



**ADDRESS BY H.E. JULIUS MAADA BIO,
PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF
SIERRA LEONE, TO THE ORGANISATION
OF AFRICAN, CARIBBEAN AND PACIFIC
STATES (OACPS) COMMITTEE OF
AMBASSADORS ON THE SIDELINES OF
THE REBRANDING AFRICA FORUM –
FRIDAY, 20th OCTOBER 2023**

Excellencies,
Committee of Ambassadors,
Secretary General of the OACPS,

1. I am pleased to address the Committee of Ambassadors of the Organisation of African Caribbean and Pacific States again following my previous visit in February 2023.

2. Let me begin by commending you for working closely with the Secretary-General, tirelessly coordinating the affairs of the Organisation to advance our common agenda.

3. Sierra Leone genuinely appreciates the OACPS phase of change and reform process consistent with implementing the vision to make the organisation “fit for purpose” internationally.

4. Let me also commend this assembly for upholding the spirit of solidarity and promoting sustainable and inclusive development in the context of South-South, North-South, and triangular cooperation in achieving the Organisation’s goals.

5. The new Partnership Agreement between the OACPS and the EU to be signed next month in Samoa is a key step to consolidating cooperation for the benefits of our people. I applaud the efforts of all Parties concerned, who continue to work diligently to achieve this remarkable milestone.

6. Collectively, we must strengthen trade cooperation and promote knowledge-based economies to accelerate sustainable development and poverty reduction in our nations.

4 Excellencies, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

7. Since 2018, my Government has made immense progress in relevant areas of good governance, human rights and the rule of law, including abolishing the death penalty in 2021 and

repealing the criminal libel law in 2020, increasing Press Freedom in Sierra Leone.

8. As you may know, I won the June 2023 Presidential elections, campaigning on the significant development achievements of our New Direction Agenda amidst leadership in turbulent times with the COVID-19 pandemic and ongoing Ukraine-Russia crisis that disrupted global economies.

9. With our vision of transforming the lives of our people through Human Capital Development, Sierra Leoneans have mandated me for a second five-year term.

10. I will briefly highlight our key national development priority focus areas for sustainable development and social progress – the BIG FIVE Game Changers. i. Our flagship FEED SALONE initiative, which I launched on Monday, entails an ambitious agricultural programme to boost agricultural food productivity to achieve food security and sovereignty. Sierra Leone has fertile arable land, abundant water resources and ample sunshine. We will prioritise agricultural transformation for jobs and wealth creation. We see agribusiness as a key driver of growth for the country and a critical area of focus for investment. We seek strategic partnerships to harness the full potential of our agriculture sector. With a growing consumer market, investors can benefit from several preferential trade agreements. These include duty-free access to the Mano River Union market of more than 50 million people and the ECOWAS market of over 420 million.

ii. The second priority area is HUMAN CAPITAL DEVELOPMENT for nurturing skills for 21st century industry. We will continue to build our human capital base, invest more in healthcare systems as a key driver for a productive society and create equal opportunities for women across all works of life.

iii. Our YOUTH EMPLOYMENT SCHEME is designed to provide an enabling environment for youth economic empowerment. We aim to create 500,000 for our youths across key growth sectors in the next five years.

iv. Also, we will focus on REVAMPING THE PUBLIC SERVICE ARCHITECTURE through service delivery, efficiency, and professionalism.

v. Our fifth priority focus area will be TECHNOLOGY AND INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT programmes to serve as pathways for sustained economic growth.

Excellencies, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

11. At the regional level, Sierra Leone continues to support the consolidation of peace, security and stability in West Africa and stands by ECOWAS to uphold our values and democracy.

12. Given this, I have visited Mali and Guinea and even invited the Head of the Military Government to Sierra Leone to promote dialogue. We hope fruitful dialogue and cooperation will help restore constitutionality and usher in development in the sub-region.

13. When I last visited this August body, I appealed for your support for Sierra Leone's candidature for a Non-Permanent seat on the UN Security Council. With your overwhelming support, Sierra Leone has secured that mandate after 53 years of hiatus.

14. This victory reflects Sierra Leone's remarkable progress and exemplifies our collective success and the crucial role of developing countries in global decision-making.

15. At this juncture, Excellencies Ambassadors, it gives me great pleasure to convey my profound appreciation to your Heads of State and Government for their invaluable support to Sierra

Leone. We will continue to work closely with member states to promote global and sub-regional peace, security and stability.

16. In my capacity as Chair of the African Union Committee of Ten Heads of State and Government on the Reform of the Security Council, The C-10, charged with the mandate to promote, defend and canvass the Common African Position, I will continue to champion in good faith our common course to ensure that the historical injustice meted out to Africa, is addressed. With concerted action, I am of the firm conviction that we will succeed.

17. In closing, let me reassure the Secretary-General and the Committee of Ambassadors of Sierra Leone's continued support for the Organisation's goal to create strong partnerships and programs focused on the innovative potential of member countries.

18. Without cooperation, the aspiration to make the Organisation fit for purpose will remain a distant dream. Therefore, I call on all member states to fulfil their financial obligation to the OACPS, which is essential to unlocking the much-needed transformation of this noble institution.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR KIND ATTENTION.