

COMMISSIONING OF INSHORE PATROL CRAFT 1



**STATEMENT BY HIS EXCELLENCY, DR. JULIUS MAADA
BIO, PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF SIERRA LEONE
AND COMMANDER –IN–CHIEF OF THE REPUBLIC OF
SIERRA LEONE ARMED FORCES, ON THE OCCASION OF
THE COMMISSIONING OF FOUR SOUTH KOREAN GIFTED
INSHORE PATROL CRAFT. FREETOWN: MURRAY TOWN
NAVAL BASE, 22 OCTOBER 2020**

Your Excellency, Ambassador Lee In Tae, the Ambassador of the Republic of Korea in Nigeria with accreditation to Sierra Leone
Minister of Governments,
Heads of Departments and Agencies,
Officers, Men, and Women of the Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces

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Officers, Men and women of the Sierra Leone Navy,
Distinguished ladies and gentlemen.
Good morning.

Let me, from the outset, extend hearty fraternal greetings from the Government and people of the Republic of Sierra Leone to President Moon Jae In and the Government and people of the Republic of Korea.

I also want to heartily welcome again, Your Excellency, the Ambassador of the Republic of Korea with accreditation to Sierra Leone, Ambassador Lee In Tae. Since we met last year, Ambassador Lee has stayed engaged with my Government in discussing how we can strengthen and further broaden our friendly bilateral relations. For that, Sierra Leone is most grateful.

We acknowledge our existing economic cooperation and especially the Republic of Korea's support for the fishing sector. We are also grateful for ongoing infrastructure projects and we look forward to expanding areas of development cooperation. Sierra Leone stands ready to learn the very valuable lessons from the development experience of the Republic of Korea.

Sierra Leone also commits to working within the Korea-Africa Framework of Cooperation, 2017-2021, in order to enhance cooperation on trade, manufacturing, industrial development, agriculture, telecommunications, human resource development, science and technology, infrastructural development, and the blue economy, among others. Sierra Leone truly appreciates the Republic of Korea's commitment to cooperating towards the development goals outlined in Sierra Leone's Medium Term National Development Plan.

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Your Excellency, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, our development agenda as outlined in our New Direction manifesto aligns with larger sub-regional and global development aspirations in both the Africa 2063 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals 2030. But our plans are tailored to our specific development context.

As a nation, we have had to contend with large scale plunder of our marine resources through illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing. Within our 200-mile Exclusive Economic Zone alone, this illegal, unregulated, and unreported loot by foreign vessels, I am informed, costs our nation over 26 million dollars in revenue loss, thousands of jobs, loss of livelihoods for coastal and other communities that could otherwise benefit from an agile fishing industry, and great shortage of fish in the local market. It is a threat to food security, livelihoods, economic development, and sustainable fisheries management that our small nation can ill-afford.

Add this to the millions of dollars lost to other such illegal activities as tax evasion; under-reporting of fish catch, and overfishing of our waters that degrade our marine environment and strip local fishing communities of their livelihoods, and the real cost of these illegal acts by illegal foreign vessels mounts.

Additionally, as a nation, we cannot afford the cost of such criminal activities as unregulated immigration, contraband smuggling, narcotics, human trafficking and labour rights, robbery at sea, and sea piracy. These collectively and each undermine the rule of law and the steady economic gains we are making as a nation. It is also a disincentive for businesses looking to invest in our nation's much untapped blue economy especially in the areas of maritime transport and fisheries. We are therefore looking to

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further enhance the capacity of our navy and maritime support fleet.

We have recognized the need for a sub-regional approach of strong collaboration to tackle these transnational crimes and security challenges. We are committed to working with sister countries in the sub-region and through appropriate sub-regional bodies to make the Gulf of Guinea safer and more secure.

I must also note that our brave men and women of the Sierra Leone Navy and members of the maritime agency are first responders in search and rescue operations when boats are stranded or afflicted at sea. We cannot afford to lose precious lives in more sea accidents.

These Inshore Patrol Craft, gifted by the Government and People of the Republic of Korea will help us greatly to start addressing some of these foregoing challenges. I want to therefore thank the Government and People of The Republic of Korea through Your Excellency, Mr. Lee-in Tae. With the gifting of these naval assets, you have shown a commitment to both developing the capacity of our Navy and supporting us to address the attendant challenges to our development and security I have mentioned today.

No doubt, these new naval assets will boost the operational capability of our navy; help us secure our maritime domain, and support in enforcing the rule of law. They will support search and rescue operations, limited fisheries protection, and other security duties. They will support port security patrols and lift capability for boarding teams that will inspect or screen merchant cargo and other vessels prior to entering port.

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I also want to thank the leadership of the Ministry of Defence for their relentless efforts at augmenting the capacity and training of our armed forces. I thank you for your commitment to working towards achieving my Government's goal of revitalizing the Joint Maritime Committee (JMC) and implementing effective and sustainable surveillance and security systems in Sierra Leone's waters.

With these brief remarks, I hereby officially commission the four Inshore Patrol Craft (IPC 01, 02, 03, and 04) into service.

I thank you.