



NATIONAL ADDRESS

BY

**HIS EXCELLENCY DR JULIUS MAADA BIO,
PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF SIERRA LEONE**

18TH OF JANUARY, 2024

FREETOWN, SIERRA LEONE

MY FELLOW SIERRA LEONEANS,

- 1.** During my New Year's Message, I shared my firm sense of hope and optimism for our nation's progress.

- 2.** My hope and optimism haven't waned but instead reinforced by the decisive wins we have witnessed in the first two weeks of 2024.

- 3.** From our assumption of the UN Security Council seat to the re-selection for the MCC Compact, Sierra Leone is once again regaining its pride of place in the global community.

4. We embrace these newfound possibilities with a deep sense of commitment to the principles of unity, freedom and justice.

5. We must embrace unity to sustain the momentum and advance our collective aspiration for a peaceful and prosperous country. Only through unity can we build a prosperous and harmonious future for all.

6. In keeping with our Government's commitment to peace and security, in the past few days, I have met with our revered Paramount Chiefs, the Inter-Religious Council,

the main opposition APC Parliamentary leadership, the Chairman of the APC and the bereaved families of the 18 gallant security officers who lost their lives during the November 26th failed coup.

- 7.** In my engagements with each delegation, I reiterated our Government's resolve to promote peaceful co-existence.

- 8.** Sierra Leone has weathered numerous challenges throughout its history, emerging more robust each time.

9. Our journey as a nation has been marked by resilience, determination, and a shared vision for a better tomorrow.

10. Yet, we recognise that challenges persist, and as we progress, the path to progress must be paved with unity.

FELLOW SIERRA LEONEANS,

11. Unity does not imply uniformity. It is about acknowledging and celebrating our differences while embracing the shared values that bind us together as one people.

12. Unity is about recognising that each of us contributes to the rich tapestry of our nation, and together, we can achieve far more than we can individually.

13. We must prioritise dialogue and understanding to foster national unity and cohesion. For this reason, we have sustained the implementation of critical elements of the mediated dialogue, including establishing the tripartite electoral review committee and the inter-party dialogue. We are continuing to

engage in open and honest conversations where every voice is heard and respected.

FELLOW SIERRA LEONEANS,

14. It is pertinent to state that while our Government is making a concerted effort to promote peace, some unpatriotic elements have continued to fan the ember of disunity and are choosing to disrupt the peace and tranquility of the country.

15. Let it be clear that our Government is ready to bear the total weight of the law on any individual, group, or association caught breaking the law. The rule of law will continue to prevail.

16. At the resumption of the trial of Former President Ernest Bai Koroma on January 17th, his lawyers made an application to the Courts to permit him to leave the jurisdiction temporarily for specialized medical reasons. The Attorney General vehemently opposed the application.

- 17.** On the principle of separation of powers enshrined in our Constitution, this is a matter entirely for the Courts to determine.
- 18.** The Courts have, therefore, granted the application for the Former President to depart from the country purely for specialized medical reasons, and his trial will be suspended for the duration of his absence.
- 19.** Of course, it is important to note that this humanitarian gesture does not in any way detract from the seriousness of the ongoing trials.

20. On the contrary, it reinforces our position that the trial is not a political witch-hunt but one aimed at unravelling the truth behind the events of November 26, 2023.

21. By the same token, I would like to take this opportunity to commend the Police and the Judiciary for their professionalism in handling this most important and delicate trial ever in our country's history in the best interests of our nation and our justice system.

22. I assure every Sierra Leonean and families of the victims of November 26 that we shall get to the root of the matter and bring all those involved to justice.

FELLOW SIERRA LEONEANS,

23. We are making concerted efforts towards stabilising the economy and prioritising foreign direct investments as pathways to revamping the critical sectors of the economy.

- 24.** To this end, we are strengthening the legal and regulatory frameworks to make the country competitive for investments.
- 25.** However, only a peaceful and secure country can present a fertile ground for investments. We must, therefore, invest in building peace and unity.
- 26.** Our beloved Sierra Leone is a mosaic of diverse cultures, ethnicities, and traditions. It is this diversity that enriches our heritage and makes us unique.

27. Our diversity should be seen as a source of strength, a wellspring of ideas that can propel us toward a brighter future. As we embark on this journey towards national unity, let us remember the importance of national pride.

28. We are Sierra Leoneans, and our pride in our nation should fuel our collective efforts to overcome challenges and achieve greatness. Together, we can build a Sierra Leone that stands as a shining example of unity in diversity.

29. Let us build bridges, not walls. Let us celebrate our differences and find strength in our shared aspirations. Together, we can forge a path towards a brighter and more prosperous Sierra Leone, where every Sierra Leonean is a stakeholder in the nation's success.

30. Long live the Republic of Sierra Leone, and God bless you all.