



Remarks by His Excellency, Dr. Julius Maada Bio, President of the Republic of Sierra Leone at the Turning of the Sod for the 150 Bed Hospital Health Village at Kerry Town - 22 January 2021

**Ministers of Government,
Executives of EASI Construction and Trading Limited,
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,
Good morning.**

1. Let me from the outset thank every Sierra Leonean who is adhering to all COVID-19 healthcare advisories. COVID-19 remains a real threat and it is debilitating and deadly. Community infection rates have increased lately. Every Sierra Leonean therefore bears a responsibility for keeping his or her family and community members safe by properly wearing masks, keeping safe distances, and frequently washing hands and/or using hand sanitisers. We must turn back the recent upsurge.
2. No one can gainsay the massive impact of COVID 19 on healthcare systems the world over. We have tailored our COVID-19 responses based on expert advice and real-time data. Our surveillance and social mobilisation pillars continue to work intensively to detect, track, and inform. We have initiated ground-breaking measures that even more advanced nations have replicated in their responses to COVID. It does feel good when bigger nations look up to a small nation like ours for models for designing their action plans. We have also been recognized by international institutions.
3. We are following through on our promise in the New Direction Manifesto and The Medium-Term National Development Plan to increase affordable access to quality healthcare service delivery. That goal also aligns with a central plank of our human capital development priorities – access to quality healthcare --, and the Sustainable Development Goal 3 on delivering good health and well-being to our citizens.
4. We have been able to continue delivering increased care for other diseases even through COVID because of our well-considered and scalable investments in our healthcare system over the last two years.
5. For healthcare infrastructure, we have commissioned a total of 380 beds in four new hospitals in Kailahun, Hangha, Rokupa, and at the King Harman Road. We have also turned

the sod for the construction of 360 beds in 3 facilities: Jojoima in the Kailahun district, Lower Banta and Upper Banta Chiefdoms in Moyamba district, and one hundred additional beds at the 34 Military Hospital.

6. We have recruited and trained nearly 6,000 additional healthcare workers, improved their conditions of service, and provided diagnostic laboratories in all district hospitals. The 2019 Demographic Health Survey (DHS) shows better health outcomes for Sierra Leoneans with a 39% reduction in maternal mortality and a 19% reduction in infant mortality. We may not be where we want to be, but we are determined to continue to give our best.
7. We pledged in our manifesto to “introduce public-private partnership in health facility management and health care service delivery in public hospitals and Peripheral Health Units.” At some level, we are already working with private public partnerships (PPP) to deliver healthcare. We have operationalised the National Ambulance Services across all chiefdoms in the country to support healthcare delivery. We are piloting a PPP model to support the provision of medicines and medical consumables at Connaught hospital.
8. As we scale up PPPs in providing healthcare services, let us ensure that there is transparency and competition in how partnerships are negotiated, clarity about outcomes and the quality of services are delivered, and also effective oversight mechanisms for monitoring implementation and funding.
9. As we move towards targets set for Universal Health Coverage, we have worked on more overarching PPP models for healthcare investments. Sierra Leoneans spend millions of dollars in foreign countries in search of specialty care services in other countries because our publicly funded hospitals still need more appropriate infrastructure and equipment and more specialty trained healthcare and other personnel.

10. What we have negotiated with EASI should make superior and quality clinical service available in-country to citizens while adding to the general quality of advanced health infrastructure available in-country. The proposed concept of a health village is therefore a welcome one.
11. I am informed that per the MOU, EASI Trading Limited will build a 150-bed general Hospital that will provide such diagnostic imaging services such as Endoscopy, X-Ray, MRI and CT Scan. This project will also construct 40 flats for Doctors, 50 rooms for Nurses, a training facility for medical, nursing and other allied health professionals, and a 36 room building for people accompanying patients. At the same time, the project will create a minimum of 200 local jobs in the Kerry Town area.
12. It is hoped that other hospitals will keenly observe the private sector management practices used in this private sector in order to adopt more efficient practices for managing public health facilities. In particular, I am interested in the use of an integrated health management information system that will be used effectively to document comprehensive patient care information that can be used across platforms and institutions for providing more integrated and continuous care for patients from hospital to hospital.
13. It is also hoped that the facility will offer improved quality of care and those services will be affordably priced. It is hoped that with the establishment of this comprehensive diagnostic, radiotherapy, and cancer treatment centre within the health village, the financial burden on Government for overseas medical treatment will be reduced. Equally, it is hoped that Sierra Leone will attract patients from the sub-region and beyond and thus start reaping some of the knock-on benefits of medical tourism. For instance, it is possible to develop a local economy around the medical village that caters for

hospitality, cultural tourism, transportation, pharmaceuticals, and other associated services.

14. With my Government's focus on building this country's human resource base through purposeful re-skilling and upskilling, I am particularly energised by the possibility that our young medical professionals will have an opportunity to work with highly trained professionals in various specialties and also be trained to use cutting-edge technologies in their practice.
15. This is just one of several initiatives for providing innovative solutions for our healthcare needs as a nation. In anticipation of yet another step forward in making available quality healthcare services in Sierra Leone, I am therefore pleased to turn sod for the construction of a 150-bed hospital facility here in Kerry Town.