



**REMARKS BY HIS EXCELLENCY, DR.
JULIUS MAADA BIO, PRESIDENT OF
THE REPUBLIC OF SIERRA LEONE, AT
THE GROUNDBREAKING EVENT OF
THE SIERRA LEONE INDUSTRIAL
ZONE, KOYA,
- WEDNESDAY, 26TH APRIL 2023**

Ministers of Government;

P. C. Bai Kompa Bomboli III, Paramount Chief, Koya Chiefdom;

Members of the Diplomatic and Consular Corps;

Professor Benedict Oramah, President and Chairman of the Board of Directors of Afreximbank;

Mr. Samaila Zubairu, President and CEO of Africa Finance Corporation;

Mr. Gagan Gupta, CEO and Founder of ARISE Integrated Industrial Platforms (ARISE IIP), ARISE P&I, ARISE IS;

Board Members of Arise IIP;

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen;

1. I am delighted to be at this event today particularly as it is an actualisation of the vision, I presented in my manifesto in 2018. It is also a welcome outcome of visits to Special Economic Zones in Gabon, Rwanda and other countries, and of partnerships and business relationships negotiated in the best interests of Sierra Leone over the last five years.
2. So, while welcoming each of you, I want to thank you for you sharing the vision and believing in the great opportunities Sierra Leone and all of you stand to gain from this partnership.
3. In my 2018 manifesto, I observed that it is possible to increase the manufacturing sector share of GDP from less than 2% (where it was then) to at least 5% in 5 years. We, therefore, zoomed in on this in our national development plan. With germane policy actions detailed in both our manifesto and national development plan, including improving the environment for manufacturing industrialisation, we have exceeded the 5% target we set ourselves and we are now closer to double digit figures. With agro-value addition over the last five years, Sierra Leone is now a net-exporter of vegetable oil and also exports margarine and other palm-oil based products.
4. Certainly, constraints around improving infrastructure and providing finance for entrepreneurs persist but my government is determined to build a diverse economy by significantly increasing the contribution of a competitive manufacturing sector to GDP. With that, we can increase foreign direct investments, stimulate two-way trade, increase demand

for locally- produced goods, create more jobs, broaden the tax base, transfer know-how, develop robust trade infrastructure and communities, among others.

5. And the time is right given the regional and international trade opportunities and markets. A stronger manufacturing sector in Sierra Leone has access to regional and international markets and, therefore, will support foreign currency inflows. The Ecowas Trade Liberalisation Scheme gives custom-free access to the ECOWAS market. The African Continental Free Trade Area to which Sierra Leone has already acceded will significantly promote intra-African trade. Sierra Leone can also access a range of other markets under the UK Generalised Scheme of Preferences, the EU's "Everything But Arms" scheme, India's Trade-related South-South cooperation, and more.
6. Let us be reminded that the last government attempted a botched special economic zone initiative. It failed because they did not get the fundamentals, including introducing enabling policies and legislation, a transparent regime of incentives, on-site and off-site infrastructure, and other essential elements, right.
7. My government has, therefore, developed a comprehensive Special Economic Zones (SEZ) policy that harmonises the needs of all stakeholders; provides an attractive, fair, predictable, stable, and sustainable ecosystem; provides for local skills development, technology transfers, and supply chains; supports the full embeddedness of feeder micro-entrepreneurs at the supply and local marketing ends; and, ensures that the zones operate in accordance with international best practices. Contained in the policy are also strategies and measures for attaining the objectives of the SEZ policy including its management and operations. Legislation will be laid in the next parliament. I expect that it will provide for such important issues as gender in the labour force, occupational health and safety, labour issues, sustainability, and climate change responsibilities.
8. My government has also considered on-site infrastructure, which, as the presenter described earlier, is included in ARISE's portfolio of investments as features of the Sierra Leone Industrial Zone. As the

Trade Minister earlier alluded, my government is fully mindful of its support to this project with off-site infrastructure and providing access to sufficient land to situate and accommodate the needs of ARISE. We recognise that efficient logistical flows to and from these SEZs are crucial. Also, as the Lands Minister noted, a comprehensive masterplan for efficient land use and development will be utilised.

9. The Afreximbank, the Africa Finance Corporation, and ARISE have all assured us of financing zone development, especially in ensuring that the facilities meet the highest international standards and, therefore, attracting the highest calibre of private investors. Be assured that my government will play its own part.
10. I also expect that Sierra Leone's natural resources will drive its comparative advantage in addition to the other focus areas highlighted earlier by the presenters. Firstly, there are consumer products that we currently import into this country at great expense but which we can easily produce in this country and sell to local, regional, and international markets.
11. Secondly, there is beneficiation – where we process and, therefore, add value to our minerals and other natural products like timber before exporting or selling as intermediate or finished products in local, regional, and international markets. The Gabon experience with adding value to timber that I experienced first-hand two years ago was instructive. Diamond cutting and polishing, steel manufacturing, aluminium panels, titanium dioxide for multiple products are all possible.
12. Thirdly, there are great comparative advantages in agro-processing and fisheries processing. Cocoa, coffee, palm oil, coconuts, ground nuts, arabica coffee, natural honey, cassava, fruits, can all be processed into a lot of finished products that can be marketed as strong product brands that will attract premium prices from foreign markets.
13. All of these have great multiplier effects for local farmers, local suppliers, and local economies around these raw materials and finished

products. Quite unlike what the naysayers are propagating, this investment demonstrates great investor confidence in the Sierra Leone economy. Following the 270 million US Dollar investment in a brand-new airport at Lungi, this investment shows that foreign investors are willing to take the opportunities on offer in Sierra Leone.

14. I am, therefore, pleased to make the following announcements.
15. First, I am informed that this initial \$300 million US Dollar investment in the SEZ will be in addition to the almost \$500 million US Dollars ARISE will invest into the port and rail network.
16. Secondly, it is expected that more than 50 factories will be incorporated in the Sierra Leone Industrial Zone at Koya. These will include pharmaceutical units, import substitution factories to reduce dependency on imports from overseas countries, and agro-processing factories for crops grown in Sierra Leone
17. Thirdly, it is expected that the immediate net impact of this investment is the creation of 9,000 direct jobs in the Koya area in addition to the 5,000 new jobs ARISE will create in the extended port and rail network.
18. Finally, it is expected that the power plant that will be used at this SIZ is 100% sustainable energy. This demonstrates that Sierra Leone can skip coal and heavy fossil fuels altogether in its industrialisation journey and leapfrog directly to sustainable energy sources.
19. So, let me conclude by thanking ARISE, the AFREXIM BANK, the AFC and all other stakeholders present. I am excited and I look forward to commissioning the completed project.

I thank you for your kind attention.