



**REMARKS BY HIS EXCELLENCY, DR. JULIUS  
MAADA BIO, PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC  
OF SIERRA LEONE AT THE SECOND  
PRESIDENTIAL NATIONAL BEST TEACHER  
AWARDS CEREMONY, FREETOWN  
INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE CENTER  
- 18<sup>TH</sup> OCTOBER 2022**

Ministers of Government,  
Honourable Members of Parliamentarians,  
Ambassadors and Heads of Foreign Missions,  
Our Development Partners,  
Paramount Chiefs,  
Members of the Diplomatic Corps,  
Heads of Agencies,  
School Leaders, Teachers, and Pupils:

Good morning:

1. I want to start by congratulating all pupils who have successfully passed their transition exams this year– the National Primary School Examination, the Basic Education Certificate Examination, and the West African Senior Secondary Certificate Examinations. We have a record number of learners who now have an option to transition into secondary school, tertiary, and higher education right through Sierra Leone. With good quality education, some are also directly transitioning into work and entrepreneurship. We are proud of you.
2. But I especially want to thank all the teachers who have put in so much work for us to see this important development in our country. The education transformation that is happening in our country would not be possible without you - diligent, trained and qualified teachers.
3. This is why we are here today. To honour and celebrate our teachers in the Second Presidential National Best Teacher Awards.
4. Just two weeks ago, we marked the 28<sup>th</sup> anniversary of World Teachers' Day, which is celebrated on 5<sup>th</sup> October every year. This year's theme as declared by UNESCO is "***The transformation of education begins with teachers***".
5. As the Co-Chair of the High-Level Steering Committee to UNESCO, and the UN Secretary General's Global Champion on Transforming Education, I couldn't agree more. Transformation indeed begins with teachers. We are seeing that in Sierra Leone every day.

6. Speaking of Transformation, I recently returned from the United Nations where I co-Chaired the Transforming Education Summit. In my delegation were two teachers- a female teacher Sally Adams from Methodist Girls Secondary School, Freetown, and Edward Kpakra from the Government Secondary School, Bo. Both were active participants in all sessions.
7. At the Transforming Education Summit, Sierra Leone took leadership roles across all spectrums of education service delivery; from school feeding to the use of innovation in education; from inclusive education to innovative financing models.
8. At the side-lines, Sierra Leone launched an 18 million US Dollar outcomes fund- the largest education sector outcomes fund anywhere in the world.
9. Sierra Leone also launched an Alliance for Foundational Learning with partners including Global Partnership for Education- GPE, UNICEF, World Bank, Lego Foundation and BRAC International. These are global examples that are now being copied by other countries across the world.
10. The youth representatives in my delegation also proudly represented us in high level sessions. Mamawa Yajah from the Nyapui School of Excellence in Kenema – a school I opened in Kenema just one year ago – called on all world leaders to set up a Youth Advisory Group, much like Sierra Leone has done. This was in fact one of the calls of action from the Summit. Kumba Amara a student representative from Njala University called on African Leaders to continue incorporating the voices of youth in decision making. Our youth and our teachers are proudly representing us well on the world stage.
11. One of the core pillars of the Summit was teachers. Teachers, Teaching and the Teaching Profession. This is why this year's theme "***The transformation of education begins with teachers***" is so critical.

12. In Sierra Leone, it wasn't until 2018 when my Government took office that the transformation of teachers, teaching and the teaching profession took a great leap. We have done so in order to address questions around access, inclusion, quality, retention, completion, and transition to technical, vocational, and higher education.
13. As promised to the people of this country, we quickly expanded the Teaching Service Commission nationwide and developed a "Professional Standards for Teachers and School Leaders". The Teaching Service Commission - TSC itself was established in 2011 but it wasn't until 2016 that the Commission was inaugurated. However, it only became fully functional in 2018 - thanks to my government's increased investment in teachers.
14. My Cabinet has endorsed more than half a dozen policies related to Teacher Recruitment, Teacher Retention, Teacher Transfer, Grievance Redress, and Professional Development.
15. These are not just words, Distinguished ladies and gentlemen. These policies are in full implementation and I personally closely monitor them.
16. And beyond those policies, we believe that a moment like this, where we pause to celebrate deserving teachers for their roles in classrooms, the community and the country can only be good for the profession and our country.
17. In addition to these awards, we also heavily invest in teachers and the teaching profession. Teachers have been motivated to improve their knowledge, skills and attitude and school leaders are empowered to guide and monitor teachers' performance and, in turn, enable them to become better teachers.

### **HERE ARE A FEW IMPACT STORIES:**

18. Since 2018, my government has recruited and replaced 10,878. By the end of this term, we will complete the recruitment of an additional 1,200 teachers and replace another. Each of those teachers

can now be guaranteed of a reliable salary. Prior to that, recruitments of teachers were frozen.

19. We have completed the reassessment and promotion of 5,251 teachers since 2018, placing them on the right pay scale. This incentivises teachers to up-skill and upgrade their qualifications.
20. While the economy remains challenging all around the world and prices of commodities are on the increase, we have tried to ameliorate this hardship for our teachers over the last four years.
21. In January 2019, the government awarded teachers from grade 1 to 6 a 10% transport allowance. In April 2020, in the middle of COVID-19 school closures, we increased all teacher salaries by 30%. This was applicable to all pin-coded teachers in government and government assisted school nationwide.
22. And now, in response to further economic challenges, my government has successfully concluded negotiations with teachers represented by the Sierra Leone Teachers Union to award a salary increase of 45% over a period of 3 years commencing with 15% in January 2022.
23. However, what is even more notable about the negotiations this time, is that since 1996, no changes had been made to the Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) until this year.
24. This novel agreement now formally recognises a 4-stage career pathway for teachers as: New teacher, Proficient teacher, Highly Accomplished teacher, and Distinguished teacher.
25. And for the first time, we now recognise Master's holders as official qualifications for teachers to be placed at appropriate and improved salary-scale levels.
26. Within that Agreement, we agree to award scholarships of up to three biological children of teachers who have remained in the profession for 10 years or more.

27. We have expanded the paid leave for female teachers from 12 to 14 weeks and gone further to grant male teachers paternity leave of up to two weeks. We do this because we recognise the sacrifices involved in the teaching profession. This is not a political game.
28. We have also extended the retirement age for teachers in the STEM field and other specialised languages from 60 to 65 years if they so choose to continue.
29. Last year, I was honoured to launch the maiden version of the Presidential National Best Teachers Awards through which the deserving winners were awarded a handsome prize of 30 million Old Leones. A small amount that still had much bigger value and impact in the lives of the winners. Those winners have gone on to transform their schools and their communities in profound ways. Thank you for your service.
30. And today, we are once again, in this same hall, to celebrate another set of Teachers who are deserving winners of the Presidential National Best Teachers for 2022. This year we will have two winners, one for the Pre-primary and Primary Level and the other for the Junior Secondary, Senior Secondary and Technical and Vocational Schools level.
31. The selection process was truly inclusive and decentralised involving Staff and indigenes of the districts where the contests took place. While a competition we, however, see an increasing healthy and supportive process that is transparent. All this is made possible because of the work of Sierra Leonean Teachers who are also on those interview and review panels.
32. While only a select few can win today, we believe that all teachers are winners.
33. We are also today recognising a different set of Awardees. These are for teachers who have gone over and beyond to take strategic

decisions in their schools, inspired bold visions in their communities and serve as excellent examples of service for the nation.

34. I would like to end by thanking all the Teachers in Sierra Leone – those on pay roll and those who serve as volunteers; those who are first in school and last to leave; those who ensure that they don't eat until all students in their class have had food; those who care for children in our schools and in our communities; We thank you.
35. We thank you for supporting the government's efforts to transform the lives of our pupils, and the education system. The best amongst you have gone the extra mile, to try and test new and innovative teaching methods to improve the pupils' learning outcomes; change their behaviour and shape their moral character. That is what we celebrate today.
36. This is the dream we are building in Sierra Leone. Paopa Salone Mus Betteh!

I thank you for your attention.