



**REMARKS BY HIS EXCELLENCY DR  
JULIUS MAADA BIO, PRESIDENT OF  
THE REPUBLIC OF SIERRA LEONE, AT  
THE COMMISSIONING CEREMONY  
OF THE FOREIGN SERVICE  
ACADEMY, TOWER HILL, FREETOWN  
– 5th JANUARY 2023**

The Honourable Vice President,  
Ministers of Government,  
Honourable Members of Parliament,  
The Ambassador of the People's Republic of China, Wang Qing,  
Members of the Diplomatic and Consular Corps,  
Friends, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,  
Good morning.

1. Let me start by wishing you all a Happy, Peaceful and Productive New Year.

2. Two years ago, with the former Ambassador of the People's Republic of China, Ambassador Hu Zhangliang, we turned the sod to begin the construction of this magnificent building.

3. This building is another testament to the mutual cooperation, shared vision, and ever-deepening relations with the Government and people of the People's Republic of China.

4. I wish to convey my sincere gratitude to President Xi Jinping for his Government's generosity and commitment to supporting our country's sustainable development and socio-economic transformation.

5. This strategic partnership continues to forge closer economic ties, deepen cooperation and support my Government's vision for developing key growth sectors, including health, agriculture, education, infrastructure and defence, and building a resilient economy. With President Xi Jinping's and his Government's support, we have registered significant progress in each of those sectors.

6. Over the past four and half years, my Government's main foreign policy focus has involved strengthening external relations for integration. Our New Direction Agenda promotes international cooperation built on mutual respect, mutual trust, and mutual benefit with our strategic partners.

7. We have strategically rebranded our great nation and repositioned it with pride in the comity of nations through proactive, constructive, and productive engagements with the World.

8. A necessary policy action to strengthen international cooperation outlined in my Government's Medium-Term National Development Plan

was establishing a Foreign Service Academy to train and produce career diplomats for global engagement.

9. It gives me great satisfaction that my Government has realised that vision by establishing the first Foreign Service Academy in Sierra Leone within two years.

10. The Foreign Service Academy will enable us to solidify our efforts in promoting Sierra Leone's foreign policy and strengthening cooperation with regional and international partners.

11. We will focus on upskilling and reskilling the existing foreign service workforce through the Foreign Service Academy. Also, the Academy will recruit and train a dedicated cadre of professional career diplomats that will be globally competitive in our ever-changing World.

12. Let me outline a few of our collective aspirations for the Foreign Service Academy, which I hope will outlive us here today.

13. **First**, our vision is to deliver world-class diplomatic training and provide the career-long learning opportunities that the Government of Sierra Leone's foreign service professionals need to excel in today's global arena, advance our foreign policy and foster international cooperation, trade and investments.

14. **Second**, the Foreign Service Academy will produce well-rounded professionals who can work with people from other cultures with different values, political beliefs, and religions.

15. The future Sierra Leonean diplomat will be well-versed in working with national, multilateral, multinational, and international organisations. The Academy will train professionals to negotiate partnerships and international instruments that foster our nation's interests, promote our trade and economic interests, and pursue multilateral solutions to transnational issues.

16. Our collective aspiration is that future foreign service professionals are well-trained career diplomats committed to serving only the supreme interest of the State and the Government of the day. They must be professionals who transcend political affiliations and abide by the oath of

promoting the interest of Sierra Leone and its people on the continent and internationally.

17. Our career diplomats must avoid the pervasive political or ethno-regional partisanship in our diplomatic service and maintain strict professionalism within Sierra Leone and beyond. I am hopeful that we will achieve this soon for the sustainable economic transformation of our great nation.

18. **Third**, the new Sierra Leonean diplomat must be proficient in navigating the technology-mediated global space. They must understand statecraft, conflict prevention, crisis management, post-conflict reconstruction, and peacebuilding; and be skilful at thoroughly thinking through complex global issues such as climate change, transnational and cyber-crimes, and regional and global health emergencies or pandemics.

19. Furthermore, this Foreign Service Academy will be a hub of academic excellence and research in modern diplomatic practice. We have laid out the soft infrastructure tailor-made for entry- and mid-level foreign service professionals in Sierra Leone, the sub-region, and across the continent.

20. I am pleased that the Sierra Leone Foreign Service Academy will pursue twinning arrangements with other existing foreign service academies to foster mutually beneficial partnerships.

21. Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, it is the opportune time for our demographic diversity to be reflected in the composition and character of our foreign service. The time to harness our demographic dividend and promote gender parity in our foreign service is **NOW. IF NOT NOW? WHEN? IF NOT US? WHO?**

22. My Government will make deliberate policy efforts to increase the intake and retention of youth and women in our foreign service.

23. We will introduce and develop special career schemes to mobilise young graduates to become career diplomats.

24. We will seek at least 30% representation of women in our diplomatic corps in line with the newly ratified GEWE ACT. However, I am confident that we will have at least 50% of women generalists and specialists in the foreign service in our lifetime.

25. As I keep saying, **THE FUTURE OF SIERRA LEONE IS FEMALE, AND THE FUTURE OF SIERRA LEONE BELONGS TO THE YOUTH.**

26. Let me close by thanking everyone associated with completing this project. I thank you singularly and collectively for your hard work and dedication in establishing our Foreign Service Academy under my leadership and Government.

27. Friends, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, it gives me great pride as **Sierra Leone's Chief Diplomat** to formally commission the first-ever Foreign Service Academy in the Republic of Sierra Leone and the Mano River Union area; and the nineteenth Foreign Service Academy in Africa.

28. Thank you for your kind attention.