



**STATEMENT BY HIS EXCELLENCY, DR. JULIUS MAADA BIO,
PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF SIERRA LEONE AT THE 59TH
ORDINARY SESSION OF THE ECOWAS AUTHORITY OF HEADS OF
STATE AND GOVERNMENT SUMMIT. 19TH JUNE 2021.**

Your Excellency, Nana Addo Dankwa AKUFO-ADDO, Chairman of the Authority of Heads of State and Government of ECOWAS, President of the Republic of Ghana;

Your Excellencies, Heads of State and Government of ECOWAS;

Your Excellency, the Representative of the UN Secretary General;

Your Excellency, President of the African Union Commission;

The President of the ECOWAS Commission,

Members of the Diplomatic and Consular Corps,

Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen.

1. I am grateful to Your Excellency, Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo, Chair of the ECOWAS Authority of Heads of State and Government, President of the Republic of Ghana, for the warm hospitality you have extended to me and my delegation. I wish to also thank Your Excellency for the wonderful facilities you have put in place for this summit. Indeed, Ghana's legendary hospitality is second to none. AKWABAA.

2. Let me also, on behalf of the people of Sierra Leone, congratulate your Government and the Republic of Ghana on your country's accession to the United Nations Security Council in the non-permanent category for the 2022-2023 session. We believe that Ghana's win is a win for ECOWAS. You can count on my Government's and country's full support and cooperation in pursuing and advancing our shared objectives.

3. I also wish to congratulate H.E. Shirley Ayorkor Botchwey, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Regional Cooperation, Republic of Ghana, for her successful conclusion of Mediation and Security Council meetings and the Council of Ministers' meetings. It is indeed a testament of her candour, diplomacy, and commitment to regional integration.

4. On behalf of the Government and people of the Republic of Sierra Leone, let me present condolences to the Government and people of the Federal Republic of Nigeria over the recent loss of Lieutenant General Ibrahim Attahiru, Chief of Army Staff, and other military personnel of the Nigerian Armed Forces. Our deepest condolences also go to the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Burkina Faso, and the Republic of Niger for the loss of lives during multiple violent attacks by insurgents and bandits. We pray for the peaceful repose of those who have died and pray that God/ Allah subhanahu wa ta'ala comfort their families.

5. Sierra Leone views with grave concern the security situation in the Sahel region, North Eastern Nigeria, and in other parts of the community. Our region is faces a myriad of security threats underpinned by political crises, religious and communal tension, growing insurgency, banditry, cybercrimes, and transnational and other organised crimes. All hands must therefore be on deck to closely attend to the security situation in our

community. We should do more, not less, to tackle persistent insecurity in our community. Sierra Leone thanks the government of the Federal Republic of Nigeria and the Republic of Ghana for their contribution to the Terrorism Fund and commits to make its own contribution in short order.

6. Sierra Leone will also continue to support preventive diplomacy mechanisms discussed during the 46th Ordinary Session of the ECOWAS Mediation Council at the Ministerial level in Accra on the 18th June 2021.

7. Sierra Leone also notes the strengthening of Women, Peace and Security which will give women more vital voices in peace and security. From Sierra Leone's experience during the country's eleven-year civil war and the making of peace, women, as non-state actors, can play very important roles in preventive diplomacy and in securing lasting peace.

8. Let me also commend His Excellency, Dr. Goodluck Ebele Jonathan, former President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, for his continued mediation efforts on behalf of our community on the socio-political crisis in the Republic of Mali. We are encouraged by assurances of strict compliance with the decisions of the ECOWAS Extraordinary Summit held in Accra on 30th May 2021. A peaceful resolution and a smooth transition to democratic constitutional governance within the agreed timeframe are imperative given the humanitarian and security situation in our sister Republic and our community as a whole.

9. Sierra Leone takes note of the Mediator's report on the Socio-Political Crisis in Mali and applauds the government for appointing Mr. Choguel Maiga as Prime Minister, and we strongly urge them to maintain the roadmap of the Transition Charter. We also encourage Colonel Assimi Goïta, President of the Transitional Government, to adhere strictly to the decisions of the ECOWAS Extraordinary Summit that was held in Accra, Ghana on 30th May 2021.

10. We applaud the preliminary work that has been undertaken to prepare for elections in Mali in February 2022. We call on the stakeholders in Mali -- the military, people, civil society especially religious groups, traditional authority, women and youth to work assiduously towards the return of

civilian rule and to ensure that insurgents do not take advantage of any perceived divisions in Malian society.

11. Sierra Leone subscribes to the ECOWAS Supplementary Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance and we look forward to the organisation of peaceful elections in Cabo Verde and The Gambia. We also urge the Governments and People of The Gambia and Guinea Bissau to show understanding and openness as they negotiate constitutional reforms in order to find common ground that reflects and respects the will of the people of those sister republics.

12. COVID-19 remains a clear and present danger to our community. Sierra Leone applauds the work of the West Africa Health Organisation in fundraising and providing critical material to Member States in the fight against the Covid-19 Pandemic. Sierra Leone has been a beneficiary and has also received Covid-19 vaccines under the COVAX project. I want to thank Professor Stanley Okolo, Director General, for his visits to Sierra Leone and his unwavering support in addressing health challenges in Sierra Leone.

13. Given the unique geography of the far east of Sierra Leone, I urge Professor Okolo to establish a health post at the borders with Sierra Leone, Guinea and Liberia in Koindu, Kailahun, District, Sierra Leone. It was the epicentre of the Ebola outbreak. A well-equipped health post could therefore serve to address health emergencies such as Lassa fever, COVID-19 and other emerging viral and other epidemics.

14. I also wish to thank His Excellency, Professor Alpha Conde, President of the Republic of Guinea, and ECOWAS for the successful and peaceful mediation of the border dispute between Sierra Leone and Guinea. The re-opening of the border between our two sister republics is most welcome. I urge ECOWAS to stay engaged in negotiating a permanent resolution of the Yenga situation given the historical realities.

15. In view of the community's commitment to enhancing trade and free movement of persons across the community, Sierra Leone seeks ECOWAS support for the mobilisation of bridges between the Republic of Guinea and the Republic of Sierra Leone at Yenga, Kailahun District and on the Meli/Makona River crossing points in Mafindor and Soa, Kono District.

16. On the matter of joint infrastructure, I thank the Commissioner for Infrastructure, Mr. Pathé Guèye, Commissioner for Infrastructure and his team, for sending a team to the Liberia/Sierra Leone border to initiate work on a Joint Border Post on either side of the Sierra Leone and Liberia border. We thank them for their continued work in preparing the technical documents and their efforts at mobilising resources for the establishment of this Joint Border Post. Sierra Leone has made available ample amounts of land at Jendema, Pujehun District that has been registered under the name of this all-important project. Sierra Leone stands ready to make all necessary provisions in order to facilitate the construction of a Joint Border Post between our two countries.

17. Additionally, I thank ECOWAS for its commitment to ongoing work on the ECOWAS Standby Force Logistics Depot at Lungi. The Government of Sierra Leone has granted duty waivers to the contractor and will ensure that essential services such as energy and water are made available to both sites. We applaud Mr. Vafolay Tulay, Commissioner for General Administration and Conference, for his engagement in overseeing this project. It is our hope that the project will be completed under the current Management that has worked so hard to revive it.

18. I also thank ECOWAS for their support in setting up of a National Early Warning Centre in Sierra Leone and the necessary training of personnel for that centre. Sierra Leone has provided a building and has recruited competent staff. Sierra Leone is waiting for the ECOWAS Commission and its partners to provide office furniture and equipment and looks forward to launching of the centre with the President of the ECOWAS Commission and the Vice President before September 2021.

19. Excellencies, distinguished ladies and gentlemen, I also congratulate the ECOWAS Commission and the Vice President in particular, for mobilizing resources for the establishment of the Fund for Regional Stabilisation and Development in West Africa – The Gambia, Mali and Guinea Bissau. I urge the Commission to mobilise additional funding that would serve other member states that meet the criteria to qualify for the funding and to find other partners beyond the Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and

Development of the Federal Republic of Germany to ensure the sustainability of this very important flagship project of the ECOWAS Commission.

20. Excellencies, distinguished ladies and gentlemen, let me also congratulate ECOWAS for the preparation of the Integrated Human Capital Development Strategy and the preparation of the Gender Transformative Human Capital Development Study. Sierra Leone has anticipated this focus through its own human capital development priorities that are central to our country's Medium-Term National Development Plan.

21. Considering that the population in most of our countries is young and that women account for about 52% of our populations, our region needs to deal with maternal and child health challenges, build resilience in our health sector, ensure that the next generation is given the right education and skills to ensure that they remain competitive at the workplace or as entrepreneurs. Digital economy and financial services are important components of ECOWAS member states' competitive strategies. I, therefore, urge the ECOWAS Commission and the Vice President who oversees this agenda to mobilise member states to implement this important strategy.

22. Gender-sensitive human capital development goals are at the heart of the ECOWAS Vision 2050 which will define the ECOWAS we want over the next 30 years. I, therefore, urge the Commission to complete work on the Vision 2050 strategy so that it can be launched at the end of 2021.

23. Sierra Leone applauds the work of the ECOWAS Agriculture Department led by Mr. Sekou Sangare, the Commissioner for Agriculture, especially in the areas of rice farming which is the main focus of my government. Sierra Leone subscribes to the ECOWAS approach to reducing the importation of rice.

24. Sierra Leone staunchly supports institutional reforms of the ECOWAS Commission. Sierra Leone aligns with sister states in the community and reiterates its preference for Model C, which institutes a 7-man commission, because it is lean, cost-effective, and it will enhance institutional effectiveness. Sierra Leone joins other member states in pushing for the establishment of an optimal size for the Commission and urges the

Commission to ensure an inclusive process of rotation that does not leave out small countries and also seeks to achieve linguistic balance.

25. Let me conclude, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, by urging the commission to reconsider the payment of the Community Levy in US dollars especially given the challenges of fund externalisation.

26. I also wish to thank Colleague Excellencies and ECOWAS member states for affirming and endorsing, in principle, the candidature of Sierra Leone for a seat on the United Nations Security Council, in the non-permanent category, for the 2024-2025 session. Sierra Leone also seeks ECOWAS's endorsement for Justice Tonia Barnett to complete the second term of Justice Jamesina King as a Member of the African Commission on Human and People's Rights.

I thank you all for your kind attention.