



**NATIONAL ADDRESS BY HIS
EXCELLENCY DR JULIUS MAADA
BIO PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC
OF SIERRA LEONE ON THE
NATIONAL DRUGS AND
SUBSTANCE ABUSE EPIDEMIC 4TH
OF APRIL 2024 FREETOWN,
SIERRA LEONE**

MY FELLOW SIERRA LEONEANS,

1. Our country is currently faced with an existential threat due to the ravaging impact of drugs and substance abuse, particularly the devastating synthetic drug Kush.
2. We are witnessing the destructive consequences of Kush on **our country's very foundation: our young people**, in spite of our Government's efforts to stop the proliferation of drugs and substance abuse in Sierra Leone.
3. This deadly Kush, which knows no boundaries of class, ethnicity, gender or religion, is taking a devastating toll on our communities, tearing apart families and robbing us of our future leaders.
4. The deterioration and alarming mortality of our young people due to the addictive use of kush is no longer acceptable. **AS A GOVERNMENT, WE SAY, ENOUGH IS ENOUGH. AS A NATION, WE SAY, ENOUGH IS ENOUGH.**
5. Synthetic drug and substance abuse is a global crisis. Sadly, its harmful effects have reached our doorsteps. Our young people are becoming increasingly addicted to kush, which has become a death trap.
6. We are making concerted efforts to combat this menace, but unfortunately, we are experiencing a surge in Kush consumption and escalating fatalities among its users.
7. In the past, I constituted a Presidential Task Force on Drugs and Substance Abuse to help fight drugs and substance abuse in our communities. We are making concerted efforts to combat this menace, but unfortunately, we are experiencing a surge in kush consumption and the escalating fatalities among users.
8. **It is my solemn duty as your President, acting on the powers conferred on me by the Constitution, to DECLARE A NATIONAL EMERGENCY ON DRUG AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE.**

9. With this **NATIONAL EMERGENCY ON DRUG AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE**, we shall broaden the scope of the Government Task Force's work and adopt a multifaceted approach to addressing the increasing Kush epidemic.
10. Our fight against Kush should be a collective effort, which is why I have directed the setting up of a **National Task Force on Drugs and Substance Abuse (NaTFDSA)**, with a particular focus on combating the rising Kush crisis.
11. The **National Task Force** will be multi-sectoral, comprising key Government Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs), Security and Law Enforcement Agencies, Community Organisations, Non-Governmental Organisations, Development Partners, Religious Organisations, and recovering people with substance use disorder to address drugs and substance abuse through a comprehensive Strategy.
12. The **National Task Force** will be responsible for implementing a five-part **Strategy for a Drug-Free Future**, which includes:
 - 1) **PREVENTION:** This includes awareness campaigns, promoting healthy alternatives, and deterring drug use.
 - 2) **CARE AND TREATMENT:** In every district, we will establish accessible treatment centres that are adequately staffed by trained professionals to offer care and support to people with drug addiction.
 - 3) **SOCIAL SERVICES SUPPORT:** To provide comprehensive recovery services, such as counselling, skills training, and reintegration programs.
 - 4) **LAW ENFORCEMENT:** We will dismantle the drug supply chain through investigations, arrests, and prosecutions.
 - 5) **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT:** Partnering with communities will be crucial in our fight against kush.
13. This Strategy will encompass all sectors of society and will be replicated at the chieftdom, township and district levels.

14. Given the **NATIONAL EMERGENCY ON DRUG AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE**, a **Presidential Advisory Team** will supervise the **National Task Force** in our quest to eradicate Kush and other lethal drugs in our communities.
15. In the coming days and weeks, the **National Task Force** will dialogue with the public about its core mandate and objectives. I encourage all citizens and residents in Sierra Leone to embrace our fight against Kush fully.

FELLOW SIERRA LEONEANS,

16. In my New Year's Day Address, I highlighted the immense investment we have made as a country in Human Capital Development.
17. Today, it is pleasing to know that we have more children in school, particularly girls, than at any other time in the history of this country.
18. We have reduced the maternal mortality rate by 61% and expanded health care coverage to our people.
19. We continue to make modest investments in infrastructure, such as energy access, transportation networks and internet coverage.
20. As a nation, we can only continue to make such investments and progress in a stable and healthy environment.
21. Today, Sierra Leone faces a critical public health emergency due to drug and substance abuse, particularly the lethal synthetic mix known as kush.
22. As part of our decisive action to combat this menace, our Government shall intensify and ramp up efforts to educate our young people about the dangers of drug abuse.
23. Through school programs, community outreach, and media campaigns, we will empower our youth with the knowledge and skills they need to make healthy choices and resist the temptation of drugs.

24. We understand that addiction is a health-related challenge. That is why we are investing in rehabilitation and treatment of facilities to provide support and care for those struggling with addiction.
25. It is not enough to punish drug users or people with an addiction; we must also offer them a path to recovery and redemption.
26. Our Human Capital Development Agenda and our sustained efforts to move the country to Middle-Income Status by 2039 will come to nought if the largest base of our population, the young people, are being ravaged by Kush.
27. We are, therefore, intensifying efforts to create more jobs through our **BIG 5 Development Priorities**, especially through the flagship **FEED SALONE** Initiative and the **Youth Employment Scheme**.
28. By creating more jobs, we will be shutting down one of the biggest breeding grounds for addiction, which is idleness or unproductivity.
29. At the same time, I say to anyone who is involved in the production, trafficking, and illicit trade of these drugs that **YOUR TIME IS UP**. There shall be no sacred cows in our quest to decisively deal with those who are caught in the act of peddling these drugs in our country.
30. We are strengthening our law enforcement efforts to crack down on drug trafficking and distribution network. We will work tirelessly to disrupt the supply chains that fuel this epidemic and hold those responsible accountable for their actions.
31. We would also empower our judiciary to act decisively and prioritise drug-related cases so that anyone arrested for the shipment, production and illicit trading of the chemical components and final synthetic drugs will be tried with the full weight of the law.
32. But our fight against this epidemic cannot succeed solely through Government actions. It requires the collective effort of every citizen, every community, and every sector of society.

33. We must come together as a nation to support one another, to look out for our neighbours, and to build a future where our youth can thrive free from the grip of addiction. **TOGETHER, LET US ALL SAY NO TO KUSH.**

34. To our Youths, I say, you cannot waste your youthful vigour on the altar of death-bound pleasure. Sierra Leone awaits your contribution towards solving some of the multitudes of challenges plaguing her.

FELLOW CITIZENS,

35. We must collectively rise to this challenge as we have done in the past to confront other epidemics, like Ebola, Rape, and COVID-19, in recent times. We must work together with courage, determination, and compassion.

36. Let us stand united in our resolve to overcome this epidemic and build a brighter, drug-free future for generations to come.

37. To every parent and family that has lost a loved one to Kush, we are in this together and we will fight to stamp out this deadly substance from our national consciousness.

38. May God bless Sierra Leone and guide us in our efforts to protect our people and our nation.

39. Thank you.