



**REMARKS BY HIS EXCELLENCY, DR.
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REPUBLIC OF SIERRA LEONE, AT THE
AFRICAN AND DIASPORA YOUNG
LEADERS FORUM DURING THE U.S-
AFRICA LEADERS SUMMIT,
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Good morning.
Is everyone awake?

1. Excellencies, distinguished ladies and gentlemen, I bring you warm greetings from Sierra Leone. I am really excited to be together in one room with leaders, policymakers, policy drivers, and most importantly, young leaders from both sides of the Atlantic. I would like to thank President Joe Biden and his administration for this very unique opportunity of convening with African leaders of now and African leaders of the future.
2. At several points in these discussions this morning, I am sure each speaker will highlight why cooperation among the Africa of now, the Africa of the future, the African Diaspora, and the United States of America are important.
3. To the question, “does Africa matter,” I will simply state the assertion by the United Nations that Africa contains 30% of the earth’s mineral reserves including 40% of the world’s gold and 40% of its chromium and platinum, not to mention an even higher percentage of rare earth and other metals that are indispensable for developing and processing new and emerging technologies.
4. Add that to 12% of the World’s oil reserves and 8% of the world’s natural gas reserves plus the largest and most diverse climate ecosystem, and you will know that the world cannot make the progress it needs to make without Africa.
5. As a quick aside, I must hasten to add that Africa and Africans were critical to the success of the first Industrial Revolution – they involuntarily provided centuries of labour to power that industrial revolution. They were largely recipients of the second and third Industrial Revolutions. With the Fourth Industrial Revolution holding out such immense prospects for Africa’s socio-economic transformation, are we consciously planning for Africa’s participation and making the right policies and right digital infrastructure investments at scale?
6. That leads me perhaps, most importantly, to the human capital development of Africa. By 2050, it is projected that one in three young

people in the world will live in Africa. By 2030, it is further projected, half the population of Africa will be less than 25. So what do we do with these numbers? How do we make shared investments in this youth bulge?

7. In Sierra Leone, we have prioritised investing in education, healthcare, and food security. We believe that providing every child, especially girls, with free quality education will equip them with the skills they require for participation in an inclusive and sustainable future global economy. Girls studying STEM disciplines are guaranteed tuition-free education from nursery through university.

8. We have passed progressive laws that enrich our society and our democracy including a Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment bill, abolished the death penalty, repealed criminal libel laws and opened up spaces for journalism and civil society, decongested prisons, clamped down hard on sexual and gender-based violence, and more.

9. An educated population in a well-governed society in which the Government invests in people, we believe, is essential for building and consolidating a vibrant, free, progressive, inclusive, and just society.

10. Furthermore, an educated population will also be well-primed to tackle shared global challenges that have manifested themselves lately in lethal combination – global financial crises and disruptions including food insecurity, global health and national health, migration especially of youth populations, the impact of emerging technologies on our societies, and the persistent risk of climate change.

11. That's the opportunity. With the ongoing World Cup, it is perhaps appropriate to draw attention to a quote by one of the game's greatest legends, Pelé, who once stated that "no individual can win a game by himself." No one country can solve the world's numerous interlocking challenges. Our recognition that the world is helplessly interlinked and that we face interlocking challenges is a good start. I am therefore very pleased therefore and grateful for this gathering.

12. For starters, education and innovation sector financing will help address skills deficits among Africa's young people and have multiplier

effects on economic growth. I am a great believer in education for personal development, community and national development, and for building more resilient economies and democracies.

13. Together, we can also think about structured ways of mobilising, harnessing, or transferring diaspora resources and the tremendous reserves of diaspora skills and knowledge.

14. Together we can develop adaptable models for green investments and just energy transitions. Together, we can develop better food production systems to tackle food insecurity and help mitigate biodiversity loss. Together, we can build more robust and resilient health systems

15. But all of that starts from open dialogues like these. Henry Ford said it very well – that “coming together is a beginning, staying together is progress, and working together is a success.” There is a whole lot we can do very well together through productive partnerships as Governments, and with multilateral institutions, the private sector, civil society, and coalitions of young people such as we have here today. I am hopeful that this convention is a propitious start.

16. I have said before that the most transformative nation or world-changing events begin when we make bold choices, ask “Why not?” and let those bold choices happen. Strong partnerships where all strategies and goals are well-aligned and transparent from the outset are therefore critical in all of this.

I thank you for your kind attention.