



**STATEMENT BY HIS EXCELLENCY  
DR JULIUS MAADA BIO,  
PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF  
SIERRA LEONE, AT THE SPECIAL  
PRESIDENTIAL DEPAC MEETING  
ON THE CONSTITUTIONAL  
REVIEW PROCESS, FREETOWN,  
SIERRA LEONE  
– THURSDAY 11TH APRIL 2024**

**The Honorable Vice President,  
The Acting Chief Justice,  
Chief Minister and other Members of My Cabinet,  
Excellencies and Ambassadors,  
Development Partners and Diplomatic Community,  
Distinguished Guests,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,  
Good afternoon**

**1.** I am honoured to address you today as we approach the pivotal and concluding phase of the Constitutional Review Process. This collective journey has spanned nearly two decades and holds immense significance for our nation.

**2.** The Constitutional Review Process is not a mere revision of a legal document. It is a transformative journey that will redefine the future of our beloved nation, fostering comprehensive inclusivity and ensuring our Constitution remains a vibrant reflection of our values and aspirations.

**3.** Sierra Leone has come a long way since the adoption of our current Constitution. Collectively, we understand that no document is perfect or immutable, hence the need for this crucial Review Process.

**4.** It is not just a duty but a shared responsibility of each one of us to ensure that our Constitution truly represents the aspirations and values of all Sierra Leoneans and remains a dynamic document capable of addressing our society's evolving needs.

**5.** When I had the honour of contesting for the Presidency in 2018, I made a solemn vow to conclude this Constitutional Review Process.

**6.** This Review Process, a fruit of the **Lomé Peace Agreement** in 1999 and a pivotal recommendation of our nation's **Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC)**, was initiated in the aftermath of the civil war in 2002. Today, I am before you, reiterating my unwavering commitment to this pledge.

**7.** The **TRC** recommended the revision of the Constitution through "**a wide and thorough consultative and participatory process**" that "**must lay the foundations for a democratic and open society in which every citizen is equally protected by the law**".

**8.** If you recall, the first Constitutional Review Process led by Dr Peter Tucker was initiated by the late President Ahmad Tejan Kabba in 2007, culminating in the submission of a Report in 2008.

**9.** Five years later, former President Ernest Bai Koroma established an all-encompassing **80-man Constitutional Review Committee (CRC)**, chaired by the Late Justice Edmond Cowan, for a second Review Process that operated from 2013 to 2017 with the technical and financial support of Development and Diplomatic Partners.

### **LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,**

**10.** As you may know, I was instrumental in ending the civil war and ushering in the peace we now enjoy in our country.

**11.** Hence, when I was first elected President in 2018, we prioritised the conclusion of the **TRC's** recommendation for a Constitutional Review Process from where it stopped in 2017.

**12.** Consequently, my Government developed and issued a **White Paper on the Justice Cowan Constitutional Review Committee Report** in 2022, which, we believe, reflects the contributions, aspirations and determination of the people of

Sierra Leone to improve and sustain the rule of law, lasting peace, and human capital development.

**13.** The Government's White Paper concluded the initial phase of the Constitutional Review Process and launched a new phase of the Review Process.

**14.** In the **White Paper**, we approved and accepted a significant number of the CRC's recommendations, which we will, in the coming weeks, table before Parliament as constitutional instruments for revising the **1991 Constitution of Sierra Leone**.

**15.** We must also acknowledge that while we try to take this process to a conclusion, we have already taken significant steps to advance several reforms and laws recommended by the **Constitutional Review Process**. These include:

- I. Reform of media laws** — mainly, the repeal of the criminal libel law, which was frequently used to infringe on the right to free speech;
- II. II. The abolition of the death penalty** and amendment of relevant legislation;
- III. Reform of land laws;**
- IV. The free quality education programme and rights of pregnant girls to education;**
- V. The amendment of the Anti-Corruption Commission Act;**
- VI. Enactment of the Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Act (GEWE Act);**
- VII. Enactment of the Political Parties Regulatory Commission Act**, among others

**LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,**

**16.** We now move into a new phase of the Constitutional Review Process. Through the Office of the Attorney General and Minister of Justice, we are concluding the technical details of this process.

**17.** We will move into drafting constitutional instruments for non-entrenched provisions in the Constitution. Parliament will debate the proposals.

**18.** A revised Constitution will be drafted for our country, and accordingly, some laws will need to be reviewed. Some provisions, which are part of the Constitution's entrenched clauses, will require a referendum.

**19.** In proceeding with this Constitutional Review, we have considered the international treaties and conventions signed and ratified by the country.

**20.** We note that such an important undertaking is not meant for the benefit of one political party. It is for the people of this country. That is why, just as we did during the consultation process, we will continue to implement a robust awareness-raising program to ensure public understanding and support for the process.

**21.** Citizens will, therefore, have to be educated during this process to ensure national ownership. We will ensure that the process remains very inclusive and participatory and that everything is done in the national interest.

**22.** We must continue to be guided by the principles of inclusivity, transparency, and accountability. The voices of all Sierra Leoneans must be heard and considered throughout the process.

**23.** This committee must serve as a platform for dialogue, debate, and consensus-building, ensuring that every citizen feels represented and valued.

**24.** As partners who have been part of this process since it started seventeen years ago, we must work together to bring it to a conclusion. Your continued support is crucial to strengthening our democratic and governance architecture.

**25.** As I have repeatedly stated, when I leave office as President, I want to leave behind laws that will enhance this country's democratic future.

**26.** I urge you all to approach this task with diligence, integrity, and a deep sense of patriotism.

**27.** The decisions we make today will shape the future of our nation for generations to come.

**28.** Let us seize this opportunity to build a stronger Sierra Leone that truly reflects the hopes and aspirations of all its people.

**29.** Thank you for your continued partnership in this endeavour.

**30.** May God bless the Land That We Love, Sierra Leone and make her great and prosperous.