



STATEMENT

DELIVERED BY

**HIS EXCELLENCY, DR. JULIUS MAADA BIO
PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF SIERRA LEONE**

AT THE

**GENERAL DEBATE OF THE 76TH SESSION
OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

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please check against delivery

**Mr. President,
Mr. Secretary-General,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,**

1. I congratulate you, Mr. President, on assuming the responsibility of steering the work of the 76th Session of the General Assembly. I assure you of Sierra Leone's fullest support during your tenure.
2. I also commend your predecessor, His Excellency, Mr. Volkan Bozkır of the Republic of Turkey, for the effective and efficient conduct of the 75th session of the General Assembly. We deeply appreciate his efforts in galvanizing a multilateral approach to containing the COVID-19 pandemic and handling its multi-faceted impacts through several high-level meetings.
3. I also congratulate the Secretary-General, Mr. Antonio Guterres, on his re-appointment. I assure him of Sierra Leone's continued support as he leads and coordinates the United Nations' response to persistent global challenges. Sierra Leone associates with his call, among other equally important matters, for prioritising COVID-19 response, vaccine access and equity; tackling poverty and inequality; the impact of climate change; and, promoting gender equality, human rights protection, and promotion.

Mr. President,

4. Our collective aspiration for a safe, equitable, and prosperous future has been challenged over the last two years. As the world wrestles with the tragedy, trauma, and adverse impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, Sierra Leone appreciates all COVID-19-specific resolutions of the General Assembly and the Security Council. Sierra Leone is also fully supportive of

all policy initiatives that advance multilateral cooperation on fighting the pandemic and implementing measures to mitigate its long-term effects on lives and livelihoods.

5. We believe that our collective commitment through multilateral partnerships will see our world through the throes of this pandemic, build resilience, and recover sustainably. The theme of this 76th Session of the General Assembly: *“Building resilience through hope”*, is therefore most appropriate and timely.
6. The COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted lives and economies, constrained development due to the repurposing of development finance and the withholding of private capital, escalated the threats of climate change and food insecurity, broadened inequities and injustice, and increased fragilities. Nations risk not meeting the sustainable development goals and building resilience against future shocks.
7. However, amidst premature pessimism that the familiar world order has unravelled, Sierra Leone sees the possibility for renewed optimism and new growth. As a nation, we are grateful to the United Nations, friendly nations, and multilateral institutions that have worked with us to navigate the stormy period since March 2020.

Mr President,

8. In Sierra Leone, through our Quick Action Economic Response Programme, we are building fiscal resilience by investing in agriculture, human capital development, and expanding productivity through economic diversification. But we believe our post-COVID recovery will be anchored

in increased private sector investments, international trade, and development financing in growth sectors.

9. In that regard, we have created a conducive business ecosystem, amicably resolved business disputes, ratified international trade and labour instruments, and continued to make progress in the fight against corruption because it is good for business and governance.

10. Our structured health preparedness plan, that has been implemented with close attention to science and data, has helped save lives and protect livelihoods. Mindful of the need to save lives and preserve human dignity, Sierra Leone has been proactive in interrupting transmission chains, curtailing infection, minimizing deaths, and mitigating the effects of COVID-19 on our population. We commend global solidarity around the provision of COVID-19 vaccines to our nation. Especially, we thank the People's Republic of China, France, the United States of America, the COVAX facility, and other multilateral institutions. We are ramping up vaccination rates and gaining greater vaccination coverage of our population. The worst of the delta variant may be behind us but we will remain ever vigilant.

Mr President,

11. Throughout the COVID-19 period, we have done more to improve human capital development, support the most vulnerable of our citizens and communities, build strong institutions, create more inclusive democratic spaces, build infrastructure, and ensure public service delivery. To our mind, resilience is not to be hoped for; it is to be worked for, and diligently and purposefully so.

12. We no longer wish to be perceived as a nation that is saddled with the tragedies and failures of the past. We no longer wish to be seen and spoken about as a nation recovering from civil strife to Ebola and from bad governance and economic gridlock to food and climate insecurity. We are a nation striving ever harder to fulfil our enormous potential.

13. Our peaceful democracy has matured. Predictable, regular, and peaceful elections are the norm. Civil society actors are partners at all levels of governance and public service delivery. We have established an Independent National Commission for Peace and National Cohesion to foster social cohesion and further consolidate peace in the country.

Mr. President,

14. We continue to remove threats to democratic freedoms and human rights. We have repealed a half-a-century old seditious libel law. No politician or rights activist is in prison for expressing his or her beliefs. No journalist is in prison for the practice of journalism. We have abolished the death penalty in our nation.

15. Throughout the COVID period, we have promoted the rights to education through creative solutions including nationwide distance learning and hybrid Education technologies. We have added 800,000 more learners, increased domestic education financing to 22%, and learning has continued throughout the period of this pandemic. Our policy of radical inclusion grants tuition-free and safe access to quality education to all learners including pregnant girls, parent learners, children from poor and rural areas, and children living with disabilities. Coupled with comprehensive school safety measures, a revamped curriculum, hybrid education technologies, credible transition examinations, school feeding,

school health, and other such forward-looking policies, we are making steady progress. We seek partnerships to further expand these investments in education, technical training, higher education, and entrepreneurship. Only then can our young persons seize the opportunity to expand the economy, innovate and take advantage of 4IR technologies, and create new possibilities for our nation.

16. In fulfilment of the right to health we simultaneously battled COVID-19 and other disease burdens such as malaria, HIV, and TB, thanks to the Global Fund. GAVI has supported the provision of more vaccines. We are reducing maternal and child mortality across the country and look forward to more partnerships to make even more progress.

17. In respect of the right to work, we have regularly paid salaries through the COVID-19 period and provided support for vulnerable populations. There is greater internet penetration and we are increasing energy access across the country through a mix of sources including solar energy.

Mr. President,

18. Sierra Leone associates with international efforts to protect the rights of women, get more women workforce ready, expand access to resources, and promote gender empowerment and equity.

19. Building resilient and inclusive post-COVID societies involves increasing access to justice in a safe and secure society. In Sierra Leone, we have expanded legal aid services to poor and under-served persons and established special courts to fast-track cases for sexual offences, social security, corruption, and small claims among others.

20. Sierra Leone urges global solidarity on access to justice and remedies for survivors of sexual violence. This is building upon our domestic efforts against sexual and gender-based violence. In that regard, I have directed the Mission of Sierra Leone to the United Nations to sponsor a standalone resolution on this issue at the General Assembly. Let this be the year that the United Nations will give all survivors of sexual violence the remedy they deserve.

21. We will continue to work closely with partners on cybersecurity, digital public goods, and to curb irregular migration of persons. We have complemented international action with local initiatives and cooperation models.

Mr. President,

22. The threat of climate change in land degradation, erratic rainfall patterns, and rising sea levels and temperatures looms large. These together threaten food and water security, fish resources, and energy access. Sierra Leone is committed to all global climate action commitments and looks forward to participating in the upcoming UN Climate Change Conference in Glasgow and in the fifteenth meeting of the Conference of Parties of the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity.

23. We are integrating climate smart polices and projects into our development priorities. Last year, we established a statutory agency to enhance our capacity to deal with the full cycle of disaster management.

24. But as with other LDCs, the climate financing gap remains a key challenge to implementing our mitigation and adaptation measures.

Accordingly, Sierra Leone joins other Least Developed Countries in calling for a green climate fund to meet the \$100 billion target to support the mitigation and adaptation plans of developing countries. Thus, we can create new green jobs especially for youth and women, create sustainable and inclusive communities, and build resilience against climate change shocks.

Mr. President,

25. In spite of this progress, our sub-regions in Africa are confronted with peace deficits arising from violent extremism, piracy, and other forces of instability. The continental African Union and sub-regional ECOWAS are fully engaged. We urge greater collaboration and closer partnerships by the United Nations with these bodies and governments to usher in a more peaceful sub-region.

26. My country provides leadership to the Group of Seven Plus (g7+) conflict affected and fragile countries. We reiterate the nexus between peace and development and reaffirm our joint call for global ceasefires and the pursuit of peace through national dialogue and reconciliation. Only then can our nations walk out of fragility into sustainable development.

27. While the COVID-19 pandemic is universal, it has disproportionately affected countries such as ours in the g7+ group. The world's poorest nations face the grim challenge of global economic downturns, reduction in foreign aid, and increase in trade deficits. Therefore, the success of global recovery efforts will depend on the recovery of these countries in fragile situations.

28. We have undertaken voluntary national reviews and peer reviews as self-assessment tools to take stock of the progress we have made and

challenges with which we must contend. We believe that with ongoing reforms, we can transition from fragility to a sustainable and resilient future. By investing in human capital development and building “effective, accountable, and inclusive institutions,” we believe that future is attainable.

Mr President,

29. A fairer and more equitable post-COVID-19 world order is possible when all nations and regions of the world can dialogue as equals. We must eradicate hierarchies of power and discuss our common concerns and shared aspirations as equals.

30. Sierra Leone notes the remarkable progress made by the United Nations and member States on decolonisation. We therefore encourage members States to map out fresh approaches for the advancement of the decolonisation agenda in line with the mandate contained in Resolution 1514.

31. A post-COVID world order requires more partnership and more collaboration with input from all nations on all continents across the world. We cannot exclude the voices of 54 nations of the world and 1.2 billion of the world’s population. We cannot justify those exclusions with power structures set 75 years ago. We must reaffirm our common values and address our shared aspirations as equals.

32. We can start to redress this gross imbalance by reforming the Security Council to make it more broadly representative, efficient, and transparent, and thus to enhance the legitimacy of its decisions. Sierra Leone recognises the demonstration of the commitment “to instil new life in the discussions on the reform of the Security Council”.

33. As the Coordinator of the African Union Committee of Ten on the reform of the Security Council, Sierra Leone is pleased to note the progress made during the 75th session of the General Assembly in the acknowledgement of “the wide recognition and broad support by Member States for the legitimate aspiration of Africa to play its rightful role on the global stage.” As asserted in the African Common position articulated in the Ezulwini Consensus and Sirte Declaration, redressing this historical injustice against Africa is an urgent priority.

34. Africa demands no less than two permanent seats with all the rights and prerogatives of permanent members -- including the right of veto, if retained, -- and two additional seats in the non-permanent category of the Security Council. On behalf of African Union Member States, I urge all Member States to demonstrate their renewed commitment towards reforming the Security Council and making it more representative, inclusive, democratic, transparent, and accountable.

35. Mr. President, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, let me conclude by reiterating that Sierra Leone will work with partners to enhance the multilateral rules-based order, collaborate on our shared post-COVID global agenda, and build back better and more sustainably so. I thank you.