



**STATEMENT BY HIS EXCELLENCY, DR. JULIUS
MAADA BIO, PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF
SIERRA LEONE, ON OCCASION OF THE FORMAL
DINNER FOR THE DIPLOMATIC CORPS AT THE
PRESIDENTIAL LODGE, FREETOWN,
27TH JANUARY 2022**

Ministers of Government
Your Excellency, The Dean of the Diplomatic Corps;
Excellencies, Members of the Diplomatic and Consular Corps;
Development Partners;
Distinguished ladies and gentlemen

DIPLOMATIC DINNER 2

1. Permit me to start by thanking every one of you, friends, old and new, for joining us this evening to break bread and share drinks. Eating together symbolically strengthens our special bond of friendship that we have built and are nurturing through mutual trust, respect, and cooperation.

2. We are committed to further enhancing mutual understanding, perceptions, and trust. We believe those are germane to sustainable and productive relations among our countries and institutions.

3. In a world confronted with persistent and emerging challenges from COVID-19, climate change and its attendant impact, irregular human migration and human trafficking, cybercrime and international crime, terrorism, to concerns about good governance, human rights and security, and peace and development, there is more need, and not less, to stay actively engaged in global and regional dialogues that strengthen our collective hand in making lives better.

4. We believe that with mutual cooperation and respect among our country and friendly nations and partners, our aspiration and hard work towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals for our citizens is possible. We will, therefore, seek to increase our global diplomatic footprint by seeking to deepen and broaden cooperation with existing friends while also making new friends and working with new partners across the globe.

5. We have been working to consolidate and enrich our democracy and we have undertaken a significant and unprecedented number of institutional, governance, and rights reforms to that end. We are the fourth most peaceful country in Africa and we lead regional indices for our fight against corruption, investments in human capital development, expanding gender empowerment and representation, fostering democratic freedoms, and protecting and promoting the rights of persons.

6. We seek to expand trade and economic relations. We offer a resource-rich, predictable, and inviting investment ecosystem where all investments are guaranteed protection and promotion.

7. Through our Development Partnership Committee forum, we seek to strengthen intense strategic collaboration with our development partners

DIPLOMATIC DINNER 3

and friends. We want more engagement in implementing our Medium-Term National Development plan. We are grateful that targeted development assistance interventions by our partners are helping improve lives and communities from sanitation, healthcare, potable water, energy access, infrastructure, service delivery, to social safety and social protections.

8. We also believe that establishing a Joint Commission for Cooperation agreement with our friends and facilitating more engagement across several areas of cooperation are central to the strategic plan developed for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation.

9. As we have indicated, we are ready to share ideas and perspectives with global institutions and partners. We will also work with all friendly nations in order to embed sustainable development in Sierra Leone.

10. COVID-19 has taught us that only by strengthening cooperation and collaboration can we tackle and prevail over global existential threats and safely navigate the difficult pathway to building back better. There is no gainsaying that our common problems and common interests require more diplomacy, not less.

11. To that end, we will soon commission our first-ever Diplomatic Academy that will train foreign service officers in Sierra Leone and across the sub-region. It will serve as a centre of excellence for foreign and diplomatic studies in the region and it will equip our foreign service officers with the highest skill levels to engage in global diplomacy. New issues demand new approaches and new expertise. COVID has taught us that mastering new technologies and gaining proficiency in using new tools will only enhance our diplomatic tradecraft. Sierra Leone will therefore train its foreign service cadre to meet these new demands and expectations.

12. Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, Sierra Leone believes that it can contribute its fair share to dialogues on global and regional peace and development. In that spirit, Sierra Leone has received the mandate of the ECOWAS community as the sole candidate for a seat at the United Nations Security Council in the non-permanent category

DIPLOMATIC DINNER 4

13. Clearly, Excellencies, distinguished ladies and gentlemen, our bid tells a powerful story – that Sierra Leone is a successful case of post-war reconstruction and peacebuilding; -- that in peace, the voices of small nations matter at the highest global levels of conversations and decision-making because only those small nations can best articulate their experiences and concerns.

14. As Coordinator of the Committee of Ten on the Reform of the United Nations Security Council, Sierra Leone leads advocacy to address historical injustices and advance the Common African Position as presented in the Ezulwini Consensus and Sirte Declaration.

15. In West Africa, we live in a rapidly changing neighbourhood where concerns about democratic governance are complicated by complex security and humanitarian threats. Events in Mali, Guinea, and now in Burkina Faso illustrate the urgent need to work together to peacefully reinstate democratic civilian rule and restore peace and stability. A stable and thriving West Africa will contribute to regional and overall global peace and prosperity. Ultimately, the goal of our diplomacy is to ensure peace and prosperity in Sierra Leone and across the world.

16. Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, let me conclude, with a quick word of reflection on the views of a long-standing American diplomat, William Burns, in his "10 Parting Thoughts for America's Diplomats."

17. He states that "Diplomacy may not be the world's oldest profession, but it remains one of the most misunderstood." People "question its relevance and dismiss its practitioners, especially [. . .], when international affairs are rocked by powerful and tumultuous transitions." But we, as leaders of Governments, need professionals with the requisite skills and knowledge who can help us make sense of and navigate a bewildering and very complex world.

18. This dinner celebrates you, the professionals. I want to thank you once more for everything you do in helping us navigate our complex world, in promoting good governance and trade, in fostering cultural understanding and mutual respect, and in pursuing peace and prosperity for all.

I thank you