



**A SPECIAL LECTURE BY HIS EXCELLENCY  
DR JULIUS MAADA BIO, PRESIDENT OF  
THE REPUBLIC OF SIERRA LEONE, ON  
ENHANCING THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM  
AND RECONSTRUCTING GOVERNANCE IN  
SIERRA LEONE AT THE YONSEI  
UNIVERSITY, SEOUL, KOREA  
- MONDAY 3RD JUNE 2024**

**President Dong-Sup Yoon  
Distinguished Faculty Members,  
Students,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,  
Good Morning,**

1. It is a great honour to stand on this sacred ground, which has been the breeding ground for hundreds of thousands of students who are contributing to the world's socio-economic growth and development.

2. For over 139 years, Yonsei University has been a beacon of academic excellence and a symbol of South Korea's remarkable transformation through education and Human Capital Development.

3. It, therefore, gives me great pleasure to be here today as I reminisce on the essence of my foray into politics, which was the desire to liberate our people from the shackles of illiteracy-induced indigence.

4. I will highlight some of my Government's strategic efforts in enhancing the educational system and reconstructing governance in Sierra Leone since 2018.

## **THE ENHANCEMENT OF THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM IN SIERRA LEONE**

5. My deep commitment to providing equal access to quality education for our people finds congruence with the aspirations of the visionaries who founded Yonsei University, who recognised the value of education that transcends racial and national boundaries

6. **Quality Education and Human Capital Development** lie at the heart of Sierra Leone's national development aspirations and, indeed, at the core of global sustainable development.

7. As the late Nelson Mandela famously asserted, **EDUCATION IS THE MOST POWERFUL WEAPON WE CAN USE TO CHANGE THE WORLD.** It is a catalyst for economic growth, social progress, and political stability.

8. An educated population is a country's most valuable resource. For countries like Sierra Leone, which are emerging from the shadows of conflict and grappling with the challenges of poverty and underdevelopment, education provides a pathway to sustainable development and a brighter future.

## **DISTINGUISHED LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,**

9. Despite our abundant natural resources, Sierra Leone has acknowledged that its most valuable asset is its human resources, comprised mainly of a young and dynamic population.

10. Therefore, our people, especially our youths, are at the heart of our **Human Capital Agenda**. Our landmark **Free Quality School Education Programme** focuses on nurturing our children's potential to become productive citizens.

11. In the past six years, our education sector has received the largest share of our annual national budget (22%).

12. We are investing significantly in the education sector to empower our citizens with the knowledge and skills needed to thrive in an increasingly complex and interconnected world.

**13. Prioritising education in Sierra Leone means breaking the cycle of poverty, reducing inequality, and fostering a society where everyone has the opportunity to succeed.**

14. As we can all see today, South Korea's remarkable rise from a war-torn nation to a global economic powerhouse serves as a testament to the transformative power of education and Human Capital Development.

15. By prioritising education, fostering innovation, and investing in its people, South Korea has achieved extraordinary economic growth and improved the quality of life for its citizens.

16. Sierra Leone has drawn valuable lessons from South Korea's experience. My Government is building a robust educational system that is accessible, equitable, and of high quality.

17. We have increased investment in education hard and soft infrastructure, trained and retained qualified teachers, and ensured that our curriculum is relevant to the needs of the 21st century.

18. Our pioneering approach to **Radical Inclusion in Education – leaving NO ONE BEHIND** – be it expectant girls, adult learners, children from our most vulnerable communities, or those with disabilities – has garnered commendations from the international community.

19. Moreover, we recognise that **Foundational Learning** is the bedrock for sustainable education. My Government has, therefore, set out to **Reform Foundational Learning For All** as articulated in our **2022-2026 Education Sector Plan**.

20. Our goal is to build on and intensify the ongoing work in support of Foundational Learning to ensure that all students in Sierra Leone learn to read fluently with comprehension, acquire mathematical competencies, and develop resilient socio-emotional skills by Primary 4 to reap the benefits of subsequent education, whether technical, vocational, or higher, and to achieve professional and personal success in life.

21. The key pillars of the Reform will focus on expanding access to pre-primary education and aligning the education system and teacher support to deliver improved learning outcomes throughout the first four years of school.

22. The Foundational Learning Reform also pays attention to the inequalities that continue to affect children's access to school and their ability to learn, including the global impact of the rising cost of living, hunger, and malnutrition.

## **DISTINGUISHED LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,**

23. In Sierra Leone, we take the education of girls very seriously. In the past six years, our enabling policies have permitted us to achieve gender parity in our schools.

24. Girls have higher retention and pass rates in all national transition examinations into tertiary and vocational institutions.

25. Our policy of ensuring free STEM education for girls from primary school through university has resulted in a record number of doing exceptionally well.

26. Our national commitment to **achieving SDG 4, to "Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all,"** is unbending.

27. We remain open to strategic partnerships to meet our obligation to the future generation, which is not only confined to national development but also to the inevitable global link that integrates all the and thriving world.

## **THE RECONSTRUCTION OF GOVERNANCE**

28. **DISTINGUISHED LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,** We recognise that our collective efforts will be in vain if we do not tackle headlong the agelong governance issues that have long militated against Sierra Leone's journey to global reckoning.

29. Upon my assumption of political office in 2018, my Government developed a comprehensive framework to reverse Sierra Leone's negative perception.

30. We remain committed to sustaining and developing democratic principles and respect for human rights, the rule of law and good governance.

31. Without a healthy democracy, we cannot assure our people and partners of a stable country.

32. As part of our commitment to democracy, I am proud to say that we have repealed the criminal libel law that hindered our country's Press Freedom and abolished the death penalty.

33. Our Government's concerted efforts to fight corruption and promote transparency have continued to gain global traction.

34. Notably, Sierra Leone has consistently made upward progress in **Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) Country Rankings.**

35. In six years, our country moved twenty-two (22) places upwards on the CPI rankings, from 130 in 2017 to 108 in 2023, which is above the sub-Saharan Africa average and the highest Sierra Leone has ever recorded since the CPI rankings began.

36. Our Government also reflects our nation's rich diversity, ensuring that all voices are heard and respected. We are committed to increasing the representation of women, youth, and marginalised groups in decision-making processes.

37. In our steadfast commitment to dismantle the barriers of gender inequality, our Government signed into law the **Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (GEWE) ACT**, ensuring women receive equal pay for equal work and amplifying their voices in all societal domains, from the workplace to the political arena — **a minimum 30% representation of women guaranteed by law.**

## **DISTINGUISHED LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,**

38. Good governance is not an end in itself but a means to achieve sustainable social and economic development.

39. My Government has continued to create an environment that fosters economic growth, job creation, and poverty reduction.

40. This includes implementing policies that support entrepreneurship, attract investment, and promote sustainable development.

41. My Government has undertaken ambitious reforms anchored on our **Medium-Term National Development Plan (MTNDP) 2024-2030, titled "A TRANSFORMATIVE ACCELERATION AGENDA FOR FOOD SECURITY, HUMAN CAPITAL DEVELOPMENT, AND JOB CREATION."** These reforms, though ambitious, are necessary for Sierra Leone's sustainable future.

42. Agriculture is our main priority sector for the next four years, with the vision of attaining food security and sovereignty in our nation.

43. Through our **FEED SALONE PROGRAMME**, we aim to ignite job creation, catalyse economic momentum, and significantly diminish the burdens of poverty.

44. In addition, we will continue investing strategically in **Human Capital Development** and seeking traditional and innovative job-creating opportunities for our youth through our **Youth Employment Scheme (YES)**.

45. **Our Technology and Infrastructure Programme** is a forward-looking initiative designed to lay the bedrock for resilient and sustainable avenues of economic progress.

46. **Reforming our Public Service Architecture** will ensure a service delivery mechanism befitting our people's aspirations.

47. I, therefore, invite Yonsei University and all credible stakeholders to join us in building a nation that is just, prosperous, and inclusive.

48. A nation where every citizen has the opportunity to thrive and where our Government continues to reflect the wishes of the people, by the people, and for the people.

49. In closing, to the **DISTINGUISHED STUDENTS** of this great University, the future leaders of our society in an increasingly globalised world, **I say to you, hold fast to the spirit and philosophy of Yonsei University — the principles of TRUTH and FREEDOM.**

50. Stay true to your convictions and passions. Serve humanity with an open heart. Unleash your potential, let your light shine and contribute to humanity's prosperity. The world awaits your greatness.

51. God bless you all and thank you for listening.