



Celebrating Life and Legacy Ceremony Acceptance ADDRESS

DELIVERED BY

HIS EXCELLENCY, BRIG (Rtd) DR. JULIUS MAADA BIO, GCRSL,

President of The Republic and Commander-In-Chief of the Republic of
Sierra Leone Armed Forces

**On the Occasion of the Unveiling Ceremony of the African
Leadership Magazine Special Edition Coverage on the Republic of
Sierra Leone and Leadership and Legacy Celebration**

Freetown International Conference Center

Aberdeen, Freetown

The Honourable Vice President,

The Right Honourable Speaker of Parliament,

Madam First Lady,

Ministers of Government and Heads of Parastatals,

Honourable Members of Parliament,

Representatives of the United States of America National
Black Caucus of State Legislators,

Members of the Diplomatic and Consular Corps,

The United States of America National Bar Association
Members,

Distinguished Friends, Partners, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good afternoon.

1. Ours is indeed a beautiful story to tell. I want to thank the African Leadership Magazine team, development partners, and all the other stakeholders involved in piecing together the story of Sierra Leone's growth in the past four years and for delivering this special edition of the Magazine.
2. I also thank the United States of America National Bar Association for bestowing this great honour on me. I thank the United States of America National Black Caucus of State Legislators for the National Black Caucus Commendation Award.

3. I accept this Lifetime of Service and Achievement Award and Recognition with great humility but with deep reflection on a past of dreams lost and optimism about a future of great promise.
4. I accept this award as a testament to our dear nation's resilience and splendour and our hardworking citizens' perseverance to build a country that can stand with pride among nations.
5. As the unveiling ceremony commemorates our four and a half years in governance and celebrates my leadership and legacy, the biblical scripture of Luke 12:48 lingers on my mind – "*to whom much is given, much will be required*". So, I accept this award with deep gratitude, giving all praise and thanks to the Lord, who has been my Source and Sustainer throughout my life's journey.

6. My journey to where I am today, a servant-leader of the great people of Sierra Leone, began a long time ago with parents who instilled unshakeable values in me.
7. Without my selfless mother of blessed memory, who bore the burden of caring for her children after my dear father passed on, I would not have cultivated the work ethic, sense of service, and humility I am privileged to have today.
8. Eternity is granted to those who share knowledge and wisdom and will live on in those to whom we pass wisdom. My mother, Yei Amie, lives on in me through everything she taught me.
9. I was privileged to have another great woman in my life; my older sister, Agnes Deen-Jalloh, who was just out of college, took on the task of caring for us, her younger siblings, and seeing to it that I got a proper education.

10. These women who set me on the course to become the man and leader I am today are why I take women's participation in governance and development seriously.
11. This is why I am dedicated to ensuring that our nation's industrious women thrive and reach their fullest potential; and that the girls of our country enjoy the same opportunities in education and life as the boys.
12. Education is truly the key to unlocking one's potential. Because of quality education, a village boy from Tihun can rise to become President of Sierra Leone.
13. They say it takes a village to raise a child. On my journey to servant leadership, I have encountered several persons who have acted as friends, collaborators, colleagues, comrades, and mentors.

14. As I look around this room, I see many of you. We've been together in the trenches, experiencing the highest of highs, and the lowest of lows together.
15. We often forget the many who did not get to where we are. All those who lived their lives sacrificially. Those who passed on as our nation evolved to where it is today. To every one of those we have lost, from those in our armed forces to other citizens, I say we thank you for your sacrifice. May your souls rest in eternal peace.
16. Four and a half years ago, citizens of our great nation strongly asserted that they believed in the collective hope of a New Direction.
17. We recall the words of St Francis of Assisi when he stated that to do the impossible, one must "**First do what is necessary. Then do what is possible. And before you know it, you are doing the impossible.**" We are doing what is necessary to consolidate a just

and inclusive democracy and create a future of equity, promise, and opportunity.

18. Leadership is the ability to capture and translate a vision into reality. In doing this, a leader realises that this vision, however elegant, is all for nothing unless one serves the people.
19. Over the past four and a half years, our focus has been fulfilling our promises to the Sierra Leonean people in the New Direction Manifesto and our Medium-Term National Development Plan.
20. Our Human Capital Development strategy, which is the centrepiece of our Government's national development plan, is designed to improve the quality of life of our citizens through education, inclusive growth and building a resilient economy.

21. Despite economic headwinds, downturns, and global epidemics, we have pursued our objectives with purpose and clarity.
22. Our development partners have worked with us because they believe, like the citizens of our dear country, that what we are doing is right for the future of this country. Our sheer audacity and abiding belief that we must do what no generation has ever done for our nation has collectively kept us on course.
23. When I received my mandate from Sierra Leoneans, my Government embraced multi-lateralism to resolve conflicts and advance our foreign policy priorities. We inherited a nation with tremendous reputational damage, which required much engagement to correct.
24. We welcome all of our development partners and proactively seek engagement with all diplomatic missions in our nation. Sierra Leone is a friend, and I

must convey that friendship to all allies of our dear country. Thank you for your steadfast and strategic partnerships over the past four and half years as we strive to spur sustainable economic development and social progress in our nation.

25. What is a leader without a team of brilliant and dedicated individuals equally committed to a vision of a prosperous, just and safe nation?

26. I am blessed to have a government that breathes life into each aspect of our vision - from my dedicated Vice President to all of the Cabinet Ministers and their staff. This award and recognition are for you. I recognise all those at all levels of Government - the executive, legislative and judiciary, who play their role in ensuring we can make life better for each citizen.

27. I am moved by the hard work of all those in the public sector, who are often forgotten as they work hard at their desks to keep the engine of Government running.

28. I say to everyone, from cleaners to directors, drivers to department and agency heads, service staff to security personnel, I SEE YOU. I APPRECIATE YOU. OUR GOVERNMENT APPRECIATES YOU. OUR COUNTRY APPRECIATES YOU.

29. There is no easy road to leadership, and I have committed my life to this cause. However, I think of the other persons I have also committed to - my family, my darling wife Fatima and my loving children. I am blessed that they are patient and understand the gravity of this mission. Still, I say to them, thank you for your love, patience and understanding. Thank you for giving me a home and playing your part.

30. I also say this to the families of all whose parents, spouses and partners are engaged in other aspects of nation-building that require massive time away from their loved ones. Because of you all, we can do the things we do.

31. The leaders of our religious and traditional institutions, too, must be recognised for helping stabilise this nation. They give me the strength to tackle some of the challenges every leader has to face on their journey to providing good governance for citizens. I urge these institutions to continue to make themselves available to heal our nation, act as tools for dialogue and peace, and support youth and community groups.

32. I also thank private sector members, many of whom are well-represented here. Government can only do so much. Part of our vision is to make Sierra Leone a destination of choice for investors and to ensure that doing business here is hurdle free.

33. The job of the Government I am proud to lead is to facilitate private enterprise and to provide the enabling environment for institutions and individuals to thrive. I am committed to ensuring Sierra Leone remains open for business, innovation and progress.

34. Ours is a youthful society. I appreciate the zeal and hard work of the young people of our dear nation. Our commitment is to redouble our efforts in creating an enabling environment to foster innovation, creativity and prosperity for all.

35. Democracy has always been dear to my heart, and the institutions strengthening it. I recognise the crucial role of one of such institutions, without which citizens would be cut off from their Government.

36. I am thankful to the media members present here and everywhere else in the country. Access to accurate information is crucial to the health of a democracy.

Citizens need the correct information to hold their leaders accountable and make other personal choices. That is why I am particularly proud that we have repealed repressive press laws, and no journalist is in prison for the practice of journalism.

37. I also recognise the crucial role of civil society in highlighting areas that need improvement and supporting the Government in keeping our democracy vibrant and healthy. You keep us on our toes, and I am thankful for this challenge.

38. I also recognise the opposition parties for helping to keep our Government accountable to the people. Our political ideals may sometimes divide us, but our human ideals should be the unifying force as we forge ahead to collectively build a resilient economy for our current and future generations.

39. I call on all the political leaders and parliamentarians of our great nation to remember that everything we do is for the people. We must act justly, shun violence and divisiveness and embrace progressive dialogue. Only then can we have a stable country where every citizen can reach their fullest potential.

40. Our nation has emerged stronger from a past of violent conflict. At our nation's darkest hour, I fought alongside thousands of heroes to defend this country and to keep it together. I forewent the opportunity to foster my ambitions, conducted democratic elections, and put this nation on an irreversible democratic course.

41. One of the greatest lessons learned under enemy fire in trenches and jungles was that no one person is as good as all of us put together. Service and sacrifice to this nation behove all of us to renew our commitment to work with one another in the best interests of this nation.

42. Throughout the last four and a half years, we have shown that we are not victims of our history and are not captives of limited imagination. We cannot be held back by the anger of the few and the pessimism of those who would instead take us back to those dark moments of our history.

43. Indeed, these are trying times for all of us. Our world is going through turbulent times. Economically, many parts of the world are seeing downturns; politically, many parts of the world are experiencing crises, and we are still experiencing the aftershocks of a pandemic that has rocked the world since 2020.

44. Now more than ever, the world needs leaders that are calm but decisive, thoughtful but bold, fearless but kind, strong and efficient.

45. As I have always said, the ties, shared values and hopes that bind us as a nation are stronger than the

fears that occasionally blind us. With boundless optimism, a faith that wisdom inspires, and zeal that never tires, we can and will again be masters of our destiny – PAOPA SALONE GO BETTER.

46. In closing, I want to thank the African Leadership Organisation for being the champions of Afro-positivism and Afro-optimism. Your work and passion over the last decade have helped propel the "Africa Rising" narrative as you focus on celebrating outstanding achievements and leadership on the continent.

47. Thank you for shedding the spotlight on our great nation and showcasing the laudable efforts of our Government. Thank you for organising this Unveiling Ceremony.

48. Sierra Leone is an investor's goldmine and one of Africa's best-kept secrets. I welcome our distinguished

international guests to our great nation and look forward to sustained and collaborative partnerships.

49. Finally, thank you once again to the United States of America (US) Black Caucus of State Legislators, President-Elect Laura Hall for this great honour, and Judge Carlos Moore, former President of the National Bar Association, for this Lifetime Achievement Award.

50. As I accept this honour, I am mindful of all the work left to be done to take the dividends of democracy to every nook and cranny of our dear nation.

51. The job of nation-building is never finished. I am therefore challenged to redouble my efforts to ensure we achieve a strong, stable and prosperous Sierra Leone.

52. This is the promise I make to myself, my family and the great people of this nation. This is the legacy I want for

our people. This award and recognition are for the great people of Sierra Leone.

I THANK YOU ALL FOR YOUR ATTENTION.