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## **Africa gets first elected female president**

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**12 November, 2005**

## **THE ARTICLE**

### **Africa gets first elected female president**

After a topsy-turvy and often acrimonious election, Liberia's Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf is set to become Africa's first ever democratically elected female president. With 97 percent of the vote counted, the former Liberian finance minister and Harvard-educated economist will soon be declared the winner. Having gained 59.4 percent of the ballots cast, she has an unassailable lead over her rival George Weah, the former world soccer player of the year. Liberia's "Iron Lady" said: "Africa is ready for a female president...Women have the education, the character, the competence, and the integrity to lead the nation." She also stated that: "This is the time to ...get Liberians out of the psychological, economic and political wreckages of war and enthrone true democracy."

Supporters of Mr. Weah are crying foul, claiming the election was spoiled by fraud. Violence erupted in front of polling stations and peacekeepers in riot gear fired tear gas to disperse angry crowds. Two U.N. soldiers were injured in the skirmishes. Mr. Weah has implored protestors to refrain from violence. The threat of unrest and claims of election fraud carry the potential of returning Liberia to the turmoil of civil war, which recently ravaged the country's economy and killed a quarter of a million people. Ms. Johnson-Sirleaf remains unperturbed about the protests and the prospect of coups and civil war, saying she was eager to "start the process of renewal and rebuilding". She said she would make Africans proud of her performance. "I look forward to the challenge," she said.

## **WARM-UPS**

**1. I'M PRESIDENT:** You are now president of your country (or of any other country of your choosing). Walk around the class and talk to the other "presidents" about their jobs. What are their plans for the week? What are the biggest problems they currently face? What do they think of other presidents and world leaders?

**2. WOMEN LEADERS:** Are women or men better world leaders? Discuss this with your partner(s). Talk about the following democratically elected female leaders:

- Angela Merkel (Germany)
- Helen Clark (New Zealand)
- Aung San Suu Kyi (Myanmar)
- Gloria Arroyo (Philippines)
- Chandrika Kumaratunga (Sri Lanka)
- Yuliya Tymoshenko (Ukraine)
- Margaret Thatcher (U.K.)
- Benazir Bhutto (Pakistan)
- Indira Gandhi (India)
- Golda Meir (Israel)

**3. CHAT:** In pairs / groups, decide which of these topics or words are most interesting and which are most boring.

*Elections / democracy / female leaders / Harvard / finance ministers / Liberia / George Weah / women / integrity / civil war / fraud / riots / challenges*

Have a chat about the topics you liked. For more conversation, change topics and partners frequently.

**4. LIBERIA:** Spend one minute writing down all of the different words you associate with Liberia. Share your words with your partner(s) and talk about them. Together, put the words into different categories.

**5. AFRICAN LEADERS:** Are African leaders different from other world leaders? What challenges do they face that other world leaders do not? Discuss this with your partner(s). Talk about the following African leaders:

- Hosni Mubarak (Egypt)
- Thabo Mbeki (South Africa)
- Robert Mugabe (Zimbabwe)
- Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf (Liberia)
- Joseph Kabila (Congo)
- Paul Kagame (Rwanda)
- Olusegun Obasanjo (Nigeria)
- Muammar al-Qaddafi (Libya)
- King Mswati III (Swaziland)
- Other

Write down one adjective that best describes each of the leaders. Explain to your partner(s) why you chose your adjectives. Decide on whose adjective for each leader is best.

**6. HILLARY OR CONDI?** Have a quick debate with your partner. Which woman would be best as the next U.S. President – Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice or New York senator Hillary Clinton? Students A choose Condi, Students B argue for Hillary.

## **BEFORE READING / LISTENING**

**1. TRUE / FALSE:** Look at the article's headline and guess whether these sentences are true (T) or false (F):

- a. Liberia had a topsy-turvy and often acrimonious election. T / F
- b. The Harvard-educated, ex-finance minister is set to become president. T / F
- c. Her main election rival was a former world soccer player of the year. T / F
- d. Liberia's new leader is nicknamed the "Gold Lady". T / F
- e. Her opponent has said the election was fairly contested. T / F
- f. Two U.N. soldiers died in skirmishes outside polling stations. T / F
- g. A recent civil war in Liberia saw over a million people die. T / F
- h. Liberia's new leader wants to make Africa proud of her performance. T / F

**2. SYNONYM MATCH:** Match the following synonyms from the article:

- |                 |               |
|-----------------|---------------|
| a. topsy-turvy  | devastated    |
| b. acrimonious  | honesty       |
| c. unassailable | install       |
| d. integrity    | unbeatable    |
| e. enthrone     | altercations  |
| f. crying foul  | chaos         |
| g. skirmishes   | chaotic       |
| h. turmoil      | remonstrating |
| i. ravaged      | calm          |
| j. unperturbed  | bitter        |

**3. PHRASE MATCH:** Match the following phrases from the article (sometimes more than one combination is possible):

- |   |                              |
|---|------------------------------|
| a. a topsy-turvy and often              | of civil war                 |
| b. Africa's first ever democratically   | lead over her rival          |
| c. she has an unassailable              | foul                         |
| d. the competence and the integrity     | true democracy               |
| e. enthrone                             | in the skirmishes            |
| f. Supporters of Mr. Weah are crying    | elected female president     |
| g. peacekeepers in riot gear fired tear | renewal and rebuilding       |
| h. Two U.N. soldiers were injured       | to lead the nation           |
| i. returning Liberia to the turmoil     | acrimonious election         |
| j. start the process of                 | gas to disperse angry crowds |

## WHILE READING / LISTENING

**GAP FILL:** Put the words in the column on the right into the gaps in the text.

### Africa gets first elected female president

After a \_\_\_\_\_ and often acrimonious election, Liberia's Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf is set to become Africa's first ever democratically elected female president. With 97 percent of the vote \_\_\_\_\_, the former Liberian finance minister and Harvard-educated economist will soon be \_\_\_\_\_ the winner. Having gained 59.4 percent of the \_\_\_\_\_ cast, she has an unassailable lead over her \_\_\_\_\_ George Weah, the former world soccer player of the year. Liberia's "Iron Lady" said: "Africa is ready for a female president...Women have the education, the \_\_\_\_\_, the competence, and the integrity to \_\_\_\_\_ the nation." She also stated that: "This is the time to ...get Liberians out of the psychological, economic and political wreckages of \_\_\_\_\_ and enthrone true democracy."

Supporters of Mr. Weah are \_\_\_\_\_ foul, claiming the election was \_\_\_\_\_ by fraud. Violence erupted in front of polling stations and peacekeepers in riot \_\_\_\_\_ fired tear gas to disperse angry crowds. Two U.N. soldiers were injured in the skirmishes. Mr. Weah has \_\_\_\_\_ protestors to refrain from violence. The threat of unrest and claims of election fraud carry the potential of returning Liberia to the turmoil of civil war, which recently \_\_\_\_\_ the country's economy and killed a quarter of a million people. Ms. Johnson-Sirleaf remains unperturbed about the protests and the prospect of \_\_\_\_\_ and civil war, saying she was \_\_\_\_\_ to "start the process of renewal and rebuilding". She said she would make Africans \_\_\_\_\_ of her performance. "I look forward to the challenge," she said.

*ballots*  
*character*  
*counted*  
*rival*  
*topsy-turvy*  
*war*  
*declared*  
*lead*  
*gear*  
*ravaged*  
*eager*  
*crying*  
*implored*  
*proud*  
*coups*  
*spoiled*

## **LISTENING**

Listen and fill in the spaces.

### **Africa gets first elected female president**

After a \_\_\_\_\_-\_\_\_\_\_ and often acrimonious election, Liberia's Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf is set to become Africa's first ever democratically elected female president. With 97 percent of the vote counted, the \_\_\_\_\_ Liberian finance minister and Harvard-educated economist will soon be declared the winner. Having gained 59.4 percent of the ballots \_\_\_\_\_, she has an \_\_\_\_\_ lead over her rival George Weah, the former world soccer player of the year. Liberia's "Iron Lady" said: "Africa is ready for a female president....Women have the education, the character, the \_\_\_\_\_, and the \_\_\_\_\_ to lead the nation." She also stated that: "This is the time to ...get Liberians out of the psychological, economic and political wreckages of war and \_\_\_\_\_ true democracy."

Supporters of Mr. Weah are \_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_, claiming the election was spoiled by fraud. Violence erupted in front of polling stations and peacekeepers in riot gear fired tear gas to \_\_\_\_\_ angry crowds. Two U.N. soldiers were injured in the skirmishes. Mr. Weah has implored protestors to \_\_\_\_\_ from violence. The threat of unrest and claims of election fraud carry the potential of returning Liberia to the \_\_\_\_\_ of civil war, which recently \_\_\_\_\_ the country's economy and killed a quarter of a million people. Ms. Johnson-Sirleaf remains \_\_\_\_\_ about the protests and the prospect of coups and civil war, saying she was eager to "start the process of renewal and rebuilding". She said she would make Africans \_\_\_\_\_ of her performance. "I look forward to the challenge," she said.

## **AFTER READING / LISTENING**

**1. WORD SEARCH:** Look in your dictionaries / computer to find collocates, other meanings, information, synonyms ... for the words **'tear'** and **'gas'**.

- Share your findings with your partners.
- Make questions using the words you found.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

**2. ARTICLE QUESTIONS:** Look back at the article and write down some questions you would like to ask the class about the text.

- Share your questions with other classmates / groups.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

**3. GAP FILL:** In pairs / groups, compare your answers to this exercise. Check your answers. Talk about the words from the gap fill. Were they new, interesting, worth learning...?

**4. VOCABULARY:** Circle any words you do not understand. In groups, pool unknown words and use dictionaries to find their meanings.

**5. STUDENT "FEMALE LEADER" SURVEY:** In pairs / groups, write down questions about Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf and other female world leaders.

- Ask other classmates your questions and note down their answers.
- Go back to your original partner / group and compare your findings.
- Make mini-presentations to other groups on your findings.

**6. TEST EACH OTHER:** Look at the words below. With your partner, try to recall exactly how these were used in the text:

- acrimonious
- 97 percent
- 59.4 percent
- soccer
- integrity
- enthrone
- crying
- crowds
- skirmishes
- turmoil
- eager
- challenge

## **DISCUSSION**

### STUDENT A's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student B)

- a. Did the headline make you want to read the article?
- b. What do you know about Liberia?
- c. Have you been following news of the Liberian election?
- d. Do you think a celebrity running in an election makes it more interesting?
- e. What do you think of people who vote for soccer stars, beauty queens and bad actors in political elections?
- f. Do you think Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf will be a successful leader?
- g. Do you think America's next President will be female?
- h. Do you think the question of whether a country's leader is male or female is much of an issue?
- i. What do you think are Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf's main challenges?
- j. What are your main challenges?

### STUDENT B's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student A)

- a. Did you like reading this article?
- b. What do you think about what you read?
- c. What do you think is the significance of an African country electing a female leader for the first time?
- d. Do you think "Africa is ready for a female president"?
- e. Would you have voted for the soccer star or the economist?
- f. What do you think female leaders talk about when they meet at different world events?
- g. Would you prefer the leader of your country to be male or female?
- h. Which of their continent's leaders can Africans be proud of?
- i. Are you proud of your country's leader? (Why / Why not?)
- j. Did you like this discussion?

**AFTER DISCUSSION:** Join another partner / group and tell them what you talked about.

- a. What was the most interesting thing you heard?
- b. Was there a question you didn't like?
- c. Was there something you totally disagreed with?
- d. What did you like talking about?
- e. Which was the most difficult question?



## **SPEAKING**

**LEADER:** There will be an election in your country soon. You believe you have what it takes to be leader. In the column on the right, write down examples of how your experience, personality, ideas and ambition support the virtues listed in the column on the left. It has been known for politicians to lie during election campaigns. You may also bend the truth.

VIRTUES	ME
Leadership	
Great ideas	
Integrity	
Determination	
Strength	
Experience	
Competence	

- In pairs / groups, show each other what you wrote. Provide feedback and advice to improve or 'spice up' the virtues to make you all sound like better leaders.
- Join new groups. Tell each other why you would make the best leader. Discuss what was said and vote for your group's leader.
- Walk around the classroom campaigning for your group's leader.
- In groups discuss the candidates you heard and decide who sounded best.
- After you have finished, talk about the politicians you know, or suspect, to have lied and the lies they told. Were these lies damaging?

## **HOMEWORK**

**1. VOCABULARY EXTENSION:** Choose several of the words from the text. Use a dictionary or Google's search field (or another search engine) to build up more associations / collocations of each word.

**2. INTERNET:** Search the Internet and find more information on Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf. Share your findings with your class in the next lesson. Did you all find out similar things?

**3. FEMALE LEADER:** Make a poster profiling the female leader of a country (past or present). Show your posters to your classmates in your next lesson. Did you all find out similar things?

**4. LETTER:** Write a letter to Liberia's new leader Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf. Tell her what you think of her election victory. Give her advice for the challenges she faces. Show what you wrote to your classmates in the next lesson. Did you all write about similar things or give similar advice?

## ANSWERS

### TRUE / FALSE:

- a. T      b. T      c. T      d. F      e. F      f. F      g. F      h. T

### SYNONYM MATCH:

- |                 |               |
|-----------------|---------------|
| a. topsy-turvy  | chaotic       |
| b. acrimonious  | bitter        |
| c. unassailable | unbeatable    |
| d. integrity    | honesty       |
| e. enthrone     | install       |
| f. crying foul  | remonstrating |
| g. skirmishes   | altercations  |
| h. turmoil      | chaos         |
| i. ravaged      | devastated    |
| j. unperturbed  | calm          |

### PHRASE MATCH:

- |   |                              |
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| a. a topsy-turvy and often              | acrimonious election         |
| b. Africa's first ever democratically   | elected female president     |
| c. she has an unassailable              | lead over her rival          |
| d. the competence and the integrity     | to lead the nation           |
| e. enthrone                             | true democracy               |
| f. Supporters of Mr. Weah are crying    | foul                         |
| g. peacekeepers in riot gear fired tear | gas to disperse angry crowds |
| h. Two U.N. soldiers were injured       | in the skirmishes            |
| i. returning Liberia to the turmoil     | of civil war                 |
| j. start the process of                 | renewal and rebuilding       |

### GAP FILL:

#### Africa gets first elected female president

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