



**REMARKS BY HIS EXCELLENCY, DR. JULIUS MAADA
BIO, PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF SIERRA
LEONE, AT THE NINTH DISTRICT ASSEMBLY AND
CONFERENCE OF ROTARY DISTRICT 9101.
FREETOWN INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE
CENTRE, 25TH MARCH 2022**

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Ministers of Government,
Honourable Members of Parliament,
Rotary International President's Representative,
District Governor,
Members of the Diplomatic and Consular Corps
Rotarians, Rotaractors, and Interactors,
Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen

1. Permit me to join the thousands of Sierra Leoneans who have already welcomed you to this our peaceful slice of God's earth. I am sure you have already interacted with some of the most friendly people you can ever meet.
2. Amidst the hassle of meetings, I want to encourage you to make time to lounge or hike on one or several of our pristine natural beaches; enjoy freshly caught seafood and other delectable Sierra Leonean cuisine – the verdict was long out – we have the best jollof and we have cassava leaves, potato leaves, and *bittas* or sorrel/sawasawa sauce; wash it down with natural fruit juices, fresh coconut water, or cocktails of your choice; visit our world-renown Chimpanzee sanctuary at Tacugama, or sail away fly-fishing or to one of the outlying islands either for pleasure or to visit the rich history we have preserved in our nation.
3. Welcome to Sierra Leone. We are the fourth most peaceful in Africa, according to the Global Peace Index. International assessments rate us highly on scorecards for governance and ruling justly. We now have a National Commission for Peace and National Cohesion. As I always say, the ties that bind us as a nation are stronger.
4. We have successfully battled several waves of COVID and the CDC rates us as a low-threat nation. My Government has continued to procure efficacious vaccine doses and I continue to encourage all Sierra Leoneans to take the vaccine and continue to abide by all COVID-19 advisories. Only when each one of us is safe are we all protected as a nation.

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5. But let me again express our nation's very warm welcome and our great delight at seeing so many Rotarians travel to Sierra Leone. It has been a long hiatus due to the global COVID pandemic. But welcome to Sierra Leone. As you may well attest from hereon, the beauty and hospitality of our country is second to none.
6. So too is our focus on changing our nation. I have emphasized that in leadership, we have a shared interest in making our nation, our communities liveable, nurturing, and therefore prosperous. Hence, as a Government, we have prioritized human capital development – an emphasis on feeding the stomach (food security), feeding the mind (free quality education), and taking care of the entire body (affordable and accessible healthcare).
7. Towards each of those objectives, my Government has introduced enabling policies, taken concrete action, and worked with partners. We believe that in looking at persistent problems in new ways, thinking about solutions together, we will reach and implement sustainable actions that will change lives and transform our nation for good.
8. I have been impressed with the emphasis on the power of one that is central to the principles of your organization – the idea that each individual is a global citizen and, working with others, can touch lives in the nether parts of our planet including Sierra Leone. This power of one, unleashed with a singular focus, with a common purpose, with a common goal, has changed lives and futures and given hope where there was none and could have been none.
9. So, when Rotarians provide solar power to the oxygen system at the Lungi Maternity Ward, they are supporting newborn babies, who could have died, a fighting chance to breathe and live on to fulfil their life's promises.
10. When Rotarians support the peanut butter project in Pujehun and stave off malnutrition among under-fives, they are helping keep alive and nourish men and women who will later change this nation.

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11. When Rotarians support the provision of polio vaccines to children all over this nation, they are ensuring that children stay alive and are unhampered by physical disabilities that will limit their chances in an already difficult world. With life-saving rabies vaccines administered through the work of Rotarians, our communities are safer.
12. When Rotarians support the Aberdeen Women's Centre and the Well Woman Clinic and change health outcomes for thousands of women who are disadvantaged by financial and socio-cultural circumstances, that is truly transformative for communities and for this nation.
13. Because of your work with the Ministry of Health and Sanitation, fewer children and fewer Sierra Leoneans are dying of malaria. Your contribution to my Government's overall effort in combatting malaria is indeed salutary. According to the latest African Leaders Malaria Alliance scorecard, Sierra Leone has either achieved, is on track, or is making progress on nearly 90% of the key indicators.
14. Your support for risk communication and social mobilization has indeed helped us fight and win not one, not two, but three successive waves of COVID-19. Rotarians, your work, continues to matter.
15. The Bo Children's Hospital is a living edifice of your impact on communities and for improving health outcomes. You have facilitated free surgery for over 750 Sierra Leoneans with medical conditions ranging from cataracts, orthopaedic surgeries, goitre, fibroids, and more. This is not mere altruism; this is about changing lives.
16. The footprint of your services and work with victims of floods and fires; your support to old people's homes; and, your support for persons with physical disabilities are indeed indelible.
17. But you have also continued to contribute towards education and the human capital development goals of this nation. You have provided local and international scholarships for deserving students; provided a solar-powered lighting system for Centennial Secondary School, Matru

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Jong, and the boarding home of Freetown Secondary School for Girls; refurbished and provided furniture for the Regent Rural Primary School; rehabilitated and constructed old and new libraries and equipped them with furniture and books. Indeed, because of your work, Russell School will get a new library and Rokel Government Secondary School will have its library completely outfitted.

18. Through your work in planting trees in derelict gardens in the central business district of Freetown, for instance, you have transformed the look and feel of the area between State House and Law Courts while contributing to climate mitigation and adaptation efforts nationwide.
19. Your work in the water sector has provided 130 borehole wells to deprived or underserved communities, schools, and hospitals all over Sierra Leone. The Hastings Dam and Water Project, which has been designed, built, and maintained by Rotarians, has provided potable pipe-borne water to over 30,000 homes. The health impact is inestimable. But you have continued to enrich communities through support for agriculture and thus enhance local economies.
20. Your work in Sierra Leone will continue to make a huge difference in the future of this nation. Margaret Mead was right to observe that "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has." As President of our grateful nation, I want the global family of Rotarians to know that we appreciate all that you have kept on doing for Sierra Leone.
21. Rotary's work is perfectly aligned with my Government's vision for Sierra Leone. I, therefore, see Rotary in Sierra Leone as a viable partner for delivering development. Edward Everett Hale could not have fluxed out the notion of togetherness and cooperation better when he said "Together — one of the most inspiring words in the English language. Coming together is a beginning; keeping together is progress; working together is a success." Together, everything is possible. Together, we can change lives.

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22. I hope that Rotarians have had a very productive District Assembly and Conference and that they will come back soon to Sierra Leone. I wish everyone a pleasant rest of his or her stay and God's speed and travelling mercies for all our guests.

I thank you for your kind attention.