



**ADDRESS BY HIS EXCELLENCY JULIUS  
MAADA BIO, PRESIDENT OF THE  
REPUBLIC OF SIERRA LEONE, ON THE  
OCCASION OF THE FORMAL OPENING  
OF THE 67<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL COUNCIL  
MEETING OF THE WEST AFRICAN  
EXAMINATIONS COUNCIL, FREETOWN,  
SIERRA LEONE - 19 MARCH 2019**

The Hon. Vice President

Ministers of Government,

Honourable Members of Parliament,

Your Excellencies, Members of the Diplomatic and  
Consular Corps,

Chairman of Council,

Heads of Delegations of WAEC Member Countries

Members of Council and The Registrar of Council

Distinguished Guests, Ladies, and Gentlemen,

Good Afternoon to all of you!

It is my singular honour and pleasure to welcome and thank every participant at this opening ceremony of the 67<sup>th</sup> Annual Council Meeting of the West African Examinations Council (WAEC). This meeting goes beyond simply affirming your primary role as a sub-regional examinations and credentialing body that develops and administers examinations in member countries. It is a reaffirmation of your commitment to

excellence, cooperation, and embracing change. For this, I thank you.

My government has prioritised investment in human capital development for the simple reason that an educated and skilled workforce is a critical and necessary factor in the development process. Included in the three staples of human capital development is Free Quality School Education (FQSE) which guarantees equal opportunity for and access to pre-primary through senior secondary school education. A key plank of that programme is quality – how do we ensure that our education prepares the very best graduates who are competitive in the twenty-first century global economy. That is clearly where WAEC comes in.

So the basis of this partnership between my government and the WAEC is one, I expect, based on ensuring not only the integrity of examinations but ensuring that the examinations are sufficiently rigorous to be considered relevant by institutions of further learning the world over.

So let me state our expectations as a government:

1. My government expects that WAEC should uphold and institutionalise core principles of integrity and transparency both about the quality of the examinations and the examinations process. We expect officials to maintain the highest standards of ethical practices in administering, grading, and delivering results.
2. My government also expects that the assessment is relevant to the curriculum and that the curriculum is a reliable index of assessment of the competence of the students. In the final analysis, WAEC has a duty to certify graduates as having credible levels of competence and possessing levels of expertise to carry out tasks relevant to national development outcomes of the respective nations served by WAEC or to pursue further studies.
3. We also expect professionalism and collaboration among the various country teams of WAEC. As we move ever so closer to regional integration, WAEC

should be seen to harmonise its strengths, embrace change, share best practices, review and adopt best practices elsewhere, and be responsive to a changing world. Part of this, as I have indicated elsewhere, comes from embracing a culture of excellence.

4. We also expect that WAEC is eager to embrace innovation and technology to deliver its services and to also maintain its integrity and relevance. I recognise that there may well be inequalities in access to technology in various parts of the sub-region, but that should not prevent WAEC from modernising its processes and practices by using available technology. Over the past decade, WAEC has introduced online registration, online results checking systems etc. I am sure we can do more with the available technology and we can innovate for the sake of excellence.

Those are our expectations as a government and I am informed that conversations at this meeting will grapple with some of those key issues and challenges. I am eager

to be informed about the outcomes of these deliberations because they have a direct bearing on our country's expectations that WAEC will continue to improve the standards and quality of education in Sierra Leone and across the sub-region.

Notwithstanding the many constraints and challenges, I am further informed that WAEC continues to be ranked among the leading International Examining Boards in Africa. I hope this continues to be the case and that action is taken to address those issues that could contribute to WAEC slipping in the rankings.

In recent years, WAEC has had its share of bad publicity mainly arising from fraudsters interfering with the conduct of WAEC's examinations and the processing of examination materials and certificates. This has resulted in a mushrooming of examination malpractices and efforts to counterfeit WAEC certificates. WAEC informs me that with effective international cooperation and collaboration in regulating examination procedures among member countries, they are optimistic that threats

to the credibility of the examinations they conduct would be drastically diminished.

Mr. Chairman, distinguished ladies and gentlemen, let me reaffirm my Government's commitment to meeting all obligations to WAEC. It is equally my hope that this Annual Council Meeting will inspire ideas and discussions on ways that we can make our examinations more credible.

Distinguished Council Members, let me express my most sincere wish that the discussions and resolutions resulting from this 67<sup>th</sup> Annual Council Meeting will positively contribute to the consolidation of the aims of the convention and its underlying philosophy.

Let me end by wishing all delegates the best for a successful and rewarding 67<sup>th</sup> Annual Council Meeting. I await your conclusions and recommendations with much interest and hope that they would contribute to greatly enhancing the quality of education and hence national development in the sub-region.

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I thank you for your attention and it is now my pleasure to declare open the 67<sup>th</sup> Annual Council Meeting of the West African Examinations Council (WAEC).