successful, we must be more preventative, than reactive, in addressing threats to our development process.
2. new instruments for supporting private sector development in isolated economies in sectors such as transport infrastructure and the movement of people and goods.
3. more use of private sector and civil society capacity in delivering public goods and services.
4. investment in regional frameworks for resilience, which can be accomplished under the overall political framework of the African Union; and
5. integration of a response to conflict and fragility. This can be achieved by agencies (government, private institutions and civil society) acting as components of a larger operation with shared goals and strategies towards state- and peace-building.

There is confidence that with the guidance and commitment of Member States, measures can be implemented to ensure that, in the future and in conflict-affected areas, no person, community or nation will be left behind, and everyone can look to prosperity through sustained growth development.

Thank you.