



**STATEMENT BY HIS EXCELLENCY, DR. JULIUS MAADA
BIO, PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF SIERRA LEONE
AT THE FORMAL COMMISSIONING OF FIFTY GARBAGE
TRUCKS FROM THE GOVERNMENT OF THE RUSSIAN
FEDERATION, FREETOWN - 1 DECEMBER 2020**

Honourable Ministers of Government
Honourable Members of Parliament
Members of the Diplomatic and Consular Corps
Distinguished ladies and gentlemen
Good morning.

1. Let me, from the outset, extend fraternal greetings and best wishes to the Prime Minister and people of the Russian Federation.

I am particularly heartened that our long history of mutual respect and cooperation continues to thrive through the fields of education, medicine, food security, and now building community resilience through support to sanitation.

2. We look forward to a further deepening of our relationship with the Russian Federation especially after the Russia-Africa Economic Forum in Sochi, where we committed to promoting and enhancing trade and investments among our economies in Africa.
3. My Government has identified human capital development as the foundational driver of national development. When citizens lead healthy lives, are given relevant and quality education, and are well resourced, their productive lifespans are increased. This can only be good for inclusive and sustainable national development.
4. In the New Direction manifesto we identified waste management as a key threat to national development. We further reiterated in the Medium Term National Development Plan, Cluster 3.4, that haphazard, unsafe, and unstructured waste disposal has social, economic, and even health implications for citizens. Women, we argue, bear the greatest impact of poor waste management practices.
5. We are contending with a number of interrelated issues. The location and management of the landfills pose a danger to health and communities. Informal settlements and unplanned urbanisation have resulted in the occupation of wetland and water plains and channels. Poor garbage disposal in these informal settlements further complicates the problem of waste management.
6. Urban areas especially generate high amounts of garbage with citizens practising open dumping, burning, and depositing into waterways. The result are mountains of rotting compost in public places festering with flies and vermin that can both cause and spread disease.
7. Some settlements burn their waste thereby releasing toxic fumes and other pollutants in the air that are both bad for respiratory health and for the climate crisis.

8. Additionally, seepage from dumpsites and piles of garbage can go into underground water and surface streams and rivers that are used by citizens. Other hard pollutants like plastic can get washed out into the ocean and therefore pose a threat to marine life and ecologies.
9. The challenge has been to collect and properly dispose of garbage in such a controlled manner that it poses no threat to human health, communities, and to the environment.
10. Last year, we took delivery of a number of garbage collection trucks and skips, courtesy of the friendly Government and people of the People's Republic of China. Waste collection has improved and there have been fewer incidents of disease burdens or public health emergencies associated with poor waste management. But we can do even better with these fifty garbage collection trucks.
11. Consistent with my Government's policy, waste management must be fully devolved to cities and councils. They must be fully responsible for the safe disposal of waste generated in their communities. To that effect, I expect that local governments will generate laws and enforceable policies to guide waste disposal. Public health inspectors should be able to enforce all such policies in the interest of public health and sanitation.
12. But those cities and towns must be supported with expertise and resources to establish safe waste disposal sites and systems that can be properly managed and improved at the local level. Recycling systems and separating stations that make garbage useful again and safe incinerators may be most useful in that regard. Government stands ready to work with local governments, development partners, and the private sector in providing these facilities.
13. Local governments must develop effective public education campaigns and risk communications around haphazard waste disposal with a view to changing attitudes to waste disposal and helping minimise the public health threat from waste disposal. The argument is simple to make. The community has a vested interest in properly disposing of its waste. The community must therefore

lead in identifying challenges that are specific to the local community, providing ideas, fully participating in decision-making, feedback, and assessment loops.

14. But garbage also opens up new opportunities for developing innovative entrepreneurship around managing waste. There are scalable technologies that private investors, in partnership with local governments, can invest in. Waste can be transformed into rich compost for agriculture; fish waste from markets can be transformed into animal feed; waste oil can be transformed into soap; plastic from dumpsites can be transformed into paving tiles; and wood and other carbon waste can be turned into charcoal briquettes – a less smoky energy source.
15. Some African countries, like Ethiopia, are currently converting waste into energy at one of their huge dumpsites. The technology is accessible and the possibility ever closer even in Sierra Leone. My Government is ready to work with partners and the private sector in introducing that technology.
16. It is also possible to organise a well-paid industry around domestic collection and safe disposal of waste. Local councils can work directly with the private sector in collecting domestic waste right at source and safely disposing it.
17. Integrated waste management, with all its possibilities, can create possible employment and entrepreneurial opportunities for hundreds of women and men.
18. I also expect that innovation and technology could be developed around waste management. Data on volumes, types, and safe disposal are all possibilities. The data could be used to monitor and propose new operational advice and support councils.
19. Let me conclude this short statement by thanking the Ministers, the Ambassador from the Russian Federation for this much appreciated token of support for Sierra Leone.
20. Integrated waste management not only helps prevent disease, but also support human capital development and help build sustainable cities and resilient communities.

21. On that note, I am pleased to commission these garbage collection trucks.