



ADDRESS BY

HIS EXCELLENCY, PRESIDENT JULIUS

MAADA BIO

ON THE OCCASION OF

THE OFFICIAL LAUNCH OF THE

SECOND JUBA BRIDGE PROJECT,

14 NOVEMBER 2018.

His Excellency, the Ambassador to the People's Republic of China,

Ministers of Government Present,

Members of Parliament,

The Mayor, Municipality of Freetown,

Development Partners,

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen

I am tempted to tell a story. (Pause). Who wants to hear a story?

Once upon a time. . .

There was once a President. He built roads.

But most of the roads were poorly planned and exorbitantly costed. The majority of the roads were not completed in a timely fashion. Not much planning and strategic vision informed the decisions. There was no inter-departmental coordination. Telecommunications, water pipes, and underground cables were regularly destroyed during road construction. As long as they (those people in whose hands we entrusted governance) would make huge amounts of money through shady project overheads and downright shunting of the project, they cared little about long-term sustainability, traffic flow, or the possible adverse impact of the project on Sierra Leoneans.

When I campaigned, I campaigned on the promise that my government would deliver purposeful and well thought-out infrastructural projects. The people of Constituency 132 know what they need. We the residents of Freetown know what we need. We the people of Sierra Leone know what we need. We need infrastructural projects that are affordable by this country; infrastructural projects that are managed in a transparent manner; infrastructural projects that serve the inclusive

needs of every Sierra Leonean irrespective of region or party affiliation; infrastructural projects that make our communities accessible and sustainable; infrastructural projects that serve the development needs of our country; and, infrastructural projects that conform to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 11) set by the international community. So our idea of infrastructural development is not about money-making and not just a partisan show; it is about delivering infrastructure that serves the development needs of our citizens and our nation.

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

To say the Juba/Lumley/Regent Road Interchange is one of the most congested places in this city is an understatement. There is very little traffic flow; commercial vehicles stop at random to load and unload passengers and goods; hawkers and street traders as well as pedestrians complicate this challenging problem even more.

In the last six months, we robustly fought graft and corruption. We have been busy consolidating sound public financial management, streamlining domestic revenue mobilization, and bringing this country back into compliance with standards set by our international partners like the IMF. We have steadied the economic ship as we work to re-energize more sectors of the economy that will enhance our economic productivity. Our partners and friends now view us favorably. They know we are a serious and focused government – a government focused on timely, efficient, and purposeful service delivery. That is good for every Sierra Leonean.

I also created the Office of Presidential Infrastructure Initiative led by Dr. Tambi, a highly trained public works engineering professional who comes with tremendous international

experience on several continents. His office will plan, design and implement strategic and transformative infrastructure projects on an integrated basis for the next five years. They will continue to give sound advice. I recognize and applaud their input in coordinating cooperation to undertake this bridge project today. I also acknowledge and commend our various development partners. I acknowledge, especially, the generosity and goodwill of the Government and people of the People's Republic of China. I recognize the leadership and coordinating roles our MDAs (especially the SLRA) have played in initiating this urban public works project. I thank our technical experts, engineers, and contractors who will be undertaking this work and who will ensure that this second Juba bridge is completed in a timely fashion. I need not remind everyone again, that my government is all about timely delivery and my government and the people of Sierra Leone expect the timely completion of this new Juba bridge.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The construction of the second bridge was part of the original Lumley –Tokeh (Peninsular Road) Project funded by our development partners. For some reason, and don't ask me why, the second bridge was never constructed. The assigned amount of over \$3 million has yet to be located. Like other infrastructural funds, it seemed to have disappeared. The impact of the refusal/failure to build the bridge is felt by everyone. Everyday commuters from Lumley to Juba, Goderich, Metchem, 7th Battalion, and beyond continue to suffer because of the traffic congestion and gridlock around the single one lane bridge. Our citizens struggle to travel to work and to access services (including medical and pre-natal services for mothers). Our children struggle to travel to and from their schools. Our nurses, Police officers, government workers, private investors, ordinary citizens struggle to travel through and to the Lumley area. Mobility is limited and this

also limits economic growth in areas around and beyond this congested area. The traffic congestion is also harmful for our environment. Toxic fumes and heavy carbon pollutants are emitted from the exhaust pipes of stalled and slow-moving vehicular traffic. Our citizens are at great risk of respiratory and other related diseases. The traffic congestion is not good for our health, not good for our children in educational institutions, not good for mothers trying to access medical services, not good for business and economic investment especially in tourism, and not good for our health and our environment. This second Juba bridge is therefore a necessity. Therefore, we are building it and we are building it in quick time. It will relieve the perpetual traffic jams in the area and make areas around, through, and beyond Lumley more accessible for all Sierra Leoneans.

There are things that are unique about this bridge project that I must highlight.

- ✓ The new funding for this bridge does not add to the debt burden on Sierra Leoneans. It is virtually fully-funded.
- ✓ The bridge will be built according to schedule and in accordance with international standards.
- ✓ The bridge will be designed and built with conduits to accommodate utility lines and pipes, ICT lines, and essential other cables and lines. We are not going to be destroying ICT cables and uprooting water pipes.
- ✓ We are not just building a bridge for the sake of building a bridge. We are also planning to implement other general improvement programs around the bridge's location that will improve pedestrian traffic flow, street trading, vehicular movements and most importantly, road safety. We are planning new market areas and planning to provide ample off-street parking for all vehicles.

We are also improving and rehabilitating the Hill Station to Regent Road segment. Therefore, very soon, commuters can drive safely from Lumley to Regent with minimal delay. This will decrease travel time and travel costs while increasing mobility and social inclusion. It will improve safe and timely access to services, jobs, schools, and hospitals for all Sierra Leoneans. Our target in building this bridge and related infrastructural improvements is simple – it is about unlocking the tremendous economic potential of this city; it is about making our city sustainable; it is about making our city conducive and accessible for business and for our citizens; it is about making urban commuting safe for all Sierra Leoneans.

Once again, I thank all our development partners, the Presidential Infrastructure Initiative team, MDAs, and our contractors who have promised to deliver on time. I salute and thank the great people of Constituency 132 – Lumley and Juba Hills and their young and vibrant Member of Parliament, Hon Ibrahim Tawa Conteh. He is a man after my heart; he is passionate about this constituency and about the people of Sierra Leone. May God sustain us all in good health as we look forward to the completion of this bridge. With this, I now formally commission the start of work on the new Juba bridge.