



**STATEMENT BY HIS EXCELLENCY, DR. JULIUS MAADA
BIO, PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF SIERRA LEONE ON
THE OCCASION OF SIERRA LEONE'S NATIONAL DAY AT
THE EXPO 2020 DUBAI - 14TH OCTOBER 2021**

Your Highnesses

Excellencies, Heads of State and Governments,

Excellencies, Heads of Delegations,

Excellency, Reem Al Hashimy, Minister of State for International Cooperation
and Director General of EXPO 2020 Dubai

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen

1. Let me start by thanking the leadership of the United Arab Emirates and the organisers of the EXPO Dubai 2020 for the warm reception and hospitality accorded me and my delegation since our arrival in this great and beautiful country that has been globally recognized as the beacon of tolerance.
2. Pope Francis' state visit to the UAE in 2019 -- the first-ever journey of a pontiff to the Southern Arabia region; the normalisation of relations with the State of Israel, the establishment of diplomatic relations at resident ambassadorial level, and Israel`s participation at EXPO 2020 Dubai; and, the ongoing construction in Saadiyat Island in Abu Dhabi of the monotheistic complex - the Abrahamic Family House comprising a Mosque, a Church, and a Synagogue--; are all clear demonstrations of the UAE's level of tolerance and commitment to global peace.
3. Sierra Leone commends your role in preaching peace and building bridges across the world. We strongly support the UAE's election as a Non-Permanent Member of the United Nations Security Council especially at a critical time for such compounded global issues as the COVID-19 pandemic, human security, migration, gender inequality, water and food security, among others.
4. UAE has also been at the centre of global humanitarian actions. On behalf of the people of Sierra Leone, I wish to thank the leadership of the UAE for their continuous support to my country and many others, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic.
5. Since her attainment of nationhood on 2nd December 1971, thanks to the dynamic leadership of the founding father and President, His Highness Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan al Nahyan, the UAE has attained remarkable socio-economic advancement in such sectors as artificial intelligence, banking and finance, tourism and hospitality, infrastructure, space exploration, and digitalization. I, therefore, extend my warmest felicitations to the esteemed Government and its People for demonstrating how a brighter future is possible.

6. With its theme “Connecting minds, and creating the future”, the EXPO Dubai 2020 undoubtedly offers a unique platform for countries around the world to showcase diversity and potential, to connect with business leaders and policymakers, attract investments, and discuss ways of fostering a brighter and sustainable future for all.

7. It is in that spirit that I urge greater partnership, dialogue, and collaboration among nations as the world tackles the adverse social and economic impacts of COVID-19 especially on our smaller African economies. With tightening fiscal spaces and mounting debts, I call on the UAE leadership to lead a campaign on debt relief for smaller countries like Sierra Leone.

8. Ours is a peaceful and stable democratic nation that is heavily investing in our people through universal access to quality education, food security, and accessible and affordable healthcare. We are open to investing in such cross-enablers as digital technology, infrastructure, and green energy access.

9. We have immense mineral resources as mapped out in our recent national geophysical survey, vast expanses of arable land, oil and gas prospects, beaches, islands, and coastal waters rich in fish.

10. We have established a firm reputation for good governance and fiscal discipline. Our economic fundamentals are strong and we have worked on making the regulatory and investment space even more conducive for global capital flows. Patient ESG investing is central to our approach.

11. In consultation with the international finance community, we are working on becoming a risk-adjusted investment destination. We recognise that in a highly competitive global market, we must continue to embrace forward-thinking and dynamic reforms so our investors can reap and repatriate above-market returns. We are open to discussing opportunities in digital and other infrastructure, mining, energy, tourism, the blue economy, agriculture and agribusiness, and more.

12. Our investment portfolios can be sourced at the Sierra Leone pavilion – opposite the Saudi pavilion. We are ready to talk business; we are ready

to show the world what we have and work with investors to achieve the future we desire.

13. Let me close by thanking the UAE for funding the construction of the Sierra Leone Pavilion and for its continuous support to the Government and People of Sierra Leone. Congratulations to the organisers for putting together a great event and I wish everyone a successful EXPO 2020 Dubai. To the great and friendly people of the UAE, permit me to wish you a happy Golden Jubilee celebration.

I thank you all for your kind attention.