



**REMARKS BY HIS EXCELLENCY, DR.
JULIUS MAADA BIO, PRESIDENT OF
THE REPUBLIC OF SIERRA LEONE, ON
THE COMMEMORATION OF THE
INTERNATIONAL ANTI-CORRUPTION
DAY, FRIDAY - DECEMBER 9, 2022**

The Hon. Vice President,
 Madam First Lady,
 The Hon Chief Justice,
 Ministers of Government,
 Honourable Members of Parliament,
 Members of the Diplomatic and Consular Corps,
 Heads of Departments and Parastatals,
 Traditional and Religious Leaders, the Media,
 Civil Society Groups,
 The Private Sector,
 Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good morning:

1. Kindly indulge me as I recount the progress we have made in the fight against corruption since 2018.
2. At the global level, we signalled our staunch resolve to fight corruption by acceding to the United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC).
3. We then developed a comprehensive National Anti-Corruption Strategy with pillars that strengthen the anti-corruption regime, implement actions for preventing and controlling corruption, and establish legally enforceable mandatory minimum standards. Thus, Sierra Leone works closely with member states at the global level to battle corruption. This is why we are here today to remind ourselves as a nation that the scourge of corruption continues to cost lives and futures, and that we reaffirm our commitment to fighting corruption in every form.
4. At the national level, we sharpened the teeth of our anti-corruption laws with an amendment to the Anti-Corruption Act 2008. The minimum punishments for major corruption offences have been substantially increased. For offences involving offering or receiving an advantage, the evidential burden has now shifted. The Commission now protects whistle-blowers and the Commission can now appeal against sentences that are deemed lenient or disproportionate.

5. At the same time, conviction rates are now at over 90%; and, the Anti-Corruption Commission has recovered billions of Leones in non-conviction asset-based recoveries, higher in the last three years than at any time in the existence of the Commission.

6. Then I signed into law the Anti-Money Laundering and Combating of Financing of Terrorism (Amendment) Act (No 3) of 2019. There are now stiffer punishments for money laundering and a laser focus on kindred financial crimes.

7. Deep structural and process reforms within public sector institutions especially involving procurement, recording, accounting, and general red tape have enhanced transparency and accountability within those institutions. MDAs have adopted integrity standards mediated and monitored by the ACC. Our twin approach is simple: the right incentives to not engage in corruption help but when it comes to the crunch, sanctions, and tough sanctions, can be used. Beyond those reforms, the ACC engages very closely with MDAs to ensure awareness and compliance in the public sector.

8. Public education on corruption-prevention has been expanded to hitherto excluded populations and communities. I am informed that the Commissioners have physically visited every district headquarter town and District Monitors have been deployed in each district to cascade and propagate public education about corruption prevention.

9. The consequences of all these efforts have not been lost on the international community. Sierra Leone has moved 14 places upward in the Transparency International Corruption Perception Index since 2018. Unlike the period before 2017, this time, Sierra Leone has consistently surpassed the sub-Saharan Average score. According to Afro Barometer, corruption prevalence has reduced from 70% before 2018 to 40% in 2020 and even lower since.

10. Just before we took over in 2018, Sierra Leone, under the opposition All People's Congress Party Government, had again just failed the Control of Corruption indicator of the Millennium Challenge Corporation. They had failed the control of corruption indicator in each of the five preceding years.

11. Since 2018, Sierra Leone has passed the control of corruption indicator each year with one of the highest percentage passes in the sub-region. In recognition, Sierra Leone has been selected to develop a compact that will be invested in the inclusive and sustainable development of this country. There is reward for good behaviour; there is great reward in fighting corruption.

12. We are encouraged by our successes, but we are motivated even more by the possibility of getting better. The theme of this year's commemoration, "Deepening inclusivity in the fight against corruption: persons with disabilities and the informal sector as critical players in the anti-graft campaign," therefore resonates with our determination to continue to broaden the fight against corruption.

13. Last year's International Anti-Corruption Day focused on the critical role of women in the fight against corruption. I highlighted then the disproportionate impact of corruption on women and persons with disabilities. We were determined therefore to introduce progressive reform that will expand the representation and participation of women. We took to Parliament a Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment bill that has now passed. Henceforth, gender-inclusive, gender-centred, and gender-sensitive policies and actions will be the norm. Women will have a loud voice in the oversight and monitoring of the allocation and use of public resources.

14. The Commission's strategy of inclusion has been very effective in not only catering to the needs of persons with disabilities at its facilities but also in superintending their interests. The Commission has successfully monitored the World Bank supported Social Safety Net (SSN) project through its Grievance Redress Mechanism component of the SSN and ensured that the extremely poor and vulnerable target groups received cash transfers transparently and free of corruption.

15. As in the case of the Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment bill, cabinet will soon consider for discussion draft legislation that comprehensively addresses the rights of persons with disabilities. We believe that greater social inclusion is better for building a just, peaceful, and progressive society. It reminds each citizen that each of us is responsible for

what happens in and to this nation and that we will therefore each play our part in making this nation a better place. As I have said before, the fight against corruption is a fight for the future and the soul of this nation. We must continue to get it right.

16. For far too long, that focus has been only on public institutions and politicians. Perhaps, rightly so. But as the theme of this year's IAC reminds us, the fight against corruption is bigger and therefore our thinking on fighting corruption must be agile and holistic.

17. The informal economy in Sierra Leone comprises market women, traders, vendors, self-employed artisans, drivers and more and perhaps constitutes a huge percentage of the economy. Those who operate in the informal economy are expected to comply with policies and regulations set by Government. Equally so, how public institutions operate has a direct impact on the informal economy. I expect that the Commission can closely examine the nature and confluence of the two and how best to minimise the impact of corruption using the people-centred model that has been so successful.

18. Let me close by reminding all of us that the fight against corruption is good for governance, good for peace, good for business, and good for inclusive national development. In Sierra Leone we recognise that the poorest and most vulnerable are the worst hit and therefore must be included in the fight against corruption. We believe in keeping citizens engaged and aware of the impact of corruption. Together, we believe we can find solutions that work; together, we believe we can and we must win this fight against corruption.

I thank you for your attention.