



**REMARKS BY HIS EXCELLENCY, DR.
JULIUS MAADA BIO, PRESIDENT OF
THE REPUBLIC OF SIERRA LEONE AT
THE COMMISSIONING OF THE
MAGBELE-ROKEL RIVER BRIDGE. 14TH
MAY 2022**

The Honourable Vice President,
Ministers of Government,
Members of Parliament,
Our revered traditional rulers,
The European Union Ambassador,
Our development partners,
Haja Fatu Modu,
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good morning:

1. I would like to start today's proceedings with a special tribute to an outstanding Sierra Leonean of blessed memory, Honourable Paramount Chief Alikali Modu III, Justice of the Peace.
2. Sixty-six years ago, in August 1956, he commissioned the old Magbele bridge. He praised the then newly constructed bridge as adding "another feather to the achievements of the SLPP."
3. He predicted rightly that "from henceforth, the progress and prosperity of the Northern Province, particularly those of Port Loko District, will take on a new and powerful energy and make the lives of the people richer and happier."
4. He emphasised, "It must be realised that without good and sound communications, roads, bridges, railways and telegraph, industrial and social progress will be slow and painful."
5. He concluded by stating that "as the days go by, we shall see more and more bridges being built, our roads etc improved, and this country with one accord, one people, shall move from strength to strength into prosperity." What prophetic words from a revered Paramount Chief and a great Sierra Leonean!
6. At the State Opening of Parliament, I spoke about my fascination with bridges: how they connect communities, locations, and people; and how they help us traverse otherwise dangerous rivers. But it is the willpower to move, together, from strength to strength into prosperity,

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with “one accord, and one people” that resonates with me even better. It is the shared vision that by thinking together, working together, we can make the lives of Sierra Leoneans everywhere even better.

7. It is this shared vision “to make the lives of people richer and happier” (as stated back 66 years ago by Paramount Chief Alikali Modu); the shared vision to make travel across the Rokel River safer; the shared vision to create a safe transportation, trade, and economic corridor to move goods and commerce from and to Guinea, Kono, kabala, Makeni and beyond to Freetown; the shared vision to provide safer access to health care with ambulances safely transporting patients, safer access to education, and safe access to other public services; it is that shared vision that has moved our development partner, the European Union and my Government to work on this brand new bridge.
8. Therefore, I want to particularly thank our partners, the European Union, for their invaluable support for this and other infrastructural projects throughout the country. Our cooperation has picked on new vibrancy, no doubt, because of our shared belief that by collaborating closely and doing things transparently, we can achieve real results and thus transform the lives of Sierra Leoneans, ease access to services, and promote international trade. Thank you for your continued belief in working with my Government.

Ladies and gentlemen, kindly indulge me, at this point, to address my people directly.

- Remind the audience about Paramount Chief Modu’s words 66 years ago.
- In 2015, the EU gave the previous Government money to construct this Magbele Bridge. After two years, they did nothing and the EU cancelled the contract. As you have heard from other people, the EU even had to pay them \$350,000 USD for doing nothing. That is over Le4 billion for doing nothing. No bridge.

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- That Work on This Magbele Bridge started in October 2018 when President Bio was already President. Within 2 years we have gone halfway; in less than 4 years, we have completed a brand new bridge.
- So, as Chief Alikali Modu said, the SLPP built the old Magbele bridge; Port Loko had to wait another 66 years for the SLPP to again build the new Magbele Bridge.
- The other people talk a lot about how they are the party of infrastructural development. But how can you be a party of infrastructural development when for 11 years in power, and even when foreign friends gave you money, you did not take it seriously and still continued an old and dangerous bridge?
- In less than 4 years alone in Port Loko District, my Government, with our Eu partners, has constructed this 163-metre-long modern two-lane bridge.
- In less than 4 years, we are constructing a \$270 million USD airport terminal at Lungi, Port Loko District even when the other people wanted to move the airport away from Lungi.
- In less than 4 years, we are re-constructing and modernising the Tagrin ferry terminal and working on bridging 4 new ferries.
- In less than four years, we have reopened the iron-ore mines at Marampa, expanded its operations, and created more jobs for our people in Port Loko District.
- We negotiated favourable terms now so that the community gets 1% of on-board-value of exports for community development – far more than any community gets. There are also thousands of direct and indirect jobs for citizens of Port Loko District.
- In less than four years, we have introduced free quality school education with free tuition, free teaching and learning materials, more teachers hired and trained – and Port Loko has made us proud as a

nation, Murialdo Secondary School has proven that we are right to invest in the future of the children of Port Loko.

- In just four years, Port Loko has proved that thousands of girls are now going to school and have a great future ahead of themselves, and a great future for their parents, and for their communities.
- In those four years, I personally came here to commission a secondary school for girls, the Dr Kadie Sesay Secondary School for Girls – named after one of your very own most distinguished and illustrious daughters.
- In those four years, we have enhanced vocational training in Port Loko District.
- In just four years, I am investing billions of Leones to refurbish Port Loko Government hospital; there is now a functional ambulance service; and medical facilities now get regular supplies of drugs. Community Health Care Centres have access to solar electricity and we have hired more nurses and midwives in Port Loko District.
- Fewer mothers are now dying in childbirth and fewer children under five are now dying as there is better immunisation and primary health care. Our friends in the UAE have also invested in constructing a major health facility.
- In just four years, my Government thought it fit to bring in agricultural investors to consider rice production in the Rombeh area. There is investment in onion and vegetable production in Port Loko District
- Add this to electricity access (solar) in Lokomasama and other places in just four years, my Government – I personally came to Lokomasama in 2019 to switch on the lights.
- So, in just four years, my Government has invested extensively in Port Loko District by all accounts.

I thank you.