



**NATIONAL STATEMENT BY HIS
EXCELLENCY, DR. JULIUS MAADA BIO,
PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF SIERRA
LEONE, AT THE 26TH CONFERENCE OF
PARTIES OF THE UNITED NATIONS
FRAMEWORK CONVENTIONS ON CLIMATE
CHANGE (UNFCCC) IN GLASGOW, UNITED
KINGDOM, 1ST – 2ND NOVEMBER 2021**

Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

1. Let me, at the outset, thank Italy and the United Kingdom for convening the global community and mobilising concerted and collective global efforts to discuss and act on the single universal existential threat of our time – climate change.
2. Sierra Leone has one of the most diverse ecosystems in the world: inland wetlands and forests across 4 main relief regions, about 15,000 plant species, the most diverse fish stocks along the west coast of Africa, and 761 species of mammals and birds.
3. But we are highly vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change, rapid biodiversity and tree cover loss, and the attendant threats to human habitat, health, food, and water security. As a consequence, other fallouts like poverty, gender disparities, and youth unemployment are intensifying especially in the COVID-19 era.
4. We are doing the very best we can in the circumstances. We are fully committed to all international agreements and actions to develop a climate resilient future. We have established a stand-alone Ministry of the Environment and recently reviewed and updated our Nationally Determined Contribution, National Climate Change Policy, and National Climate Change Strategy and Action Plans. We have identified environmental pressure points and we are implementing coherent mitigation and adaption strategies.
5. Within our limited resources, we have underscored climate change actions in national development planning and budgeting processes in alignment with outcomes derived from the UNFCCC process.
6. We have enhanced the conservation and protection of natural habitats and ecosystems, improved meteorological services, integrated water resource management and community-based adaptation strategies in the agriculture sector, and promoted climate change risk-management.

7. We are promoting alternative renewable energy in off-grid solar networks and stepping up tree-planting to restore 960,000 hectares of depleted forests.
8. We believe that establishing a green economy should focus on restoring and protecting, investing in, consuming sustainably, and being accountable and inclusive.
9. As Prime Minister Boris Johnson recently stated, it is indeed “right and lucrative to be green” and we want to work collectively toward that goal.
10. But good climate policies and ambitions alone, such as ours in Sierra Leone, may however fall short. Additionally, due to high debt servicing, Sierra Leone lacks the fiscal space to scale up investments in climate change actions. We therefore agree with Kermit the Frog, that being African and being one of the Least Developed Countries, “it is not that easy being green.”
11. We need technical support to introduce or implement enabling regulatory and structural reforms. My government is eager to work with partners to further ease the investment climate, co-create projects, and map out incentives for potential green and ESG investments.
12. We urgently need investments in digital infrastructure and technology if we are to acquire better GIS data, improve marine conservation and management, promote nature-based solution and just rural transitions to sustainable agriculture, introduce climate-smart agriculture and food systems that preserve our forests, and provide high-yield, improved seeds to farmers.
13. We stand ready to invest in green energy sources with smaller environmental footprints. We have introduced some off-grid solar electrification to some towns, but we need to expand those investments to other towns and make them even more affordable. Cheaper and affordable solar systems will expand energy access to more Sierra Leoneans.

14. We should also invest in affordable, competitively-priced, low-carbon energy sources for cooking and other domestic uses in order to avoid the indiscriminate felling of trees for firewood and charcoal.
15. We need to invest in green urban planning, sustainable urban waste management, green mass-transit transportation systems, and stricter emissions testing and enforcement to reduce emission footprints.
16. We need technical and vocational training to support the growth of jobs created as a consequence of these investments.
17. But more importantly we believe sustained investments in an equitable education will prepare young people and women especially, to respond to climate challenges, help consolidate the gains we will make from the foregoing investments and build a more inclusive and resilient future.
18. We need support from global climate financing streams. Africa has access to less than 5% of global climate financing. We also need the support of larger economies and the international financial community to de-risk private capital and green investments.
19. At this conference and beyond, Sierra Leone is determined to engage and explore all possibilities, ideas, and partnerships to achieve our collective global goals.
20. It may not be easy being green but we, in Sierra Leone, are determined to be green.

I thank you all for your kind attention.