



**Statement by His Excellency, Dr. Julius Maada Bio, at  
the Official Launch and Commissioning of the Sierra  
Leone National Drone Corridor. Friday, 29<sup>th</sup> November  
2019**

Development partners

Distinguished ladies and gentlemen

Fellow citizens

Good morning:

## NATIONAL DRONE CORRIDOR 2

Let me first thank UNICEF, DSTI, Njala University, the Civil Aviation Authority, and citizens of the great Kori Chiefdom for collaborating to establish this seminal national drone corridor.

**We are indeed proud that this is the first NATIONAL drone corridor in West Africa.** But beyond pride, we are excited that we are putting innovative technology to the service of our development aspirations.

As I have reiterated, we may be a small nation, but we are doing big things. **We believe, as a nation, that we can leapfrog the constraints of history, of infrastructure, and of geography to champion the small things that have a huge impact for our development agenda and to reach the last mile.**

We have already seen how technology is helping us streamline citizen registration with implications for financial inclusion, public service delivery, and the participation of citizens in the full life of our democracy.

We have used technology to streamline revenue collection and financial processes with implications for transparency and accountability in governance.

We have used technology and data to plan and review policy interventions with implications for focused investments and better outcomes.

**We are an inspired nation; we are an innovative nation and we will continue embracing technology because of the boundless opportunities it offers to us as a growing nation.**

Our progressive vision for the possibilities offered by drone technology predates but aligns with the African Union's '(High Level Panel on Emerging Technologies) 2018 call on member states "to use drones to boost Africa's development and accelerate transformation on the continent."

**We are particularly energised about the possibilities of drone technology to service primarily our human capital development priorities in free quality education, food**

**security, and quality healthcare and other ancillary development benefits.**

Here is a profile of possibilities:

**For Agriculture and food security,** drone technology can provide a bird's eye view of a farmer's crop, help in damming and irrigation pathways, spray fertilisers and insecticides more efficiently, and help in general crop monitoring and management. This leads to increased average acreage yields. Cash crop plantations can be more effectively monitored from the air by drones.

**Drone technology can help monitor green cover loss and** adequately anticipate general problems related to climate resilience and biodiversity loss as a result of human activity.

**In education, drones offer dynamic experiential learning for students especially in STEAM disciplines and expand the possibilities for teaching new curricula and new disciplines** that are critical to national development from waste management, urban planning, to infrastructure management to eco-tourism.

**For healthcare, drones can facilitate the rapid delivery of medical supplies** (for pregnant women undergoing Postpartum haemorrhage and help stem maternal mortality), vaccines, and life-saving medicines (such as snake-bite serum) or deal with medical emergencies in otherwise inaccessible areas where there may be an outbreak of communicable diseases.

**For disaster management, drones can help with aerial surveying**, mapping, and closely examining disaster areas in order to predict and act on possible developments.

In all of these use cases, drones not only help us deliver solutions but also help us collect pristine data and images that will help us make the best decisions.

Looking ahead, we anticipate that we will continue supporting the invaluable opportunities offered by drone technologies.

First, we believe that **we must craft an effective regulatory framework to manage and support emerging this drone ecosystem**. In doing this, we will consider best

practices in other parts of Africa and look at our unique local and future uses of the technology. Eventually, we will harmonise our policies with those of our neighbouring countries.

Second, we believe that **to ensure the safe and sustainable use of drone technology, we must develop a well-designed curriculum for training our emerging crop of drone pilots and engineers.**

I have always emphasised my great belief in the boundless talents of Sierra Leone's young innovators and entrepreneurs. I believe **we should start thinking innovative funding models and resource pools that will help support the emergence of a critical local mass of drone operators and entrepreneurs.** We must protect the product of their talents with strengthened Intellectual Property (IP) laws that are enforceable across board.

I will conclude by throwing a challenge to our partners that Sierra Leone is a site for testing, seeding, and scaling new ideas. We want to collaborate; we want to learn; we want

partnerships that will help us develop new use cases and expand the penetration of new drone technologies and practices.

**To all our partners, friends, and to all those who have made today happen and for a brighter future to look ever so possible, thank you again.**

With this, I now formally launch and commission the Sierra Leone National Drone Corridor.