



**STATEMENT BY HIS EXCELLENCY DR JULIUS
MAADA BIO,
PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF SIERRA LEONE
ON THE OCCASION OF THE LAUNCH OF THE
NATIONAL DIALOGUE ON “DEVELOPING A JUST
AND INCLUSIVE ENERGY TRANSITION PLAN FOR
SIERRA LEONE IN THE CONTEXT OF CLIMATE
RESILIENCE AND SUSTAINABLE FOOD SYSTEMS”
MONDAY, OCTOBER 23, 2023
FREETOWN**

The Honourable Vice President

Chief Minister and Ministers Present

Madam First Lady

Honourable Members of Parliament

Elected Local Government Officials

Members of the Diplomatic Corp

**The Chairman and Staff of the Presidential
Initiative on Climate Change, Renewable
Energy and Food Security**

The International Experts

Ladies and Gentlemen

Good morning everyone

1. I am very pleased that my Government and partners are fully engaging in Sierra Leone's first national **Climate Resilience And Energy Transition Dialogue**.
2. I am delighted to see many important players in the energy and agriculture sectors here today – representing the public sector, private sector, developing partners and civil society – to help us jointly develop the **Sierra Leone Just Energy Transition Plan and the Climate Resilient Agricultural and Food Systems Strategy**.

3. This inaugural Dialogue builds on our proactive participation at the Africa Climate Summit in Nairobi, Kenya, and the United Nations Climate Week on the sidelines of the UNGA78 in New York.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

4. Sierra Leone, as with other developing nations, is exceptionally vulnerable to climate variability and climate change, which affect citizens and make adaptation efforts more pressing as rapid changes in weather patterns erode the productivity of local water and food

systems and generate unintended consequences for sustainable development.

- 5.** Given the importance of energy for sustainable economic development, Sierra Leone must develop and support a just transition to clean energy systems that can drive socio-economic benefits, social inclusivity, and empowerment.

6. Our nation's low access to modern energy undermines its development goals and ability to build climate resilience. Moves toward low-carbon sources of energy to reduce global greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions are of paramount importance. Still, they must be compatible with achieving Sierra Leone's development aspirations and meeting the unmet energy needs of 8.4 million Sierra Leoneans.

7. Though we have made progress with 36% of our population having access to electricity and established about 100 mini-grids across the country, there is no gainsaying that we must make concerted efforts to reduce energy poverty in Sierra Leone to drive our aspirations for industrialisation, wealth creation, and the achievement of our BIG FIVE Game Changers.

8. My Government's long-term vision is to position Sierra Leone as an agricultural powerhouse and a regional hub for energy. We aim to achieve this by mobilising investments for one gigawatt (1GW) energy generation capacity over the next 10-15 years for local consumption and export in the sub-region.

9. We believe this will spur transformative growth in advanced manufacturing and agricultural production, leading to thousands of quality jobs, growing our economy and fulfilling our climate action goals.

10. To accomplish these targets, my Government is committed to developing policies and programmes to achieve climate resilience and a just energy transition that is inclusive, “leaving no one behind”.

11. This **Just and Inclusive Energy Transition Plan** requires close consideration of the equity implications and challenges associated with prevailing energy poverty, low energy consumption and energy needs for economic growth and transformation.

- 12.** In the medium term, my Government is committed to comprehensive energy sector reforms to provide the enabling environment to achieve at least 300 megawatts of new generation capacity by 2028, including a significant share of renewable energy to help us build a climate-resilient and integrated sustainable energy sector.
- 13.** Our country must unlock its huge renewable energy potential and combine this with conventional energy to light up and power our homes and businesses.

- 14.** We must also address the challenges of transmission and distribution bottlenecks and the urgently needed reform of EDSA to improve energy supply and access.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

- 15.** Our ambitions arise from challenges but are equally fueled by opportunities, such as our abundant natural resources, an enviable demographic profile, and low carbon footprint. We strive for a net-negative carbon footprint, using renewable energy to invigorate

our agricultural systems, energise our rural areas, and create gainful employment.

- 16.** To achieve this ambitious agenda, we seek partnerships with other countries, bilateral and multi-lateral institutions and the Private Sector. Your affirmative response to our invitation on such short notice affirms your commitment to our shared objectives.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

- 17.** My Government has shown the much-needed political will for a just energy transition. Next, we aim to create the needed investment-friendly climate to attract Clean Energy investments and align private sector interests with our national development objectives.
- 18.** As evidence of our commitment, we established a Ministry solely focused on the Environment and Climate Change in 2019. I have recently instituted the Presidential Initiative on Climate Change, Renewable

Energy and Food Security to coordinate, provide strategic guidance and support, facilitate collaboration and partnerships, and accelerate investments and resource mobilisation.

- 19.** We are laying the groundwork for multi-sectoral collaborations, ensuring a coordinated approach aligned with national priorities and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). This Dialogue will also provide inputs into our next Medium Term National Development Plan, which is under preparation.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

20. Let me seize this opportunity to acknowledge the significant investments of the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC), the World Bank, the African Development Bank, UNOPS, the European Union (EU) and other development partners who have undertaken extensive studies of our energy sector during the past five years, and also developed road maps for generation, transmission and distribution.

- 21.** We need to harness these efforts and develop the **Just and Inclusive Energy Transition Plan** (JET-P) consistent with our Nationally Determined Commitments (NDCs) and our ambitions for Middle-Income Status by 2035.
- 22.** Our ambitious energy plan will help us create wealth and provide access to renewable and sustainable energy for all. We believe this Dialogue will contribute towards laying the foundation for achieving our energy transition goal. Considering this, we seek investments and international partnerships to advance our climate action and development initiatives.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

- 23.** Under our flagship FEED SALONE Programme, we intend to utilise clean energy to promote climate-smart agriculture and agro-industrialisation, increase domestic revenue, and expand market access.
- 24.** The FEED SALONE programme further solidifies our goal to be a food-self-sufficient nation, establishing rural community hubs to address longstanding challenges and social inequalities.

25. While our challenges are monumental, they are not insurmountable. Sierra Leone can no longer wait. Just like blood is to the body, so is energy to the economy. This National Dialogue is a step in the right direction to build strategic partnerships on energy that allow us to reach a greater level of ambition and delivery.

26. With your collective support, we shall achieve our vision of transforming Sierra Leone into a regional leader in clean energy access, climate resilience and food security.

27. It is now my honour to declare this Energy Transition Dialogue open.

28. I wish you all fruitful deliberations.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR KIND ATTENTION!