



REMARKS BY HIS EXCELLENCY, BRIG. (RTD) DR. JULIUS MAADA BIO, PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC SIERRA LEONE AND COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF OF THE REPUBLIC OF SIERRA LEONE ARMED FORCES, ON THE OCCASION OF THE LAUNCH OF 2022 POPPY WEEK. STATE HOUSE, TUESDAY 25TH OCTOBER 2022

Ministers of Government present,
 The Minister and Deputy Minister of Defence,
 The Director General, Ministry of Defence,
 Chief of Defence Staff and All Assistant Chiefs of Defence Staff,
 Serving and Retired Senior Officers of the Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces,
 Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, Good morning.

1. Gary hart, the American politician and diplomat once said that: "I think there is one higher office than President and I would call that patriot." Today, we are gathered here to celebrate patriots who served this nation, the commonwealth, and humanity with great distinction.
2. At the end of Poppy Week, the nation will again join these patriots, the Sierra Leone Ex-Servicemen Association and serving men and women of the Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces to commemorate National Remembrance Day.
3. We celebrate National Poppy Week across this country because we believe, as William Makepeace Thackeray once said that: "Bravery never goes out of fashion." Like service to one's nation, it is always a common currency that never loses its face value and it is always celebrated and honoured.
4. So, indeed, the lead-up to National Remembrance Day celebrations is therefore a special moment of deep reflection on the sacrifice by a few Bravehearts for so many rights across the Commonwealth and across the globe.
5. From the bloody battles of the World Wars; the jungles of Burma and Congo; the deserts of Darfur and the towns of Somalia; the beaches of Monrovia, to the jungles and towns of Sierra Leone, brave men and women have made the ultimate sacrifice. They were each moved by what we can never explain but we will forever cherish and never forget.
6. To those who made the ultimate sacrifice, we owe them an unpayable debt of gratitude. They are gone but not dead. The Scottish Poet, Thomas Campbell, was right when he said, "To live in hearts we leave behind, is not to die." They still live in our hearts. They live in our hearts as we remember their uncommon courage and bravery even as they faced death.
7. So, as Czeslaw Milosz (Cheslaf Miloz) advises us: "The living owe it to those who no longer can speak to tell their story for them." We shall tell their story by celebrating their service and sacrifice.

8. But we shall not also forget those whose memories and bodies are forever scarred by their service. They fought no less, and we value their service no less.
9. To the serving men and women of the Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces, thank you for continuing to serve and to protect. To the ex-servicemen and women, we stood together to keep this nation together when civil war violence engulfed this country.
10. The brutality of that war should also serve to remind all of us ex-servicemen to embrace our democracy and avoid destructive wars and civil uprisings that cause undue suffering for Sierra Leoneans. Let us all remain more focused, peaceful, and law-abiding and we will all contribute to the security and development of the nation, with sincerity of purpose.
11. The Indian diplomat Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit was right when she said that "the more we sweat in peace the less we bleed in war." My Government has established a national Peace and cohesion commission; held a national conference on uniting our nation, and engaged stakeholders right across this nation on why it matters to keep the peace. I believe that our nation will thrive in peace and therefore we will continue to make peace.
12. Let me close by thanking the Remembrance Day Planning Committee for your great efforts in planning and organising events leading up to the coming commemorations.
13. It is therefore my profound honour and delight to declare the 2022 Poppy Week open.

I thank you for your kind attention.