



**NEW YEAR'S BROADCAST TO THE NATION  
BY HIS EXCELLENCY, DR. JULIUS MAADA  
BIO, PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF  
SIERRA LEONE, FREETOWN - 1<sup>st</sup> JANUARY  
2021**

Fellow Citizens:

1. 2020 has been an exceptional year – a year in which the raging worldwide COVID-19 pandemic has killed over 1.7 million people including our fellow Sierra Leoneans at home and abroad; a year in which worldwide healthcare systems and economies have struggled; and, a year in which worldwide anxiety and fear have shaken hopes for the future.

2. We took a licking like all countries in the world and in the sub-region, but we have kept on ticking as a nation. We have demonstrated our unity, resilience, and perseverance as a nation. We have showcased leadership with empathy; churned out opportunity out of adversity; and continued keeping our promises to the nation for progressive and accountable governance of the state. In 2020, Sierra Leone has been recognised the world over for simply doing the right things really well.

3. We collectively resolved two years ago that our nation must no longer be defined by the stigma of the past – as a helplessly corrupt nation, vulnerable to pestilence, prone to bloody wars, wracked by human trafficking and illegal migrations, and creaking under the burden of bad governance and failure.

4. Our international standing, image, and respectability as a nation have continued to improve in 2020. For the first time in our nation's history, one of our nation's best judges, Justice Miatta Samba, beat out worldwide competition to be elected judge on the International Criminal Court. After a decade and more, we paid our dues to major international institutions and we have deepened and heightened our multilateral engagements with nations and institutions all over the world. We continue to provide continental leadership for the C-10 for the much overdue reform of the United Nations Security Council.

5. Our international governance and transparency assessments throughout 2020 have been outstanding. This year, the Millennium Cooperation Challenge (MCC) selected our nation as compact eligible after we passed a record 13 indicators including the control of corruption indicator and the indicator on political and human rights. We passed the EITI, assessed for the first time ever to Tier 2 for the Trafficking in Persons' assessment by the US State Department, and made progress in the United Nations and World Bank human development indicators.

6. Our competent handling of the COVID-19 pandemic has been praised by the Centres for Disease Control and

Prevention, the World Health Organisation, the African Peer Review Mechanism and more. We have been cited for being innovative, proactive, and predicating our successful policies on data, science, technology, and expert advice.

7. Through a central coordinating unit, NACOVERC, we quickly set up ancillary coordinating units in each district, established 6 testing labs, 21 treatment centres with at least one in each district, made available at least 1,000 beds, and ramped up surveillance, contact tracing, and social mobilisation in short order. We have also provided health insurance for over 11,000 workers. Consequently, we have kept case fatalities ratios very low.

8. Throughout, our focus has been on saving lives and protecting livelihoods. Through our Quick Action Economic Response Programme, we launched a 500 billion Leone Special Credit Facility through the Bank of Sierra Leone to support the production, importation, and distribution of essential commodities; deferred taxes by the National Revenue Authority on businesses; provided cash transfers to persons with disabilities, informal sector workers, and other vulnerable groups and households right across all sixteen districts; provided safety net support to 2,368 workers in the tourism and hospitality industry; allotted microfinance support to

thousands of women in the informal economy right across the country; and designed the National Micro-Finance Programme for small and medium enterprises.

9. We end 2020 with a less complicated business landscape and more engagement with the private sector on business reforms. We have secured funding for improving the Doing Business Environment. We are reviewing the industry policy for the development of the Special Economic Zone, enacted the Consumer Protection Act, developed a national trade strategy, and reviewed the Cooperative Policy for rejuvenating rural community entrepreneurship. Four manufacturing companies - Jolaks, Sierra Leone Flour Mill, Sonocco, Gold Brewery - will soon start producing key consumer goods in Sierra Leone. These factories will support job creation, skills transfer, and revenue generation. The National Investment Board, a one-stop-shop for investors, will also facilitate more such investments. We are transitioning into more integrated and electronically-mediated business registration, operations, and records systems.

10. These reforms are being complemented with significant investments in modern digital technology infrastructure, an expanded fibre-optic backbone, and greater ICT penetration that will serve as a cross-cutting enabler for the development

of other sectors of the economy and for public service delivery. In 2020, Government has deepened its fight against corruption and strengthened the judicial system to support business development.

11. We have stabilised the prices of petroleum products and increased revenue in the downstream petroleum sector with far-reaching reforms that will improve our strategic reserves and make the sector more profitable. Our overall macroeconomic picture is not as bleak as anticipated at the onset of COVID-19.

12. In 2020, we completed the Nationwide Airborne Geophysical Survey and we are now developing an Enterprise Geo-Scientific Information Management System. We have strengthened governance of the mines and minerals sector and formalised artisanal mining. In spite of COVID, three major mineral rights holders (Koidu Limited, Sierra Rutile/Iluka, and Sierra Mineral Holdings) continued uninterrupted operations. Four more large-scale mining projects will soon start with Wongor Investment and Mining Corporation, Kingho Mining Company Limited, the Tongo-Tonguma Kimberlite Project operated by Sierra Diamonds Limited, and Meya Mining Limited.

13. In 2020, we have rehabilitated or upgraded trunk roads to all-weather roads to facilitate access to markets for rural farmers. We are building bridges, surfacing or completely rehabilitating over a thousand kilometres of major trunk road, and over a hundred kilometres of urban and city roads nationwide.

14. In 2020, we have also increased installed energy generation capacity, upgraded and expanded the transmission and distribution network, started work on restoring electricity to seven district headquarter townships, and advanced work on the CLSG line that will benefit an additional 39 communities. This is in addition to off-grid solar installations in various communities, right across the country.

15. Talking about agriculture, my government remains committed to implementing the key priorities of rice self-sufficiency, crop diversification, livestock development, and sustainable forest management and diversification as articulated in the National Agricultural Transformational Plan (2023). Due to the pandemic, the government focused on intensifying staple crop production in order to mitigate anticipated food shortages in the country. Among other initiatives, Government acquired equipment for more mechanisation, designed better agricultural financing

instruments, improved seeds and seedlings for rice and cash crops, and provided for more private sector engagement in agricultural production. In 2020, we also launched a \$54 million commercial rice production investment at Rhombe, Port Loko district and significantly advanced rice value chain investments in the south and the north of the country.

16. In the fisheries sector, we developed a comprehensive fisheries management and sustainability plan, invested in inshore patrol craft and other surveillance technologies, provided advanced fishing vessels and equipment for youth and women in the artisanal sector, scaled-up investments in sanitary fish processing at both artisanal and industrial levels, and expedited arrangements for the construction of a 55-Million dollar Fish Harbour Complex.

17. We have not relented on creating the right environment for tourism-sector investments in various parts of the country. We have broken sod on the new Lungi International Airport terminal and other imminent investments on Sherbro Island as part of that comprehensive package.

18. In 2020, we also commenced the construction of a water treatment plant and distribution networks in Bonthe and other headquarter towns.

19. We have significantly improved medical infrastructure and increased bed capacity at maternal and child health units, upgraded medical and diagnostic medical equipment, recruited and trained thousands of more nurses and enhanced their conditions of service, transformed patient referral and transportation services through the National Emergency Medical services, streamlined and expanded nationwide medical supplies, and improved blood supply services. Preliminary data indicates that we have reduced maternal and child mortality as well as overall morbidity from common illnesses.

20. We have maintained public education financing at 22% of the budget and set up a Multi-Donor Trust Fund of about \$72M in partnership with the World Bank, GPE, EU, Irish Aid and FCDO. Over 2.6 million pupils are direct beneficiaries of our continuing investments in increased access to education. We have developed more school infrastructure especially through partnerships with the private sector and development partners, provided free school feeding for vulnerable school populations, recruited more teachers with improved service conditions, and improved quality teaching and learning. A school catchment analysis, a new 5-year Education Sector Plan, and a new Education Act that responds to the needs of the future are on our immediate agenda. We are working on transformative higher education reforms and skills development training across

the country. Even during COVID-19, we paid for all transition examinations at all levels, revised the school curriculum, and held a national forum on the future of education in Sierra Leone if we are to compete in the global economy. In 2020, we created more safe spaces for girls, overturned the ban on pregnant girls from attending school, and introduced a policy of Radical Inclusion in line with our principles of universal access.

21. In 2020, we strengthened the Sexual Offences Act, introduced one-stop centres for rape survivors, established Sexual Offences Model Courts to fast-track cases of sexual and gender-based violence, launched a Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment policy, and furthered more dialogue with women's groups, civil society, and advocacy organisations.

22. We have put more unemployed urban youth to work in 2020 through various employment initiatives undertaken by the Ministry of Youth.

23. In 2020, we have initiated a new disaster management agency to lead on our resilience strategies as a nation and we have built more public safety infrastructure in fire stations in district headquarter towns.

24. In 2020, we have expunged the seditious criminal libel law and amended the Independent Media Commission Act to guarantee free speech; no journalist is in jail for seditious libel

offenses; and my Government has sustained a structured engagement with civil society and rights groups. We have also maintained the moratorium on the death penalty and set up a technical committee to advise on the recommendations of the Justice Cowan-led constitutional review process.

So in spite of COVID-19, we have made great progress because of our relentless optimism and resilience in the face of adversity. We are indeed one nation and one people with a zeal that never tires. 2021 will be better because we know and believe that dogged hard work and focus breed success. Let us all continue striving even harder to make our Sierra Leone a more peaceful, more resilient, and more prosperous nation.

I wish everyone a happy New Year.