



**REMARKS BY HIS EXCELLENCY DR. JULIUS  
MAADA BIO PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF  
SIERRA LEONE AT THE LAUNCH OF THE ART  
EXHIBITION ON SIERRA LEONE  
PEACEBUILDING JOURNEY AT THE  
DELEGATES' ENTRANCE OF THE UNITED  
NATIONS HEADQUARTERS, UNHQ, NEW YORK  
- 12<sup>TH</sup> AUGUST 2024**

## **EXCELLENCIES, DISTINGUISHED LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,**

- 1.** I am profoundly delighted to officially open this extraordinary Art Exhibition on Peacebuilding in Sierra Leone.
- 2.** I am deeply moved to share a personal anecdote. My involvement in Conflict Resolution and Peace Building is not just professional, but deeply personal.
- 3.** I have been on this journey since I was a young man in the Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces, even researching the concepts for my doctoral degree course before the call to serve in the highest office of our land in 2018.
- 4.** This **Arts Exhibition** makes me reminisce about my journey in Sierra Leone's peacebuilding process, from defending our nation on the battlefield as a Military Officer to initiating the first peace talks as a military Head of State and now, as President, prioritising peace consolidation through dialogue and institution building.

5. The lessons we have learned as a nation are invaluable. We are committed to sharing our experience with the Global Community, believing that it will inspire hope in those who seek peace, reconciliation, and justice and contribute to the cultivation of a culture of peace.
6. Like other States that have struggled with conflict resolution, peacebuilding, and state-building, we have wholeheartedly welcomed the immense responsibility and opportunity to contribute to the maintenance of global peace and security through our engagements at the Security Council and other regional and international efforts.
7. Today, we gather to honour the profound journey of peace and resilience, not only for Sierra Leone but for nations across the world that have faced the scourge of war.
8. **We have installed this Exhibition not only as a testament to humanity's enduring spirit but also as a powerful tool for education and inspiration.**

- 9. The power of truth-telling and the critical importance of commemorating our collective efforts in conflict resolution, peacebuilding, and peace consolidation are all vividly portrayed here.**
- 10. Our experience in Sierra Leone has taught us invaluable lessons. The scars of the civil conflict are deep, as we see from some of the exhibits, but they also remind us of the remarkable resilience and strength that lie within our people.**
- 11. We have learned that peace is not merely the absence of war but the presence of justice, truth, and reconciliation, three principles that carry immense weight in our journey towards peace.**
- 12. It is a continuous process, requiring unwavering commitment and the collective will of society, a dedication that we must uphold every day in our pursuit of peace.**

- 13.** Through the Exhibition and collaborative efforts to put it together, we have combined the three elements of **memory, truth-telling and accountability**, the key pillars of our transitional justice process.
- 14.** The Exhibition has brought together the work of the **Truth and Reconciliation Commission**, the **Special Court for Sierra Leone and its successor**, the **Residual Special Court for Sierra Leone**, and the **Monument and Relic Commission**, as well as the private initiative of the **Center for Memory and Reparations**.
- 15.** The message is to reinforce the view that memorialisation plays a pivotal role in this journey.
- 16.** By remembering and honouring the victims and survivors of conflict, we acknowledge their suffering and validate their experiences.
- 17.** This act of remembrance is crucial for healing and for preventing the recurrence of such tragedies.

**18. Memorialisation preserves the lessons of our history for future generations,** ensuring that the stories of courage and resilience are never forgotten.

**19. Truth-telling is equally essential.** The work of the **Truth and Reconciliation Commission in Sierra Leone** was a significant step in uncovering the realities of our conflict by exposing the atrocities committed and giving a voice to those who suffered.

**20.** Accordingly, we laid the foundation for genuine reconciliation. Truth-telling fosters trust and understanding, bridging divides and paving the way for lasting peace.

**EXCELLENCIES, DISTINGUISHED LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,**

**21.** The **Special Court for Sierra Leone** is noted for its successful completion of its mandate. The story of one of its legacy project, the **Peace Museum**, the home of these artefacts and

media, honours the bravery of men, women and children from our shores and those of the troop-contributing countries, both UN and ECOWAS, your countrymen and women from far away, who through their service brought us out of the scourge of war to this very day of peace and national cohesion.

- 22.** As we launch this **Peace Exhibition** at the United Nations, we celebrate the collective efforts of individuals, communities, and nations in building and sustaining peace.
- 23.** This Exhibition is not just a display of artefacts and stories. It is a tribute to the indomitable human spirit that strives for peace in the face of adversity.
- 24.** As the continuous work to consolidate peace requires inclusive dialogue, robust institutions, and the promotion of human rights and justice, let us, therefore, reaffirm our commitment to these principles.

**25.** Let us work together, hand in hand, to create a world where peace is not a distant dream but a lived reality for all. Our collective commitment to these principles is the key to our success.

**26.** Let this Exhibition inspire us to renew our efforts in conflict resolution, to embrace the power of truth and reconciliation, and to build a future where every individual can live in dignity and peace.

**27.** With this, **Excellencies, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, I have the distinguished honour and pleasure to officially launch the SIERRA LEONE PEACE EXHIBITION at the United Nations.**

**THANK YOU!**