



**STATEMENT BY HIS EXCELLENCY
PRESIDENT JULIUS MAADA BIO ON
OCCASION OF THE EXTRAORDINARY
SESSION OF THE ECOWAS AUTHORITY
OF HEADS OF STATE AND GOVERNMENT,
VIDEOCONFERENCE - 23 APRIL 2020**

Chairman, His Excellency Mahamadou Issoufou, President of the Republic of Niger,

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen

1. Let me from the outset thank the Chairman, **His Excellency Mahamadou Issoufou**, for convening this timely virtual meeting to discuss this global pandemic that is ravaging our region and the rest of the world.
2. I also wish to thank **His Excellency Jean-Claude Kassi BROU**, President of ECOWAS Commission, for the insightful presentation on the **Situation and Impact of the Corona Virus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) in the Region.**
3. May I use this opportunity to express my deepest condolences for the lives lost to the Corona Virus disease (COVID-19) within our ECOWAS family, Africa, and in the rest of the world. Therefore, I want to encourage your Excellences to consider making meaningful contributions to the Africa Union COVID-19 Response Fund.
4. Although there are fewer deaths from COVID-19 within the ECOWAS region, we must recognise and plan for the adverse impact of this global pandemic on our macroeconomic stability, economic productivity, regional trade, food security, and social safety. There are also implications for the debt burdens on regional states with lower revenues, low economic activity, non-existent cross border traffic and trade, and lower commodity prices still.
5. It will also forestall our agenda for human capital development and for sustainable and inclusive economic growth in the region.

6. In the short run, our task is to preserve macroeconomic stability and minimize the impact on the private sector and SMEs, the informal economy, and food security while sustaining productive sectors and stimulating domestic consumption.
7. There is also a case to be made for innovation, new economic models, diversification, and new possibilities to make our economies more productive and more resilient. The objective is a smoother post-COVID-10 economic take-off that creates even more jobs and more opportunities for our citizens in our region.
8. My government, with support of our development partners, has introduced a short-term Quick Action Economic Response Program to help cushion the impact of the pandemic on our citizens. The program aims to maintain macroeconomic stability, sustain the supply of essential commodities, administer a social safety net for vulnerable groups, bulwark the private sector, and provide some support for small and medium enterprises that employ many of our people.
9. **Chairman, Excellencies,** as the coronavirus spreads all over the world and throughout our region, our governments are rightly preoccupied with the health and survival of our people. I therefore wish to commend the entire region for the bold steps taken by governments in the fight against the coronavirus and the comparably lower infection rates and deaths.
10. As at this morning, Sierra Leone has 61 confirmed cases, one death, six recoveries and 608 under quarantine. Our current health system is barely coping with the confirmed cases.
11. My government has instituted bold measures to prevent, protect against, and curtail the spread of the corona virus. We have

restricted population movements and strongly urged citizens to observe hygiene protocols, social distancing, and other public health advisories. We have ramped up contact tracing, isolation, quarantine administration, and testing.

12. But with population flows across irregular border crossing points posing cross-border infection risks, the ECOWAS region must adopt common measures and a coordinated approach to fighting COVID-19.
13. **Excellencies**, May I also express that a global pandemic of this nature needs a coordinated global effort to address it. Therefore, we must work as a region in parallel with our global partners, if we are to minimize the effect on our region and to bring this pandemic to a complete end.
14. As a country, the assistance we have received so far from the local private sector and organisations, international development partners and friends, has helped us so far minimize the spread of COVID-19, to an average low in the region.
15. Esteemed colleagues, I wish to recognize the assistance of Alibaba; the Diplomatic Community in Sierra Leone; China Pharmaceutical Company; and Cotton Tree Foundation among others.
16. We have also received assistance with testing kits and other essential equipment from friendly partners (mainly The People's Republic of China).
17. Let me also thank our ECOWAS members for the donation received from the West Africa Health Organization (WAHO) in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic.
18. In conclusion, I wish to reiterate my firm commitment to working with ECOWAS and the policies we intend to implement in order to

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eradicate the coronavirus in our region and the world, minimize the impact on our economies, and prepare our economies for renewed growth.

Thank you all