



KEYNOTE ADDRESS

BY

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**DISTINGUISHED SPEAKER AND GUEST OF
HONOUR**

AT THE

WORLD WITHOUT HUNGER CONFERENCE

ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA

NOVEMBER 5-7, 2024

- **YOUR EXCELLENCIES,**
- **DISTINGUISHED GUESTS,**
- **LADIES AND GENTLEMEN**

GOOD AFTERNOON

1. I bring you warm greetings from the Government and people of Sierra Leone.

2. I thank the **Government of Ethiopia, UNIDO,** and the **African Union Commission** for organising this remarkable gathering dedicated to building a “**WORLD WITHOUT HUNGER**”.

3. This noble pursuit is not just a task for Governments or International Bodies but **a collective mission that urgently requires all of humanity's commitment, collaboration, and support.**

4. My country, Sierra Leone, joins you in this critical mission with great determination and shared purpose.

EXCELLENCIES, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

5. The state of food insecurity in Africa and the World at large is alarming.

6. The World Food Program (WFP) estimates that about 21% of Africa's population is threatened by moderate to severe hunger.

7. In Sierra Leone, we understand first-hand the devastating impacts of hunger and malnutrition, with severe food insecurity affecting over 18% of our population.

- 8.** Food insecurity impacts every dimension of life, from a child's growth and development to their ability to learn and succeed in education and, ultimately, their future opportunities.

- 9.** Addressing these challenges is not just a priority for my Government but a fundamental necessity for our nation's progress.

10. Our flagship **FEED SALONE Program** is our roadmap to boosting agricultural productivity, building more resilient food systems, and achieving food security.

11. The initiative directly taps into our immense agricultural potential, youthful population, and favourable climate, leveraging modern technologies to enhance productivity.

12. Through strong collaboration with the private sector and Development Partners, our approach focuses on targeted policies that boost farm-level productivity while creating opportunities for innovation and private-sector investments.

13. Some of our successful strategies to drive sustainable growth in Sierra Leone's agriculture sector include:

- 14. Adopting a whole-of-government approach**, bringing together all the relevant Ministers to address food systems bottlenecks.
- 15. Implementing targeted policies to reduce food imports** and make the sector more competitive for our farmers.
- 16. Promoting Sierra Leone as a viable agro-investment destination**, forging strategic partnerships, and mobilising over USD 1 billion in resources to develop rice agro-

industrial clusters to achieve rice self-sufficiency.

17. Additionally, **our School Feeding Program has proven to be an essential intervention in addressing hunger and malnutrition** among schoolchildren.

18. This Program has significantly increased school attendance and enhanced academic performance by ensuring that over 500,000 students have access to nutritious meals during the academic year.

19. We are also investing in research to develop the best-yielding, climate-resilient crop varieties for our diverse ecologies, especially by capacitating the Sierra Leone Agricultural Research Institute (SLARI).

20. Furthermore, our Government is developing the country's first-ever biometric national farmers' registry to allocate resources more efficiently and make more informed policy decisions that will benefit our farmers.

- 21. Lastly, our FEED SALONE Program strongly emphasises empowering women,** who represent more than 70% of our agriculture labour force, from cultivation to processing and marketing.
- 22.** We do this by creating economic opportunities for our women, by enhancing local processing along the value chains.
- 23.** This commitment to gender equality is a cornerstone of our efforts to achieve food security.

EXCELLENCIES, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

24. It is clear that solving the complex problem of hunger and malnutrition requires global collaboration.

25. While taking proactive steps at the national level to reduce poverty and hunger, we are equally leveraging global strategic partnerships.

26. At COP28, **Sierra Leone, Brazil, Norway, Rwanda, and Cambodia** launched the **ALLIANCE OF CHAMPIONS FOR FOOD SYSTEMS TRANSFORMATION** — a new strategic coalition of ambitious countries determined to act urgently together.

27. This initiative makes acting on food systems **a political priority**. Members commit to delivering universal access to affordable, nutritious, and sustainable diets, aiming to accelerate major progress this decade.

EXCELLENCIES, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

28. As we know, Africa's population is growing and is projected to rise to at least 2.4 billion by 2050, and two in every five children will be born in Africa.

29. This underscores the pressing need for us to work together urgently to find sustainable solutions to the Continent's raging food insecurity.

30. We stand at a critical juncture, and our collective actions as Governments, international organisations, academia, civil society, and the private sector will determine the future of food security and sovereignty in Africa and worldwide.

31. The fact that more than 800 million people remain hungry highlights the significant challenge we face in meeting the **Sustainable Development Goal of Zero Hunger by 2030.**

- 32.** While achieving a **Zero-Hunger World** is undeniably an uphill task, it is not impossible.
- 33.** It's important to note that it's not all gloom, as Ethiopia's success in achieving wheat sufficiency offers a beacon of hope and optimism.
- 34.** Ethiopia's ability to achieve wheat self-sufficiency through targeted technological interventions, institutional strengthening, and a supportive policy environment is a great

example of what can be achieved when a confluence of strategic actions occurs.

35. With visionary leadership and strong political will, we can harness Africa's vast arable lands and its demographic dividend to achieve our food security goals and create lasting transformation so that no child goes to bed hungry.

36. It is in the interest of the world that Africa unlocks its agricultural potential.

37. As leaders, we must pledge today to use all our political capital to transform food systems, collectively intensify our efforts to achieve **SDG 2** and bring our Continent closer to a **WORLD FREE OF HUNGER.**

38. I call on all stakeholders to adopt a **comprehensive approach to addressing hunger and food insecurity in Africa** and implement sustainable solutions that will have a lasting impact on bringing the **World closer to achieving FOOD SECURITY FOR ALL.**

39. I look forward to our collective efforts in creating a WORLD WITHOUT HUNGER for our current and future generations.

40. Thank you all for your attention.