



**KEYNOTE ADDRESS BY HIS  
EXCELLENCY, PRESIDENT JULIUS  
MAADA BIO AT THE LAUNCH OF THE  
COMMISSIONS OF INQUIRY, SPECIAL  
COURT COMPLEX, JOMO KENYATTA  
ROAD, FREETOWN, SIERRA LEONE.  
TUESDAY 29 JANUARY 2019.**

The Honourable Speaker of Parliament,

The Honourable Chief Justice,

Madam First Lady

Former Vice Presidents

The Chief Minister,

Ministers and Deputy Ministers of Government present,

Honourable Members of Parliament,

Paramount Chiefs and Other Traditional Leaders,

Members of the Diplomatic and Consular Corps,

Representatives of Our Development Partners,

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good Afternoon:

In May last year during my inaugural address, I launched three peaceful democratic wars: first, a war on indiscipline; second, a war on corruption and third, a war

on poverty. Today, we are here to affirm that the peaceful democratic war on corruption is unstoppable, unmistakable and winnable.

Corruption remains the single most critical deterrent to the development of Sierra Leone. It impedes human capital development which is the most critical driver of development in every country.

When monies meant for educating our children and youth population are stolen by just few people, that is a threat to our national development. When monies meant for providing basic social services for every citizen are stolen by just few people to build mansions and buy luxury cars, that is a threat to our national development.

When monies meant for providing healthcare facilities or ensuring food security for every Sierra Leonean are stolen by few people, that is a threat to our national development.

When grants or loans meant for building critical infrastructure that will propel economic activity and provide good paying jobs for our people are stolen by few people, that is a threat to our national development.

When few people collude among themselves and deprive our citizens and country of revenue from our rich natural resources and other sources of public revenue, their activities constitute a threat to our nation.

When people fraudulently convert public funds and resources to their own private use, waste public funds with impunity, and abuse their offices and authority to the detriment of millions of Sierra Leoneans, that is a threat to us as a nation.

And we must also be very clear that when people who occupy public offices steal public monies or engage in other forms of corruption, they do not do so on behalf of their tribe, their region or their political party. Rather, they do so as individuals or a group of individuals and they must be held accountable.

Corruption is a threat to our national development and national security. Corruption is a clear and present danger to the life of every Sierra Leonean and a threat to our

existence as a nation. We must confront corruption head on. We must be bold and resolute. We must fight and win this war on corruption.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) report has continued to remind us loudly that corruption was one of the main causes of the bloody civil war in this country. Despite strong anti-corruption laws introduced in 2000 and amended in 2008, governance institutions and national development have been perennially weakened by corruption. Corruption has thrived because there has been a lack of strong political will and the near absence of a steely determination to draw a line under corruption once and for all.

Successive government audit reports reminded government between 2007 and 2018 of gross inefficiencies and deficiencies in governance and public accountability, leakages, and downright squandering of state revenue and resources. The responses were more lip service to fighting corruption, sham trials, and backdoor acquittals and reinstatements of public officials.

Two days after I took up office, I commissioned a Governance Transition Team (GTT) to investigate perceived governance and public accountability issues that had led to the near collapse of the state. Their report concluded that rampant corruption, fiscal indiscipline, and abuse and misuse of public office had left Sierra Leone in a dysfunctional state. The country was overburdened with debt, a near moribund economy, weakened

governance institutions, and gross inefficiencies and injustices in governance processes. Based on the recommendation of the GTT report for judge-led Commissions of Inquiry, my government requested the legislature to debate and institute the Commissions of Inquiry as required by law.

The Commissions of Inquiry will look at three key issues: governance processes, assets, and the outcomes of the forensic audits. The forensic audits tracked fraudulent activities within entire chains of governance. The commission on assets will look closely at disparities between income or means and assets. The Commission on governance processes will examine inefficiencies and deficits in governance especially where people

deliberately misused public offices or took advantage of state institutions.

The judges have no stake in the politics of our country and they will sit as independent commissioners without bias or prejudice. It is not a political witch-hunt. Nobody is going to be asked whether he or she belongs to a political party or hails from a particular region. It is a simple process. The Commissioners will ask people questions, investigate what they are told and the evidence put before them, and thereafter present a report of their findings. As a government, we will act on those findings because it is in the national interest and it is for the public good. We will act on the findings to show Sierra Leoneans, including serving government officials that this must be the last Commission of Inquiry in our

history. These commissions will act as a deterrent to every Sierra Leonean who are or will be entrusted with the public trust. They will be a reminder that when one serves one's country, one must serve with honesty, fairness, justice, diligence, and compassion,

As I have said repeatedly, this war against corruption is a war we must win. I have fully empowered the Anti-Corruption Commission to use all its legal powers to relentlessly investigate and prosecute all cases of corruption even in my administration. **Therefore, let me make this solemn promise to the nation that anyone found wanton of corruption in my administration will be promptly removed from public office and subjected to the full force of the law.**

As a government, our fight against corruption is and will remain as consistent as it is robust. As a country, we must put an end to this culture of rampant thieving, abuse, waste, and impunity. We must foster a culture of public accountability. The Commissions of Inquiry are a public commitment by us as Sierra Leoneans to rid our country of corruption, fraud, abuse, and waste.

Therefore, the war against corruption is not just a fight for my government. I call on all political parties, ethnic groups, regions, NGOs, CSOs, religious bodies and Sierra Leoneans at home and abroad to join the war against corruption. The Commissions of Inquiry are part of our war against corruption.

As a people, the Commissions of Inquiry give an opportunity to hold accountable those we once entrusted with public offices. We owe it to our country; we owe it to our compatriots and generations yet unborn to get it right once and for all. This is about democratic accountability and our collective determination to win the war against corruption.

**Let me end by reiterating that all those who will be invited by the Commissions of Inquiry must fully comply. Anyone, I repeat anyone, who fails to honour the invitation of the Commissions of Inquiry will face the full force of the law.**

I therefore formally launch the Commissions of Inquiry.