



2ND ANNUAL CGA-APRM PAN-AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT CONFERENCE

"CREATING THE AFRICA, WE WANT, CREATING THE SIXTH REGION WE WANT"

Virtual Meeting

12 NOVEMBER 2020

**STATEMENT BY HIS EXCELLENCY, DR. JULIUS MAADA BIO,
PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF SIERRA LEONE**

Hon. Michael T. Scuse, Secretary of Agriculture in the State of Delaware, USA;

H.E Josef Leonel Coria Sacco, Commissioner for Rural Economy and Agriculture of the African Union Commission (AUC);

Hon. Lana Marks, United States Ambassador to the Republic of South Africa;

Prof. Ezraah Aharone, Director of the Centre for Global Africa at Delaware State University;

Prof. Eddy Maloka, CEO of the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM), Distinguished guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

1. Permit from the outset to thank you for the honour and very unique opportunity, as President of the Republic of Sierra Leone, to participate and contribute to discussions on the governance and development of the African continent.

2. Africa is home to more than a billion people, and home away from home, both culturally and historically (however, distant or near), for hundreds of millions more in the Sixth region. It is a rich and diverse community of resourceful and talented citizens, full of enthusiasm, energy, and great optimism.
3. The Sixth Region, that comprises “peoples of African origin living outside the continent, irrespective of their citizenship and nationality, and who are willing to contribute to the development of the continent and the building of the African Union” is an integral part of the African continent. Its citizens, Diasporan Africans, are enablers and driving forces in the socioeconomic transformation of Africa as envisaged in the African Union’s Agenda 2063.
4. In spite of arguments about how the Sixth region of Africa is constituted, represented, or legitimised, I would argue that the Sixth Region is grounded in the universality of Pan-Africanism. Its agenda and character are pluralist, globalist, transgenerational, and essentially African.
5. So, let me welcome every one of you, distinguished Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, to this 2ND Annual CGA-APRM Pan-African Development Conference, titled “*Creating the Africa, We Want, Creating the Sixth Region We Want – through Agribusiness, Research, and Innovation*”.
6. Let me also congratulate the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) -- our home-grown self-Assessment instrument of good governance --, and the Centre of Global Africa (CGA), for pioneering this initiative. I also recognise further commitments to strengthening the CGA-APRM partnership.

7. The focus of this conference on executing joint Africa-Diaspora initiatives to accelerate the AU's Agenda 2063, while simultaneously advancing Diaspora interests in ways that are problem solving, capacity building, revenue generating, and mutually beneficial, is something that I **value immensely as an African Leader**. But this conference is also critical because it may help us design, structure, and concretise official channels and linkages for unimpeded two-way transactional activities that will help Africa and the Sixth Region create "The Africa We Want."
8. The question is not whether both parties are willing to engage. It is "how do we harness and mobilise the Sixth Region"? How do we structure mutually beneficial and functional linkages between African countries and the Sixth Region?
9. I recognise various existing formations and initiatives for continuous engagement especially in regard to Diaspora investments and knowledge transfers. I urge, however, that these should be significantly developed, given the potential and the opportunity for impacting the development of the continent.
10. Continent-side, there are significant gaps in financing the AU Agenda 2063 that also aligns with global sustainable development goals (SDGs). Part of our task here today, therefore, is to think through how we locate, harness, and scale up the potential of the Sixth Region to finance those identified gaps in Africa's development.
11. African has a young and rising consumer population and a large potential market of 1.2 billion people that is suitable for different potential diaspora investment portfolios and scales. As African leaders, our task is to first lower the risk profiles of our countries by

improving good governance, fighting corruption, fostering national cohesion and peace, and creating an even, fair, predictable, and simplified investment landscape. My Government has focused on addressing all the foregoing perceived challenges.

12. Although the realities of statehood and regional economic formations are inescapable, African leaders should work towards uniformity and clarity of trade, investment, and financial regulations across the continent. They should also identify best practices and therefore design, review, and validate frameworks of engagement with the Sixth Region. We should also institutionalise ways of transforming Sixth Region remittances into investment funds that could serve various growth sectors across the continent.
13. In most of our countries, we are working toward establishing a structured and firm bedrock for inclusive and sustainable development. In Sierra Leone, our Medium Term National Development Plan lays out our development priorities that are moored on Human Capital Development (access to free quality education, quality healthcare, and food security). We also recognise that we can reduce poverty by creating jobs, lower import-dependency, and enhance food security if we invest heavily in the agribusiness sector.
14. Structured Sixth Region financing and expertise can support the transfer of Diaspora resources, skills, and expertise and thus develop capacity and knowledge transfer, establish agribusiness growth centres and incubation hubs, and promote value-addition and local manufacture.

15. We should not also lose sight of the potential of a structured triangular cooperation nexus among countries, the Sixth Region, and multilateral institutions that could support diaspora investments in agribusiness.
16. We should also recognise that the Fourth Industrial Revolution, with its implications for global trade and development is upon us. Africa cannot afford to be at the receiving end as it was during the first, second, and third industrial revolutions. Africa should be an equal and active participant and partner. Our investment in Human Capital Development is underpinned by this objective.
17. Governments have a responsibility, in that regard, to establish the right context that will facilitate Diaspora investments in innovation and technology. In Sierra Leone, I established a Directorate of Science, Technology, and Innovation to explore, develop, and deploy technology and innovation to scale in order to support governance, business, healthcare, and research. This institution is a local partner that has worked with Governments, multilateral agencies, and the private sector to develop innovative technology-mediated solutions for Sierra Leone including in managing the COVID-19 epidemic. But I also see potential for Sixth Region investments in knowledge transfer, innovation, and technology entrepreneurship that will develop bespoke solutions that address Africa's development challenges.
18. So this conference is tasked with three key but interrelated tasks: how do we identify the opportunities; how do we structure linkages and investment interventions; and, how do we create a conducive win-win ecosystem to support inclusive and sustainable development in Africa.

19. Let me once more thank the APRM under the leadership of APRM Continental Secretariat and its CEO, Prof. Eddy Maloka. I wish to commend and thank Prof Maloka for his stellar work in championing this 2ND Annual CGA-APRM Pan-African Development Conference.
20. Let me also commend the commitment and the aims of the CGA under the leadership of Prof. Ezra Aharone for the support to the APRM and African development through America's Historically Black Colleges and Universities and other Diaspora stakeholders.
21. My country supports these dialogues and initiatives about Africa's development and my country is ready to work with the APRM, the CGA, and other partners in that regard.
22. The Africa we have may not be the Africa we want. But by engaging all stakeholders, creating conducive environments for exploring possibilities and fostering real ideas, structuring and deepening linkages and dialogues around Africa's development, we (the Sixth Region and Africa) may create the Africa that we want.

I wish you all fruitful deliberations.

God bless Africa; God bless the Sixth Region of Africa.

I thank you for your kind attention.