



**STATEMENT BY HIS EXCELLENCY, DR JULIUS
MAADA BIO, PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC
OF SIERRA LEONE, AT THE MEETING WITH
MEMBERS OF THE DIPLOMATIC CORPS AT
THE PRESIDENTIAL LODGE, HILL STATION,
FREETOWN – 21 MAY 2020**

COURTESIES

1. Let me, from the outset, share Ramadan greetings and pray that the fullness of the blessings of the month be granted to all members of the Diplomatic and Consular Corps in Sierra Leone.
2. At this difficult moment of the Coronavirus pandemic in all of our lives, I thank everyone present for promptly responding to my invitation to a meeting.
3. I salute and associate strongly with focused and intensive multilateral global efforts by countries and international organizations including the United Nations, the WHO, the African Union, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and ECOWAS, among others, in battling this highly infectious and deadly pandemic.
4. On behalf of the Government and people of the Republic of Sierra Leone, I wish to express my sincere condolences to families in all of our countries that have lost their citizens and loved ones to this deadly pandemic.
5. Sierra Leone is committed to all global efforts at preventing, protecting against, and curtailing COVID-19. Sierra Leone is fully supportive of global initiatives to enhance health security and build capacities for responding to health emergencies, especially disease outbreaks that threaten global development.

ON COVID 19

6. Sierra Leone's response to COVID-19 was early and well-considered. Even before our index case, Government and partners had triggered

off healthcare protocols, reactivated all EOC pillars, and set up structures for quarantining, testing, disease surveillance, contact tracing, and isolation and treatment centres.

7. Our technical and resource capacities have been further bolstered with generous support from our friends and diplomatic partners. For that, we are most grateful.
8. Inasmuch as COVID is here, I may wish to remind partners that our healthcare facilities are in great need of necessary medical supplies, equipment, and infrastructure as we continue to deal with Maternal and child health, malaria, HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis and other disease conditions.
9. With regard to COVID-19, we have garnered and used mainly local resources to support the different pillars. Our medical personnel have recorded impressive successes. We have also used innovative technology solutions and other strategies. We are appealing for support in specific areas:
 - Co-leadership on driving coordination among various pillars and support and strengthening specific pillars within the EOC – testing, logistics, quarantine administration, risk communications and social mobilisation, and contact tracing.
 - Support for local research and development especially with local partners like DSTI
 - Support for surveillance and contact tracing so that our fight is informed by consistent and real-time data. To complement local

technology solutions and personnel capacity, we would like to equip our workers with devices such as tablets and phones.

THE ECONOMY

10. With regard to the economy, we have launched a Quick Action Economic Recovery Plan, details of which we shared with this community. Generally, responses have been favourable although further interventions by our development partners will help stabilise the economic situation and prepare the country for a smoother take-off at the end of COVID.

PEACE AND SECURITY

11. We are all aware of the recent unfortunate incidents of criminal violence in Lunsar, Tombo, Foredugu, and Pademba Road Correctional Centre. Government has a responsibility to ensure law and order throughout the country.
12. Those who incite, support, perpetuate, or benefit from such criminal violence are not making peaceful political expressions.
13. As moral guarantors of the peace we enjoy in Sierra Leone, we expect an unambiguous condemnation of such criminal violence from our development partners.
14. Every state the world over (including the UK, US etc) delegitimizes the use of criminal violence by persons or groups to intimidate the public and upend the rule of law. Where this directly targets state authority and the rule of law, it is declared an act of

terrorism against the state. I am sure you will agree that such criminal violence that endangers life and property, public safety, or interferes with the peaceful governance of the state is unacceptable and must be addressed within the confines of the laws of this country.

15. Beyond condemnation of such criminal violence against the state and state authority, we expect our partners to cooperate very closely in supporting peace, public safety, and security at all levels and at all times.
16. Investigations have identified members of the All People's Congress party including a former Member of Parliament of that party as being responsible for incitement and acts of violence. One would expect the APC to condemn and dissociate itself from such persons and their acts. They have yet to do so.
17. As Government, we have initiated dialogue on national cohesion and peacebuilding and we have engaged the leadership of the APC. We are open to further dialogue with clear objectives of making permanent peace. We expect you, the moral guarantors of our peace and our partners in development, to patiently urge the APC to cooperate and participate in dialogue that brings about a permanent cessation of all acts of hostility and criminal violence against the state. We believe it is best for Sierra Leone and for the future of Sierra Leone that partners continue to invest in peacebuilding.
18. My Government has also met with civil society and we have agreed on a permanent framework for identifying structural and other imbalances that have triggered and could trigger conflict in our

country. I have appointed the Honourable Vice President (who has extensive national and international civil society credentials) to work closely with Civil Society on those and other issues pertaining to further opening up democratic and civic spaces. We will invite you, our international partners, to actively participate in those dialogues.

19. In conclusion, let me once again thank the international community for standing by us and we believe that by heightening and broadening future cooperation, we will all make Sierra Leone what we all desire – a favourable destination for business, and a peaceful and well-governed state where the rule of law is supreme.

I thank you.