



**KEYNOTE ADDRESS BY HIS  
EXCELLENCY, DR. JULIUS MAADA  
BIO, PRESIDENT OF THE  
REPUBLIC OF SIERRA LEONE, AT  
THE 2024 ENERGY SECTOR  
ROUNDTABLE, NEW  
BROOKFIELDS HOTEL, FREETOWN  
- 18<sup>th</sup> MARCH 2024**

**The Chairpersons,  
The Chief Minister,  
Ministers of Government,  
Members of Parliament,  
Members of the Diplomatic and Consular Corp,  
Development Partners,  
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,**

- 1.** I wish to express my gratitude to the Minister of Energy and Team for convening another energy sector roundtable meeting, which is bearing the theme - "Countdown to 2030: Sustainable Energy for All". Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, a sustainable, reliable, and adequate energy supply is a critical contributor to the transformational development of any society.
- 2.** Bearing in mind the renewable sources available to us as a nation, sustainable energy for all by 2030 (especially renewable energy) is a possibility in Sierra Leone. However, transitioning these sources into usable energy for domestic and commercial purposes is a daunting and costly task. This is why this energy roundtable is important, as it creates the platform for us to discuss around these issues.
- 3.** My presence here and perhaps for all of us, is an indication of the priority that we place on the issue of energy with particular emphasis on availability and access by Sierra Leoneans irrespective of geographic location. I therefore would like to join the Minister of Energy and his Team in welcoming you to this event as partners and critical stakeholders or even beneficiaries.
- 4.** The theme "Countdown to 2030: Sustainable Energy for All" resonates well with the structure, spirit, and intent of our Government's Medium Term National Development Plan that was recently launched at the Bintumani Conference

Center. The Medium-Term National Development Plan is anchored within the timeframe of 2024-2030; and energy availability is one of the key drivers to deliver on the pillars of the Plan.

- 5.** Ladies and gentlemen, I know this is a daunting task; but I am convinced that with determination and sincere commitment, backed by honest partnership and devotion from Energy sector stakeholders, it could be achieved. Let us be positive; and be resolute and determined to explore every opportunity that science and technology can offer to ensure that Sierra Leone benefits from 21<sup>st</sup> century energy solutions in securing universal energy access and energy transition.
- 6.** Our Government remains committed to working with all partners and actors both national and international to co-create an eco-system that would facilitate the provision and access to energy for all.
- 7.** Distinguished partners, ladies and gentlemen, the previous roundtable in October 2022 did provide the framework to guide collaborative partnership in moving Sierra Leone's energy sector forward. In 2024, my expectation is that we should be scaling up from just the identification of gaps and challenges; to discussing and proffering comprehensive and lasting solutions to our energy situation.
- 8.** The second term of this administration is a little above four years to its expiration; and six years down to the 2030 countdown time limit. The current reality paints a picture of impossibility – we can only currently boast of 36% access to electricity; the need to accelerate our efforts is highly demanding. But we can achieve our goal if we remain committed and vigilant.

9. Let me remind all present that the "New Direction" vision was also formulated in very difficult circumstances; many were of the thought that it was never achievable.
10. Despite facing unprecedented global challenges, our focus on human capital development yielded tangible results. Today, Sierra Leone boasts of improvements in its education indices including achieving gender parity at the primary school level.
11. The philosophy of the "New Direction" was transformed into an agenda used as a catalyst to enable Government to take advantage of new opportunities, while addressing emerging challenges.
12. In 2024, the Government's tenure in this second term is driven by the commitments made in our 2023 Manifesto and elucidated in the Medium-Term National Development Plan with a focus on the Big Five Game Changers, namely:
- A. Feed Salone**, which entails an ambitious programme to increase staple food production to drastically minimize our reliance on food imports, increase our exports, create jobs, boost economic growth and reduce poverty:
  - B. Human Capital Development:** which aims at nurturing skills for the 21st-century industry, with a gender focus.
  - C. Youth Employment Scheme:** Which aims at creating jobs through targeted initiatives.
  - D. Technology and Infrastructure Programme:** Which is intended to establish pathways for sustained economic growth; and
  - E. Revamping the Public Service Architecture:** Which focuses on enhancing delivery efficiency and professionalism.

- 13.** Distinguished ladies and gentlemen, the Big Five Game Changers were carefully crafted taking note of Sierra Leone's peculiar development aspirations but also mindful of ensuring that the country continues to meet its global commitments and obligations. The UN's Sustainable Development Goal 7 is about ensuring access to clean and affordable energy, which is key to the development of agriculture, business, communications, education, healthcare, and transportation. Energy is therefore critical to helping us deliver on our Medium-Term National Development Plan; which has as its first and major pillar – the Feed Salone initiative.
- 14.** As engrafted in the SDG 7, there can hardly be any meaningful national transformation without the country being energy sufficient. This implies that our vision for transforming Sierra Leone, should also be a vision of Sierra Leone with abundant transformation in energy generation. If we have to accelerate the achievement of our development agenda, then we have to move away from the dependency on temporary energy solutions, to long-lasting and affordable baseload energy supply.
- 15.** Our baseload supply should be able to catalyse productive uses at all levels.
- 16.** Sierra Leone needs affordable energy; and not one that is saddled with debt, incapacitating EDSA and EGTC, and reducing the citizens to the never-ending cycle energy poverty. This is not good for our people; it is not good for us as a Government, and I do not think it can be good for our partners as well.
- 17.** There are several barriers on the way to a "Countdown to 2030: Sustainable Energy for All" in Sierra Leone. We have to genuinely and sincerely reconsider those agreement that

seem to slow down our energy transitioning; we have to tamper down some of the bureaucracies and conditions we have crafted in our partnership engagements that is slowing down progress.

**18.** The Ministry of Energy, EDSA and EGTC; we all have our parts to play in the “Countdown to 2030: Sustainable Energy for All” to be a reality. We must make sincere commitments for our dream of 2030 to come true.

**19.** Similarly, there is a parallel need for all Sierra Leoneans to develop a deeper sense of patriotism and trust in each other; we should foster a culture that protects our national infrastructure, especially our energy supply facilities. This is a harm not only to Government or to EDSA or the Ministry of Energy, but is a greater harm to our communities that are the direct beneficiaries.

Illegal access to electricity is a crime and it also hinders revenue generation and affects service provision. The workers in the energy agencies should also adopt ethical, non-corrupt practices in the provision of services. All of us have our parts to play for the “Countdown to 2030: Sustainable Energy for All” to be a success.

**20.** Distinguished ladies and gentlemen, two years ago, I outlined critical initiatives necessary for progress in Sierra Leone’s energy sector and those initiatives remain abundantly relevant today. I crave your indulgence to reiterate these, as a way of emphasis:

**A. The Financing of the Energy Sector:** We must transition to a financially sustainable model that attracts investments. The Government still continues to struggle with the spiralling costs of generating and distributing electricity; we are still paying millions of

dollars in subsidies to keep light on and make energy affordable for citizens. We have to divest from blindly providing subsidies to a financially sustainable model.

**B. The Regional Interventions:** We must continue to leverage our regional energy connectivity in a mutually beneficial manner.

The TRANSCO-CLSG provides the opportunity for increased regional connectivity. The work of the West African Power Pool in promoting competition is a welcome opportunity as it will lower electricity costs. In my opinion the regional energy connectivity has the potential to transform Sierra Leone; but we should not only be consumers of electricity, but generators as well.

**C. The Regional Emergency Solar Power Intervention (RESPITE) Project:** The World Bank has evaluated the pressures of spiralling oil prices and other costs for our economy, and proposed a Regional Emergency Solar Power Intervention (RESPITE) Project. This regional intervention is much needed in the short term, as it also supports the energy transition. Sierra Leone continues to embrace cleaner energy sources while ensuring reliability. In line with our global commitments on climate actions, we stand ready to build a greener and more sustainable energy future.

We are all in for energy transition, but we require a practical approach. We do not want to sacrifice development opportunities that require reliable and affordable baseload energy, for temporal generation at the same time. I expect that this roundtable will provide guidance on how to mobilise climate finance

for this purpose and also forge just-energy partnerships.

**D. The MCC Compact:** Government remains committed to upholding democratic norms and values at all times as an anchor for promoting inclusive and sustainable development for all Sierra Leoneans. Our close collaboration with MCC on these critical principles and the proposed Compact present a real opportunity to put Sierra Leone on a path to just energy transition. We also hope to leverage the proposed Compact to cultivate partnerships with private sector stakeholders by undertaking deep reforms that can improve overall sector performance and credibility.

**E. The Rural Electrification and Mini-Grids:** Promoting investments in rural energy access is still a priority for Government. With 100 Mini Grids in operation, Sierra Leone is a leader in mini-grid deployment, and we are proud of this achievement. Government has created an enabling mini-grid investment environment with associated regulation, licensing, and tariff procedures. We are mindful of the fine balance between minimising cost-reflective tariffs for rural populations while minding the commercial viability of those installations.

- 21.** Distinguished ladies and gentlemen, my government welcomes additional investments in the sector by existing operators, development partners, and interested investors. The Ministry of Energy would continue to explore options to enhance the enabling environment.
- 22.** The UN SDGs have a window of only six years to go, and our Government is committed to addressing energy poverty as a national priority. Expanded energy access



will unlock our country's economic potential, modernize key sectors, and foster human capital development.

With increased investments, we can make our economy more productive, recover quicker from economic shocks, and alleviate poverty.

**23.** Ladies and gentlemen, in closing, let us seize this moment to reaffirm our commitment to sustainable energy for all. Together, we can propel Sierra Leone towards a brighter and more prosperous future.

**24. It is now my pleasure to declare this Energy Roundtable officially open and to also launch the Multi-Tier Electrification Access Framework.**

**Thank you for your attention.**