



**STATEMENT DELIVERED BY HIS EXCELLENCY, DR. JULIUS
MAADA BIO, PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF SIERRA
LEONE, ON OCCASION OF THE PRESIDENTIAL NATIONAL
BEST TEACHER AWARD EVENT, FREETOWN - 5 OCTOBER
2021**

Distinguished teachers and school administrators,
The Honourable Vice President,
Ministers of Government,
Honourable Members of Parliament,
Members of the Diplomatic and Consular Corps,
Revered Traditional Rulers and Municipality Leaders,
The leadership and staff of the Teaching Service Commission,
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,
Good morning.

- 1.** You may have noticed that I deliberately reversed sequencing in protocol in order to highlight the importance of teachers not only at this event but in our lives and for the future of this nation. In that regard, I crave your indulgence to all stand up and give all teachers – young, experienced, more experienced, retired, sick, or late -- a standing ovation for one minute.

Thank you. Thank you! Thank you!

- 2.** If a bare-footed, five-year old village boy, who stared in awe and with great curiosity on his first day at school, today holds degrees from institutions of higher learning, can speak English and French, use technology, think critically, interact freely with world leaders, and is today President of this Republic of Sierra Leone, it is all because of the sacrifice, care, nurture, and patience of teachers.
- 3.** Therefore, on this day set aside as World Teachers' Day, it is all appropriate to celebrate, to honour, and to thank every teacher for all they have done. Through war and through pestilence, teachers have been at the very heart of our nation's resilience and recovery. Even during the COVID-19 pandemic, they kept schools open, imparted knowledge with characteristic selflessness, patiently prepared students for transitional examinations, and continued to mould and open minds as they are wont.
- 4.** So today is about honouring those who may have been mocked, ridiculed, and under-appreciated for choosing a profession that does not bestow instant monetary wealth upon them.
- 5.** Today is about recognising communicators, influencers, opinion makers, care givers; people who serve with empathy; who mould character, instil discipline and respect; who empower; who give passions, imaginations, hopes, and dreams an opportunity to blossom.
- 6.** Today is about thanking those who when children have doubts, when they make mistakes, when they are unsure and frustrated, will

patiently stand by and assure them that the best is always in them and they are the best who can ever be.

- 7.** Today is about honouring those who have dedicated their lives to nurturing and developing the human capital of our nation and thus shaping the future of our nation. Today is about celebrating and honouring our teachers. Thank you.
- 8.** As President, I have prioritised investing in people because it is the only enduring, inclusive, and sustainable pathway to developing our nation. Central to that investment is quality education that is universally and equally accessible to all.
- 9.** The Chairman of the Teaching Service Commission has given an exhaustive list of reforms we promised and have delivered to teachers. The Minister of Basic and Senior Secondary Education has laid out the whole gamut of reforms in the education sector that have made us the object of great admiration the world over.
- 10.** We thank our partners who have believed in us, stood with us, and worked with us to invest in our citizens through free quality education. The partnerships, technical support, policy advice, and funding support have been truly invaluable. Thank you for your support for teacher training, your provision of teaching and learning materials, and your alignment of your funding and expertise with our long-term strategies for augmenting teacher training.
- 11.** There is a role for the private sector and for foundations and other multilateral agencies. Let us forge partnerships that improve the quality of teachers and of teaching in Sierra Leone. We believe that quality teaching leads to better student outcomes and higher student achievement and completion rates.
- 12.** This is why teachers are central to our overall education strategy and why, in the People's Manifesto, I announced the best teacher award for the most innovative, ingenious, and dedicated teachers at national, regional, and district levels.

- 13.** Our thinking was that through a transparent, competitive process based on clear guidelines, teachers would be identified across the country who consistently demonstrate a number of desirable qualities.
- 14.** Our assessments were based on innovative teaching strategies including the use of technology and digital media; creating an inclusive and engaging learning environment for students; maintaining high standards of teaching and assessment; supporting student learning and development beyond the classroom; maintaining the Teaching Code of Conduct; and, being a peer mentor and positive role model for other teachers.
- 15.** The objective is to motivate teachers to work towards excellence in the teaching profession and to inspire others to join the profession and to exceed minimum standards. We want to raise the profile and visibility of teachers and of the teaching profession.
- 16.** Winners will serve as role models for other teachers and share their best practices. I expect that the Teaching Service Commission will develop a toolkit that outlines feasible ways best teachers can do so.
- 17.** In addition to the modest prizes, we will be providing to each winner today, these winners will be nominated as Sierra Leone's nominees to compete in this year's AU Teacher Prize.
- 18.** Let me close by thanking teachers for what they are and for all they do. You nurture and educate young people who I see as a source of hope; and as drivers of a productive, inclusive, cohesive, and sustainable future.
- 19.** If we should be at the centre and not at the receiving end of the fourth industrial revolution; if we should participate actively in the global order; we must and should do better at educating our next generation of leaders.
- 20.** If as a nation we should meet our targets of social justice and civic responsibility; of gender empowerment and equality; of radical

inclusion of the youth, girls – pregnant or parent learners -, the poor, the rural, those living with disabilities, and other at-risk populations; we must continue to invest in, honour, and celebrate our teachers.

I thank you and May God bless Sierra Leone.