



**STATEMENT BY HIS EXCELLENCY, DR. JULIUS MAADA BIO, PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF SIERRA LEONE, AT THE INSTALLATION OF CHANCELLORS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF SIERRA LEONE, NJALA UNIVERSITY, ERNEST BAI KOROMA UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE, AND TECHNOLOGY, AND KONO UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY, FREETOWN, STATE HOUSE - 30<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER 2021**

The Honourable Speaker of Parliament,  
The Chief Minister and Ministers of Government,  
Honourable Members of Parliament,  
Members of the Diplomatic and Consular Corps  
Chairman and Members of the Tertiary Education Commission,  
Members of Court of the Universities,  
Academic and Administrative Staff Representatives of the Universities  
Students Representatives,  
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good morning:

1. I would like to start these brief remarks by thanking everybody who has worked tirelessly to make this day possible.
2. In the New Direction Manifesto, we made a firm commitment as a party to “establish a university system that employs its own leadership as chancellors.” These would be persons with “distinguished and proven records of higher education leadership, significant international clout and contacts (funding and research networks), and who are reform-minded”.
3. I promised at the same time to cease being a Chancellor of the Universities. This necessitated a wholesome review of the Universities Act – a task undertaken and completed with great diligence by various bodies. As per the Universities Act 2021, I will no longer be chancellor of any of the public universities. I will be a “VISITOR” to these Universities. As I have said before, it was a promise made; it is a promise delivered.
4. But the task was more than just making a promise happen. My commitment to wholesale governance reform within the university was intentional. It coheres with my bigger promise to this nation of good governance in all spheres.
5. My diagnosis of key governance challenges identified that the politicisation of university governance led to diminished academic freedom and all its attendant implications for faculty attrition and productivity; poor management, especially as the best persons could no longer superintend decision making about the development of those institutions; poor decision-making, ineffective regulation, and poor planning.
6. With the politicisation of university governance, public universities relied on what subsidies the Government could allocate to those institutions. Lower allocations led to frequent student strikes as student rations and services were reduced to bare minimums and university hostels, faculty housing, libraries, and lecture halls fell into rapid disrepair. The correlated decline in the economy had impacts on investment in public universities. Financial mismanagement and a lack of investment in physical and digital infrastructure were evident.
7. With this greatly diminished university autonomy, came diminished participation of faculty and staff in the operations and future of their institutions. With the prospects of arbitrary executive interference in everything about the university, dispirited faculty and staff saw themselves as having lesser stakes in ensuring excellence in their institutions. The consequence was obvious – a sharp decline in the quality of higher education in our country. Curriculum offerings were not aligned with the skills development needs of the country.
8. So, when I made the decision to depoliticise public university governance, it was well thought out and intentional. It was about assuring a future of effective and autonomous governance for public universities.

9. So, we are here today to not only celebrate a promise delivered but to work towards a future of excellence and development at our universities.

10. The constraints and challenges are still many, no doubt. But that is where focused and autonomous leadership supports the growth and development of our public universities.

11. Be reminded that the role of Chancellor is clearly defined in the new Universities Act 2021. For instance, their term no longer extends at the behest of the President of the country. Chancellors are now term-bound and their roles are clearly spelled out in the Universities Act 2021.

12. As Chairman of the University Court, I expect that you will closely superintend the overarching governance framework of your respective universities. I have argued elsewhere that you must closely study and adopt best practices. Review university ordinances, rules, and regulations and ensure that they are consistent with the strategic goals the university courts wish to meet. One does not stumble on excellence; one works towards excellence.

13. As Chair of the Finance and General Purpose Committee, make sure that financial controls and financial systems can ensure financial solvency and stability, financial growth, and overall institutional development.

14. Institutional effectiveness must be measured and reviewed at regular intervals. Data should help us reflect on what we are doing well and what we can do better.

15. Let me close by reminding all of us that Chancellors project the integrity of their respective institutions. Use your mandates to develop those institutions so you shall leave a legacy worth mentioning when the history of that institution is written.

16. Let us all make our public universities centres of excellence where we educate the workforce that will build a sustainable and inclusive future for our nation.

I thank you for your kind attention.