



**STATEMENT DELIVERED BY HIS EXCELLENCY,
DR. JULIUS MAADA BIO, PRESIDENT OF THE
REPUBLIC OF SIERRA LEONE, DURING THE
GENERAL DEBATE AT THE FIFTH UNITED
NATIONS CONFERENCE ON LEAST DEVELOPED
COUNTRIES, DOHA, QATAR
- 5TH MARCH 2023**

Chairman,
Mr. Secretary General,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

1. Let me, at the outset, express my deep gratitude to His Highness, Tamin Bin Hamad Al Thani, Emir of the State of Qatar, for consenting to host this Summit and for the warm hospitality, support, and the outstanding facilities that have been placed at our disposal.

2. Let me also commend the leadership of the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) for conducting the work of the group, providing support and forward momentum for our efforts even during these very challenging times. We are grateful that you have actively protected the interests of the Group in the process of implementing the Programme of Action and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Chairman, Excellencies,

3. Sierra Leone reiterates its commitment to the collective and shared responsibility to uphold the principles of the United Nations. We affirm our renewed solidarity in advancing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and in intensifying cooperation among LDCs.

4. The world has registered great transformation since the first United Nations LDC Conference in 1981, with some countries graduating from LDC status. But persistent structural global inequalities, the COVID-19 pandemic, recent geopolitical tensions, global economic headwinds and disruptions have reversed gains most LDCs have made towards achieving the SDGs. Consequently, most LDCs have failed to graduate to middle-income status.

5. We acknowledge that 14% of the global population lives in LDCs and continues to grapple with poverty, food insecurity and malnutrition, poor health care, and other structural challenges that further expose them to vulnerabilities. We therefore must scale up international and national efforts to urgently address the plight of this group of countries.

6. The collective cause of the g7+ -- that Sierra Leone currently chairs -- is aligned with the Doha Plan of Action which recognises the nexus of peace and development. 18 of the 20 g7+ countries are on the LDC list. This group of countries continues to be adversely and disproportionately affected by the current global crises.

7. We, therefore, renew calls for debt relief and investments in connectivity and infrastructure that support economic diversification. Additionally, regional and global actors must support ecosystems of shared peace while adhering to such aid effectiveness principles as respect for country ownership and leadership.

8. Only by doing that can we achieve what this year's theme promises -- "from potential to prosperity." The theme, therefore, resonates with Sierra Leone's aspirations. We are committed to implementing national strategies that are consistent with the Doha Programme of Action for the decade 2022-2031. We welcome the six focus areas that are aligned with Sierra Leone's current Medium-Term National Development Plan (2029-2023). It will also be mainstreamed into our successor national development plan (2024-2028).

9. We will continue to advance human capital development by investing in people through quality education, healthcare, and food security. Our recent Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment law sets legal minimums for the representation and participation of women in the private and public sectors. We will continue to prioritise interventions that address vulnerabilities and exclusion among women, girls, youth, the aged and the disabled. We will scale up radical inclusion, financial inclusion, skills development and job creation, and continue to pursue our National Social Protection Policy.

10. Through the 10-year National Innovation and Digital Strategy (2019-2029) we will continue to facilitate and support a vibrant national innovation and entrepreneurial ecosystem for the public and private sectors.

11. In-country, we will continue to implement our Integrated national financing framework, scale-up financial digitalisation, and strengthen our

national systems for more effective resource mobilisation and efficient use of public finances.

12. We will accelerate efforts at addressing climate change and environmental degradation; diversify our economic activities with a renewed focus on boosting food production and agribusiness, tourism, fisheries, and light manufacturing. We can also generate significant regional trade volumes by implementing the African Continental Free Trade Area initiative.

Chairman, Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

13. Let me conclude by expressing our sincere hope that within a spirit of multilateralism, we can galvanise significant global efforts to effectively address the challenges confronting the LDCs. By tackling those, we can ensure that “no country is left behind” in the race to meet the UN 2030 SDGs.

I thank you for your kind attention.