



**STATEMENT BY HIS EXCELLENCY, DR. JULIUS MAADA
BIO, PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF SIERRA LEONE ON
THE OCCASION OF THE SIGNING OF A MEMORANDUM OF
UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN THE UNIVERSITY OF SIERRA
LEONE AND THE UNIVERSITY OF LIBERIA. STATE HOUSE,
FREETOWN - 7TH SEPTEMBER 2021**

Ministers of Government
Distinguished visiting delegation members
Academic staff,
Ladies and Gentlemen,
Good morning and welcome to Sierra Leone

1. On the margins of the centennial commencement ceremony in Monrovia, Liberia, in December 2019, I met with Prof. Julius Sarwolo-Nelson and a cross-section of the University administration and staff. Dr. Bernice Dahn, and Prof. Kobbah-Boley, it is a real pleasure having you here again today. Welcome to Freetown, Sierra Leone.
2. Earlier on at the commencement ceremony, I had argued that Liberia and Sierra Leone share a common, unbreakable, and continuous demographic, historical, cultural, and academic heritage.
3. I also argued that our common aspiration was to be a region teeming with talent, educators, innovators, and entrepreneurs. I challenged all of us to create a knowledge-based economy in our region.
4. On the same day, I engaged with faculty and staff of the University, and we agreed that a partnership between the University of Liberia and the University of Sierra Leone was long overdue. Today, I am pleased that all of you furthered the shared vision we agreed on that day and this memorandum of understanding is, today, a reality.
5. I am gratified that, in the MOU, you have incorporated some of the key areas discussed then – research collaboration and joint publications, knowledge and technology exchanges, staff capacity development and exchanges, programme and curriculum development, and more.
6. The rationale for the MOU has been well laid out in statements by the previous speakers. There is a need for collaboration in higher education in order to develop homegrown development solutions for problems we experience in our countries – whether it is in the fields of the innovative uses of technology for development, agricultural production, medicine and more. We must re-purpose technical and higher education for increasing productivity, creating jobs, and for other national development outcomes -- not just for giving out paper certificates.
7. But think also about how this partnership will enhance the standing and reputation of both institutions, enrich faculty and students, and

improve the quality of higher education in both our countries. Both institutions were established in the 1800s – Fourah Bay College in 1827 and the University of Liberia in 1862. A partnership of the first and second oldest universities in West Africa holds tremendous promise if we get this right.

8. Remember also that as Governments, what you do in the universities and technical and vocational institutions have implications for the policies we craft and vice versa. In delivering human capital development, for instance, we will consider not just equal access to quality education and radical inclusion of all but also access to healthcare, food security, water and sanitation, and more.
9. So, for me, this MOU is a shared vision that is most commendable. Thank you to both leaderships for your drive and engagement. Thank you for moving the moving the needle on this.
10. I would like to encourage you to move from this MOU to more concrete elements of this shared vision. What are the deliverables? What are the commitments? How will you organise yourselves to achieve those deliverables? How will you plan to achieve and sustain those deliverables? How will you engender trust and communicate effectively and honestly about your partnership? What are the milestones and how will you assess and measure your successes or critically reflect on the challenges?
11. I am sure your sister institutions already have a sense of a framework of cooperation; of co-planning visits; assessing relative strengths, constraints, and opportunities; timelines for deliverables; and more. But I just thought I should perhaps give a sense of what I am thinking.
12. For us at the executive levels, how should we support this shared vision? How do you propose we pull in national institutions and their strengths to support this shared vision? How do we foreground the significance of this partnership into our policies and our development plans and activities?

13. Sustainability also comes to my mind. How do we plan to financially sustain this initiative? What are the linkages among your academic institutions, government, and the private sector that can sustain this partnership?
14. This partnership should also be situated within a wider context of international knowledge production and sharing. Our universities here in Sierra Leone have individual links with Harvard University, Yale, MIT and international research and other foundations and institutions. I am sure that they would be interested in having both countries as lab for producing, testing, and scaling solutions while working closely with faculty in both countries within the framework of this shared vision.
15. So, there is a lot to gain from this MOU concluded here today. I want to publicly commit my support to making this a sustainable win-win partnership for both our nations.

I thank you.