



**ADDRESS BY HIS EXCELLENCY THE PRESIDENT AND COMMANDER-
IN-CHIEF OF THE REPUBLIC OF SIERRA LEONE ARMED FORCES AS
REVIEWING OFFICER AT THE COMMISSIONING PARADE OF
OFFICER CADETS AT THE ARMED FORCES TRAINING CENTRE,
BENGUEMA BARRACKS
FRIDAY, 3 SEPTEMBER 2021 AT 10:00AM**

The Honourable Vice President,
Madam First Lady,
Ministers of Government
Honourable Members of Parliament,
Armed Forces, Intelligence, Corrections Services, Fire, and Police Chiefs,
Members of the Diplomatic and Consular Corps
Local council and traditional leaders,
Director-General, Ministry of Defence
Commandants of the Armed Forces Training Centre and the Peace Mission
Training Centre
Sierra Leone Ex-Service Men's Association
Instructors and Staff of the Armed Forces and Peace Mission Training Centres
Graduating Officer Cadets

Families, friends, distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen

1. I am excited to be here today as the Reviewing Officer of this Commissioning Parade. I am here with family members, loved ones, and millions of Sierra Leoneans to congratulate each of our 60 Officer Cadets who were recruited into the RSLAF in 2019.

2. Of these 60 Officer Cadets, 11 Specialist Cadets were commissioned three months ago; one is training at the Royal Air Force College, Cranwell; and the other one is at the Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst.

3. As a nation, we have recruited more women into our armed forces over the last three years. Our recruitment of women is far above the threshold specified in UN Security Council Resolution 1325. My Government has been guided by our commitment to gender equity and our recognition of the critical role of women in the future of RSLAF. As with all aspects of our national life, women's voices and representation matter in our country's armed forces and my Government will stay committed to recruiting and retaining women in RSLAF.

4. For successfully accomplishing the daunting task of transforming civilians into professional soldiers, I want to thank the commandants, staff, and instructors of the Armed Forces and Peace Mission Training centres. To you and all serving and former members of the RSLAF, I lead to thank you for your unparalleled commitment and great service to this nation.

5. I also want to thank the RSLAF for their exceptional role in battling COVID-19. Our infection rates and deaths are lower, and we have successfully fended off the worst of the delta variant wave. Your service to this nation in war and in peace is forever emblazoned in the RSLAF slogan "Serving the Nation." Indeed, our nation is forever grateful.

6. As a Government, we will not relent in building the capacity of men and women of our armed forces. My Government is committed to ensuring adequate investments in basic domestic training as the key foundation for advanced professional training. We thank our development partners for their great support in building the capacity of our armed forces – the United Kingdom, the United States of America, People's Republic of China, France, Canada, Bangladesh, Nigeria, Egypt, Ghana, Russia, Pakistan, Turkey, Liberia, Guinea, to name a few. Over the last three years, my Government has engaged new and existing partners and advocated in the best interests of the RSLAF for training and equipment needs.

7. As a nation, we have a long and proud military tradition. Our men and women of these armed forces have demonstrated gallantry in various theatres of war and peacekeeping all over the globe. Sierra Leone's contribution to the United Nations peacekeeping efforts, over the years, demonstrates our country's strong commitment to the principle of maintaining global peace and security, supporting stability, and promoting and protecting human rights.

8. The United Nations demands well-drilled, smaller, agile, and flexible units for peacekeeping operations. Our RSLAF is indeed a well-trained army fit for purpose. In that regard, plans are now in progress to secure the necessary equipment to recommit a Quick Reaction Force Company to peacekeeping operations. This will be good financially and professionally for you, our brave men and women.

9. We will accelerate ongoing efforts to construct standard and conducive barrack accommodation for our officers, soldiers, and their dependants across the country. Along with our partner, the People's Republic of China, our work on the ultra-modern Myohaung Officers' Mess and five-storey Single Officers' Quarters at Wilberforce stands as testament. It will be a site where young

officers will build esprit de corps and be nurtured in the traditions and ethos of the Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces.

10. We will soon commission those edifices and other construction projects across the country including billets and forward patrol bases. We will continue our welfare commitments and we will continue to professionalise the RSLAF because it is in the best interests of this nation and this nation's development.

11. Be reminded that you are now sworn on oath to serve this nation. It is your duty to respect, uphold, and protect the national constitution of the Republic of Sierra Leone, and to obey all lawful orders from your superiors without question.

12. You are soldiers first and always. You are not tools in the hands of politicians, and you must never be. Your duty is to protect our peace, our democracy, and thus support our national development. So, professionalism is not an option, it is a way of life for an officer. It involves discipline, loyalty, respect, compassion, and character. As officers, you must demonstrate these qualities in how you lead and how you live. Do more, learn more, and serve with honour without giving excuses.

13. To the families of these fine men and women, thank you for motivating and supporting them to serve our country. We hope they will inspire us all with their good examples.

14. My final few words to the graduates: congratulations and always be fine officers of the Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces.

I thank you. May God bless us all and may God bless Sierra Leone.