



**INTERVENTION BY HIS EXCELLENCY, DR. JULIUS
MAADA BIO, PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF SIERRA
LEONE AT THE 58TH ORDINARY SESSION OF THE
ECOWAS AUTHORITY OF HEADS OF STATE AND
GOVERNMENT**

VIDEOCONFERENCE, 23 JANUARY 2021

Colleague Excellencies,
President and Vice President of the Commission,
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,
Good Morning:

1. Let me extend, at the outset, Sierra Leone's deepest sympathies to the families of former Heads of States, Former Secretary General of the ECOWAS Commission, and all our citizens who have succumbed to the ongoing COVID 19 pandemic. May their souls rest in perfect peace.
2. May I thank His Excellency Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo for the excellent manner in which he has conducted the trust reposed in him by the Authority for the year under review.
3. May I also thank Honourable Minister H.E. Shirley Ayorkor Botchway for excellently chairing the Ministerial Session and generating the relevant reports for the consideration of the Authority.
4. My sincere appreciation to President Jean-Claude Kassi Brou, Vice President Finda Koroma, Commissioners and Heads of ECOWAS institutions and agencies for their continued commitment and dedication to overseeing the State of the Community.

State of the Community:

5. I want to commend President Kassi Brou for the comprehensive update on the state of the ECOWAS Community. Sierra Leone subscribes to the analyses of the community's political, security, and macro-economic situation in substantial terms.
6. The COVID-19 Pandemic slowed down economic activities in our respective countries thus impacting sub-regional economic growth. It is therefore necessary to implement measures to rekindle trade, boost economies and thus enhance regional economic stability in the community.
7. It is also time for the community to devote collective efforts towards strengthening intra-community trade, and also to implement the cross-border region project to fast-track regional integration and facilitate the implementation of the AfCFTA. This will further remove all trade barriers between our respective countries and enhance cross border movements and trade. Sierra Leone shares borders with Guinea and Liberia and therefore fostering cross border cooperation (as acceded to in the AfCFTA pact) is important in our community.
8. Sierra Leone favourably welcomes ongoing sub-regional initiatives in the areas of agriculture, mining, energy, water, infrastructure, and

education. These initiatives improve regional integration with the outcomes of bettering the lives of our peoples in our community.

9. Sierra Leone commends and applauds the work of the West African Health Organization in the health sector and for minimising the impact of COVID-19 on our community safe during this pandemic.

10. Sierra Leone applauds the ECOWAS Commission for demonstrating inspirational leadership and commitment in the preparation of the ECOWAS Vision 2050. As with Sierra Leone's Medium –Term National Development Plan (2019-2023), I am informed that the roadmap for preparing ECOWAS Vision 2050 was inclusive and followed broad based stakeholder consultations, including the effective participation of member states. Sierra Leone firmly supports the new ECOWAS Vision 2050, Human Capital Development and Gender Transformative Human Capital Development, especially during this COVID-19 when a number of jobs have been lost and digital education and skills development are urgent priorities if our citizens should continue to participate meaningfully in the global economy. Sierra Leone also strongly supports the Declaration on Reducing Sexual and Gender-Based Violence especially during the COVID-19 pandemic.

11. Sierra Leone wishes to notify Member States that two of its Nationals are vying for regional positions at the African Union. Professor David Luke is vying for the position of Commissioner of Economic Development, Trade, Industry and Mining. He is shortlisted and he topped the group as the most qualified candidate. Mr. Francis Ben Kaifala has been nominated for the position of Member of the African Union Advisory Board of Corruption (AUABC). Sierra Leone is kindly requesting for the support of ECOWAS Members States for the candidatures of these highly qualified Sierra Leoneans.

Political Governance & Security:

12. SL remains fully committed to supporting peace and security in our community. Our sister countries in the Sahel region -- Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger, and Nigeria -- continue to experience growing threats of violent extremism and devastating terrorist attacks from extremist groups.

13. It is critical for us to revisit our framework at the Extraordinary Summit in Ouagadougou and build on the commitments made from this

Summit for combating terrorism in the sub-region and to also ensure the full implementation of the eight critical pillars of our action plan.

14. Sierra Leone calls for strengthening the early warning centres in the Community by ensuring that there are adequate tools and analyses to predict conflicts from terrorist attacks to intra-community clashes.

15. Sierra Leone supports the strengthening of mediation at all levels to promote effective dialogue among all stakeholders as a means of reducing conflict and threats to peace and security.

16. Sierra Leone supports collective engagements in both the prevention of conflict and in advancing political solutions to the settlement of conflicts and disputes through the collective resolve of member states.

17. As our democracies are evolving in the community, it is also critical to nurture respect for the will of the people in elections, and to reduce pre and post elections tensions and violence in order to consolidate peace in our respective countries. It is our fundamental obligation to conduct peaceful elections and peacefully transfer power in order to enhance our community's democratic values. We must continue holding free and fair elections and respect the tenets of good governance, peace, and security in the sub-region.

18. Sierra Leone commends the ECOWAS Commission for the 30% payment made to SOGEFEL for the construction of phases two and three of the Lungi Logistics Depot and the signing of the contract with the supervising firm. Sierra Leone hopes that the consortium will be paid the 30% mobilisation fee so work can resume, and that going forward, there will be no more delays in payments to suppliers that could inhibit progress on the operationalisation of the depot.

Mali:

19. Sierra Leone continues to follow and closely monitor the political situation in Mali and congratulates the transition Government under H.E. Bah N'DAW, President of the Transition and Head of State of the Republic of Mali, for implementing the transition process and completing the establishment of the transition bodies.

20. I also thank the Malian Authorities for the efforts made by the Government on the security situation in the country, in spite of the enormous challenges that nation faces.

21. Sierra Leone expresses thanks and appreciation to the ECOWAS Special Envoy and Mediator, H.E. Dr. Goodluck Ebele Jonathan, Former President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, for the continuous assessment on the status of implementation of our collective decision on a steady transition process in Mali.

22. We must not forget that the Mali situation poses substantial risks to peace and security in the sub-region. It is therefore necessary for us to support the transition government and ensure that there are no relapses to tension in the country.

23. Sierra Leone calls for continuous consultation through open dialogue with all the political stakeholders in Mali. Sierra Leone also urges all stakeholders to follow an inclusive transition process and ensure that the elections management bodies adhere to the resolutions of the Inclusive National Dialogue.

24. Sierra Leone also calls on the President of the ECOWAS Commission to oversee the ECOWAS Monitoring Committee and to ensure that the activities of the transition government are closely monitored.

25. Finally, for credible and transparent elections, Sierra Leone calls on the Transition Government to develop a clear road map with an action plan of the various activities to be carried out during the 18-month transition period.

The Single Currency

26. Sierra Leone remains committed to the implementation of the ECOWAS Common External Tariff and the ECOWAS Trade Liberalisation Scheme (ETLS). Sierra Leone also commends the Community for work towards the realisation of the ECOWAS Single Currency. We are committed to all the decisions taken at the Ministerial Committee on the ECOWAS Single Currency Programme.

Sierra Leone-Guinea Yenga Issue

27. Sierra Leone observes with deep concern the increased instances of incursions by Guinean troops in the Yenga area which is in the undisputed sovereign territory of Sierra Leone. The issue remains unresolved and our Guinean counterparts have continued to encroach on Sierra Leone's land and sea borders.

28. Sierra Leone calls on this body to urgently create a special committee to look into the unsolved Yenga matter between the two countries through diplomatic engagement with a view to finding a lasting solution to this long-standing boundary dispute.

Sierra Leone –Guinea Border

29. Sierra Leone is concerned about the restrictions imposed from the Guinean end on the free movement of goods and people between the two countries thereby creating huge economic loss for both countries. I urge the Government of the Republic of Guinea to consider removing these restrictions to enable the free movement of people, goods and services in order to promote cooperation, regional trade, and regional integration.

I thank you all for your kind attention.