



**STATEMENT BY HIS EXCELLENCY, DR. JULIUS MAADA
BIO, PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF SIERRA LEONE
AT THE LAUNCH OF THE SIERRA FISHERIES FISH
PROCESSING FACILITY AT KISSY DOCKYARD.
FREETOWN - 18 DECEMBER 2020**

Ministers of Government
Honourable Members of Parliament
Members of the Diplomatic and Consular Corps
The Industrial Fishing Companies Association
The Consortium of Artisanal Fishermen
Women in Fisheries and our Fish Traders
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen

Good morning:

1. Let me start by thanking Sierra Fisheries and The Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resources for the invitation extended to me. Let me share the good news that in recognition of our passing an unprecedented number of indicators and the critical control of corruption indicator with a new high grade, the Millennium Corporation Challenge has unanimously selected Sierra Leone to develop a compact. This recognition that we are doing a lot of things right is very encouraging and this should spur us on as a nation to do even better.
2. We assert in our New Direction manifesto and in the Medium Term National Development Plan that fisheries as a sub-sector contributes 12 percent of GDP, employs over 500,000 people, and is the staple of economic activity right along the coastline and in the interior of Sierra Leone. In line with our bid to achieve food security, fish remains the primary source of primary protein for most Sierra Leoneans. Besides, we have emphasised, as a Government, that there is great potential to increase earnings from the sector.
3. In various engagements, (as noted by previous speakers and in other engagements throughout this year), we have launched initiatives that will enhance the development of the fisheries sector – from subsidised boats, navigation and other equipment for youth, women, and other artisanal fishing groups to inshore patrol vessels and other specific policy activities to protect and sustainably manage marine ecosystems.
4. To further reduce levels of illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing in our waters, we will augment our inshore patrol vessels with drone surveillance systems and

make more integrated use of the radar installation at the Cape Light house.

5. We have also constructed or rehabilitated fish landing sites, constructed landing platforms, enhanced smoking and drying stations that use new technologies and practices to serve the artisanal fisheries sector.
6. In the last two years, we have expanded the sector and made it more profitable for operators and for government while at the same time ensuring sustainability. We are conducting fish stock assessments and implementing robust sustainable management plans that are consistent with international best practices. We look forward to working with the European Union and other partners to rescind all restrictions on our fish exports and thus expand our industry to reach more markets.
7. In our manifesto, we promised to create the enabling environment for private sector investments in the value-chain processing of fish and fish products.
8. But more importantly, I have stressed in previous engagements that we must minimise spoilage and post-harvest loss by processing fish so that it has a longer shelf and market life and it can be safe for consumption by citizens. This will also expand the fish value-chain and create new employment in the sector.
9. So the construction of this Fish Processing Plant at the Kissy Dock Yard by the Sierra Fishing Company provides an established in-shore facility for processing fish. I am informed, and previous speakers have indicated, that this facility will sort, blast freeze, and package whole fish for the local market and for export. I am also informed that all environmental, health and safety assessments have

been conducted and certified. I am also informed that there will be a rigorous monitoring regime in place for the type of fish, and the quality and safety of the packaged whole fish for market.

10. This opens new possibilities for new economies around the frozen fish distribution chain from cold storage transportations, cold room investments, to retail freezer cabinets across the country and in the sub-region. New technologies like solar-powered cold storage rooms in far-to-reach areas are suddenly a possibility. There is a possibility for ice-plants to serve the distribution chain especially as we are expanding investments in electricity across towns in Sierra Leone over the next one year. So also is the possibility of skills training around the safe handling and transfer of frozen fish from this processing plant to the consumer. I challenge the Ministry to lead in anticipating these possibilities and to ensure that Sierra Leoneans benefit fully from all these new possibilities.
11. But to my mind, we can also go beyond just scooping fish from the ocean, carrying and sorting, and freezing and packaging just whole fish. There is a possibility of a whole value-addition economy that will add more value to our fish products and create even more jobs. This will also reduce fish waste and catch loss. Fish fillet, fish powder, battered and breaded fish slices, dried and salted fish, fish sausages, fish loins, fish balls, and fish meal are all possible products that can be derived from processing fish. There is also the possible innovative extrusion of fish products (especially of fish considered not desirable for packaging during the sorting process) to augment other products like soups, snacks, and pasta produced in other countries. So I want to challenge Sierra Leoneans and the private sector to think beyond just catching and selling whole frozen fish and smoked fish. There is a bigger and

very lucrative world of possibility in the fish value chain. My commitment is that my Government stands ready to facilitate these investments in the fish value-chain with very attractive incentives.

12. I also want to challenge the Ministry to work across relevant MDAs and with the private sector to develop rational and comprehensive environmental, health, and safety guidelines around this expanded sector. Those guidelines should be measurable and enforceable across the industry and they must be consistent with international best practices. This is in addition to all existing fish quality assurance regime in the Ministry of Fisheries and quality control regimes in place at the Ministry of Trade. Good hygiene and manufacturing practices will make our industry and products more attractive to investors.
13. As I always emphasise, skills training around this sector is extremely important. Sierra Leoneans must be trained to acquire these new skills and we should create an ecosystem that facilitates their full participation in the local economy around fish value-addition now and into the future.
14. Let me conclude this short remark by thanking the Managing Director of Sierra Fishing Company and his team for this investment that opens up new possibilities in the Sierra Leone market. You are partners in development and we will ensure as a Government that we create the necessary conducive win-win environment to make this investment worth your while.

It is therefore with great pleasure that I formally commission this Fish Processing Facility at Kissy Dockyard.

I thank you.

FISH PROCESSING FACILITY 6