



**STATEMENT BY HIS EXCELLENCY, DR. JULIUS MAADA
BIO, PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF SIERRA LEONE AT
THE INAUGURATION OF THE UNIVERSITY COURT OF THE
EASTERN TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY OF SIERRA LEONE,
KENEMA CITY -23 OCTOBER 2021**

The Honourable Speaker of Parliament,
The Chief Minister and Ministers of Government,
Honourable Members of Parliament,
Members of the Diplomatic and Consular Corps
Your Worship, the Mayor of Kenema City,
Our Revered Traditional Rulers and Community Leaders,
Chairman and Members of the Tertiary Education Commission,
Members of Court,
Academic and Administrative Staff of the Eastern Technical University,
Students Representatives,
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,
Good morning:

1. I could not be more honoured to be here this morning. As a party and as a Government, we thought it fitting; we rationalised it; we promised it; and this morning, we have delivered. But we have delivered several promises.
2. In the People's Manifesto, I promised to establish a Ministry of Technical and Higher Education that superintends tertiary and technical education in this country. We have delivered.
3. We also promised to "establish a university system that employs its own leadership as chancellors" – persons "with distinguished and proven records of higher education leadership, significant international clout and contacts (funding and research networks), and who are reform minded." I promised to cease being a Chancellor of the Universities. That is a promise delivered.
4. Per the Universities Act 2021, I will henceforth be a "VISITOR" to these Universities. I have no desire to intervene in the general governance of these institutions. I will support the institutions to develop and produce the highest quality of graduates we need for sustainable and inclusive national development.
5. In November 2020, at the Milton Margai College of Education and Technology, I argued that by investing in workforce development and equipping our labour force with the requisite skillset, we could rapidly unlock the great potential of this nation. I have also argued that practice-oriented technical training and entrepreneurship are immeasurably more valuable and relevant to national development than a classical education as we have known it since 1827.
6. The "*Pappay you borbor dae ya*" culture where university graduates scramble for scanty public sector jobs must be replaced with a new "can-do" entrepreneurial and innovation mindset. That is the mindset that will create jobs, create wealth, and grow the economy of this nation. We need innovators, highly trained teachers, nurses and healthcare personnel, skilled technicians, and persons with skillsets who will transform the economy of this nation.

7. At this new university, I am informed that there will be a Faculty of Business Enterprise and Entrepreneurship Studies; a Faculty of Vocational and Skills Development Studies; a Faculty of Pure and Applied Sciences; a Faculty of Engineering and Innovation; a Faculty of Development Agriculture and Natural Resource Management, a Faculty of Health Sciences and Disaster Management Studies, and last and definitely not least, a Faculty of Education.

8. The scope covers translational sciences and innovation, healthcare service training and delivery, engineering, agriculture and agribusiness, natural resource management, disaster management, entrepreneurship, and teacher training and development.

9. This is education that develops human capital, creates and drives a new kind of knowledge-based economy, and nurtures opportunity and creates private sector jobs. Ours is a growing economy with great potential and only well-trained people can drive that development. In a week, I will be at COP26 to discuss how we can contend with climate change, build resilience, and create a green economy. That new economy requires new skill sets. Those skillsets can be quickly developed within a technical university.

10. No doubt, those expanded course offerings are of immense value for national development. You would recognise therefore my reason for establishing not one, not two, but three public technical universities in this country -- the Eastern Technical University; Milton Margai Technical University; and The Kono University of Science and Technology respectively. These universities give expanded access to university education with a focus on innovation, creativity, and entrepreneurship. This is growth in the right direction. This is what the new direction was always and is about.

11. As has been noted, this University has evolved from humble beginnings. But even then, it was always defined by its impactful partnerships with the community and its immense service to the nation as a whole. From Bunumbu Teacher's College, children who went on to become scientists, lawyers, and doctors learned their first lessons.

Distinguished ladies and gentlemen, kindly allow me to proffer my views on a few key areas of the mandate of the court of this nascent technical university.

12. First, it is important that the court should define what this university is and what it stands for as it develops its strategic identity. In the last decade or two, we have seen universities offering courses outside their historical mandate. If this university is going to be known to produce the best teachers, the best innovators, the best nurses, and the best disaster or resource management professionals, then let it be so. So, identify and carve a unique niche and achieve excellence in pursuing that vision.

13. Secondly, the pursuit of excellence and development at our universities has usually been saddled with financial problems. Industrial actions, mismanagement, a failure to upkeep or upgrade physical and digital infrastructure, have all been lingering constraints. Government cannot singularly fully fund a university's growth and operations. I, therefore, expect that you expand your resources mix and not rely solely on government funding. Plan for a mix of university fees, university operations, entrepreneurship and investments, advocacy, research, partnerships with institutions/agencies or the private sector and more. More importantly, make sure that the financial systems and control environment are always appropriate to assure solvency, financial stability, and accountability at this university.

14. Above all, ensure that your governance framework is consistent with best practices. You must make certain that there is coherence and consistency across the university's ordinances, rules, and regulations to ensure fairness and compliance. Let this also be the University court that develops relevant documentation on governance, strategic management, a predictable and consistent university calendar, and standing orders. Such clarity will enable the University Court to carry out its mandate with great distinction.

15. As a court, it is your duty to guarantee that the senior administrative staff pursues the vision and mission of this University. As a nation, we have yet to fully value performance reviews that are undertaken at predictable intervals. But taking stock is always a useful way of establishing whether the

University administration is meeting the strategic goals the court sets for the university.

16. But it would be most helpful also for the University court to measure its own performance and effectiveness through an independent review process. The court and senior administrative team should be able to evaluate the effectiveness of the governance framework of the university and how well it is delivering its strategic mandate. This should be a university with a difference. So, some induction training of court members in requisite leadership skills after this ceremony today may be a useful start.

17. Let me close this statement by applauding our collective desire and demonstrated will in the last three years to build our nation. We are collectively resolved as Sierra Leoneans to fulfil our great promise and bequeath a legacy of excellence for our children. Our formal establishment of this technical university is a cornerstone in that foundation for the sustainable and inclusive development of our nation.

18. I, therefore, formally declare the establishment of the Eastern Technical University of Sierra Leone.