



**SHORT STATEMENT BY HIS EXCELLENCY
PRESIDENT**

DR. JULIUS MAADA BIO

**AT THE ANNUAL DINNER OF THE SIERRA LEONE
BAR ASSOCIATION**

**ON FRIDAY 13TH DECEMBER 2019 AT BINTUMANI
HOTEL**

AT 7:00PM

My Lord Chief Justice

Honorable Justices of the Supreme Court and Court of Appeal

Honorable Judges of the High Court

Honorable Magistrates Present

The Attorney General and Titular Head of the Bar

Ministers and Deputies Present

The President and other Executive Members of the Bar Association

Members of the Bar Association

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen

Good evening,

I know this is not an occasion for long speeches but even if my speech was a ten thousand word document, as lawyers you would still permit me to call it a "brief". Many of us who are not lawyers are very delighted to be here tonight because we were once told by the American lawyer, Joseph

H. Choate that "You cannot live without the lawyers and certainly you cannot die without them".

Lawyers would always be part of our lives and perhaps the best compliment I have ever read of lawyers was from a Japanese proverb which says "Only lawyers and painters can turn white to black". Tonight, it is also amazing to see our lawyers immaculately dressed and sharing such professional bond and camaraderie because when they are in courts they sometimes behave like physicians, when one says something, the other contradicts.

Ladies and Gentlemen, lawyers always have a way of confusing us the lay people with their legalese or complex writing, so the minute you read something that you can't understand, you can almost be sure that it was drawn up by a lawyer. For instance, on your invitation cards to this dinner and dance, it reads: "Let....Attend before the High Court of Customary in the Refectory Jurisdiction after having paid the prescribed filing fees of Le 500,000....."

The card goes on to state: "And further take notice that if you fail to attend at the hearing of this summons such steps will be taken against you as are socially permitted under the Old Pals Act and the Rules of the Cocktails and Medieval Feasting Divisions of the High Court of Customary, Refectory Jurisdiction". Hence, rather than being invited with a simple invitation card, we are summoned and confused with legal jargons. Even the "Agenda of the Programme", the Bar Association refers to it as "Particulars of Proceedings".

Despite these peculiarities about lawyers, tonight we can all agree with the words of Gabriel Macht who once said: "Lawyers serve a purpose, and we couldn't operate as society without them. They can make things more complicated and difficult, but there are certain times where the need for them is crucial to an argument or an event or an issue."

Distinguished guests, the Sierra Leone Bar Association plays a vital role in our society not only in advocating for

upholding the Rule of Law and providing access to justice but more importantly in enhancing our democratic dispensation. This means that a strong, independent and effective Bar Association is the cornerstone of democracy, justice, human rights and the rule of law. Also, as an integral part of the legal profession, the Bar Association has a duty to safeguard the quality, competence and ethics of members of the legal profession.

Therefore, the theme for this occasion, "Unity at the Bar", calls for a reflection by every member of the Bar. Tonight, each of you must examine your past and present actions and commit yourself to promote peace, unity and love among colleagues in the Bar. Elections within the Bar or framing the Bar's position on national issues should be elevated above national party politics and pro or anti-government sentiments.

Ladies and Gentlemen, a united Bar Association will not only enhance the credibility of the legal profession and correct misconception of political affiliation, but also, it will inspire

public confidence in the discharge of the Association's functions.

Distinguished guests, at the outset, I stated this was not a night for long speeches but I will be remiss if I fail to make this point that the Government and the Bar Association have a vested interest in upholding the Rule of Law and ensuring access to justice for citizens. This relationship should be underpinned by partnership and not confrontation. Therefore, we must build on this partnership to strengthen our democracy, protect the independence of the judiciary and ensure lawyers are able to practice without fear or favour.

On this note, I wish everyone a delightful and memorable dinner and dance.

I thank you.