



**STATEMENT BY HIS EXCELLENCY, DR.  
JULIUS MAADA BIO, PRESIDENT OF THE  
REPUBLIC OF SIERRA LEONE AT THE  
60TH ORDINARY SESSION OF THE  
ECOWAS AUTHORITY OF HEADS OF STATE  
AND GOVERNMENT. ABUJA, 12<sup>TH</sup>  
DECEMBER 2021**

Your Excellency Nana Addo Dankwa AKUFO-ADDO, President of the Republic of Ghana, and the Chair of the Authority of Heads of State and Government of ECOWAS;

Your Excellencies, Colleague Heads of State and Government of ECOWAS  
Your Excellency, Jean-Claude Kassi Brou, President of the ECOWAS Commission,  
Representative of the AU, UN and other International Organisations;  
Distinguished Ladies & Gentlemen,

1. Let me first convey warm greetings from the Government and People of the Republic of Sierra Leone. I also wish to express our sincere gratitude to His Excellency, President Muhammadu Buhari, and the Government and People of the Federal Republic of Nigeria for hosting this 60th Ordinary Session of the ECOWAS Authority of the Heads of State and Government. We commend Your Excellency for the excellent hospitality accorded our delegation since our arrival in Abuja and the outstanding facilities.

2. Let me commend the Leadership of His Excellency, Nana Addo Dankwa AKUFO-ADDO, President of the Republic of Ghana and the Chair of the Authority, for the quality leadership and commitment he has ably and ceaselessly demonstrated.

3. Let me also congratulate and thank the President, Vice President, and Management of the ECOWAS Commission for their peerless service to ECOWAS Member States especially in the area of the institutional reform process.

4. Sierra Leone also congratulates the ECOWAS Commission for the adoption of Vision 2050 - a landmark policy document that would transform the region over the next 30 years. We call on ECOWAS to fully implement a communication strategy to ensure that the Vision is understood and 'owned' by people of the ECOWAS community. We further call for a robust resource-mobilisation strategy so that vital programmes are funded. The Commission must also introduce a monitoring and evaluation dashboard to measure the impact of the Vision on the ECOWAS people.

Excellencies, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen

5. Sierra Leone firmly endorses ECOWAS' mediation efforts for both a return to constitutional order and democratic transition roadmaps for both Guinea and Mali. We remain firmly committed to and endorse the efforts of the ECOWAS Commission and the Authority of Heads of State to ensure stability and peace in the ECOWAS region.

6. Sierra Leone's bilateral engagement with the CRND leadership in the sister Republic of Guinea focuses on supporting a return to constitutional order and security cooperation between our two nations that share a long border.

7. From the Mano River Union (MRU) Diplomatic, Peace, Security & Democracy Conference convened in Monrovia by my brother and colleague, H.E. President George Manneh Weah, the MRU Communique also complements, supports, re-affirms, and endorses the ECOWAS mediation process and transition agenda for the restoration of constitutional order in Guinea.

8. A high-level MRU delegation has since engaged the CNRD military leadership on the imperative for sub-regional security cooperation and joint border patrols. I, therefore, urge colleague Heads of State to mandate the MRU to play a complementary support role to the ECOWAS process in Guinea.

9. Excellencies, we recall consensus by the Authority of Heads of State for the Commission to commence a review of the revised supplementary Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance as it relates to the contentious issue of third term mandates and arbitrary changes to electoral laws. I urge the Commission to commence a time-bound review of the supplementary protocol in order to restore public trust and confidence in ECOWAS' commitment to supporting stable, timely, and legitimate democratic transitions.

10. In that regard, Excellencies, let me commend ECOWAS' efforts in supporting Cape Verde and The Gambia to conduct free, fair, transparent, and credible elections.

11. Let me also add that our Governments must be seen to promote the all-important voices of women in supporting peace and security in our community.

#### Counterterrorism

12. On the issue of terrorism, Sierra Leone will continue to work in close collaboration with ECOWAS to fight and prevent terrorist activities in the region. The established Counter-Terrorism Centre in Sierra Leone is currently working with the United Nations Office on Counter-Terrorism. Our response must be nimble and adequate. Sierra Leone, therefore, urges that the region bolster its cybersecurity capacity and cooperation in order to interdict the networks and activities of terrorists.

13. We must also strengthen National Early Warning Systems and introduce a more effective coordination mechanism among member states.

#### Covid-19 and Building Healthcare Resilience

14. As our nations contend with the new OMICRON variant, my Government will continue to partner with Members states to galvanize our efforts to prevent and curtail Covid 19.

15. May I congratulate His Excellency, President Buhari, for his work as the Covid 19 champion. Let me also recognise Professor Stanley Okolo, Director General of WAHO, for his exceptional work in helping Member States to deal with the pandemic.

16. As we face unprecedented mutations of the virus, our joint efforts to prevent and curtail the spread of COVID-19 are critical. We urge enhanced access to vaccines and also support for the development of capacity for manufacturing COVID-19 vaccines in Africa.

17. But additionally, we must also build resilience across our healthcare systems through capacity building for health care staff to deliver essential health services to our populations – both rural and urban.

18. We have an opportunity, Excellencies, to reform or re-engineer health systems by not only enhancing workforce capacity and capability,

implementing digital healthcare systems, but also by identifying alternative models of healthcare.

19. We also support sub-regional manufacturing capacity for PPEs and essential medical commodities and for equipping ICUs adequately.

20. Our respective countries have supported vulnerable populations through the COVID-19 pandemic period. But our recovery from the pandemic will be better and stronger if we continue investing in human capital development. We should focus on inclusive development, effective delivery, and innovative approaches. Investing in people will spur inclusive, long-term, and sustainable economic growth.

21. Equal access to quality education must be complemented with the promotion of gender empowerment and equality laws and policies that support greater involvement in decision-making and national development.

22. Women must be fully involved in using innovation and technology to drive excellence in health care, education, agriculture, and energy, among other fields. We can accelerate socio-economic development by placing ICT at the centre of our development strategies.

#### Climate, Energy, and Agriculture

23. Sierra Leone, like other ECOWAS member states, is most vulnerable to the negative impact of climate change. Our response to this existential threat is critical. I, therefore, appeal to Member States to collaborate on climate mitigation and adaptation, and work jointly towards accessing climate finance.

24. There is also a need for resilient infrastructure for dams, bridges, roads, and railways that withstand the effects of climate change.

25. We have an opportunity to introduce more green energy sources such as solar and biogas and to transmit those to the populations in rural communities.

26. Our call for just-rural agriculture, climate-smart agriculture investments and for the engagement of women and youth as agro-entrepreneurs must be supported with tangible joint actions across the community.

On UN Security Council Seat Bid 2024-25

27. Excellencies, I am pleased to inform you that the 39th Ordinary Session of the AU Executive Council on 14th October 2021 unanimously endorsed Sierra Leone as the sole candidate for West Africa and the ECOWAS region for the UNSC seat bid for 2024-25 in the Non-Permanent Category with elections in June 2023.

28. Let me take this opportunity to thank member states and colleague Heads of State for your invaluable support. In particular, let me thank my dear elder brother, President Muhammadu Buhari of the Federal Republic of Nigeria for his magnanimous support and show of common solidarity for Sierra Leone to represent ECOWAS and the African continent on the world stage. On behalf of the Government and people of Sierra Leone, I thank you all for the confidence reposed in Sierra Leone to represent ECOWAS.

29. As I conclude, let me reiterate My Government's full support for ECOWAS in its effort to address issues that affect the region with a view to maintaining Good Governance, peace, security, Stability and inclusive sustainable development.

I thank you for your kind attention.