



KEYNOTE ADDRESS

BY

HIS EXCELLENCY DR. JULIUS MAADA BIO

PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF SIERRA LEONE

**AT THE OPENING CEREMONY OF THE 10TH
ORDINARY MEETING OF THE AFRICAN DIAMOND
PRODUCERS' ASSOCIATION (ADPA)**

**COUNCIL OF MINISTERS AND COMMITTEE OF
EXPERTS AND THE OPENING OF THE SIERRA LEONE
MINING WEEK AND EXHIBITION**

FREETOWN, SIERRA LEONE

APRIL 10, 2025

- HONOURABLE GOVERNMENT MINISTERS,
- ESTEEMED MEMBERS OF THE AFRICAN
DIAMOND PRODUCERS ASSOCIATION,
- MEMBERS OF THE DIPLOMATIC & CONSULAR
CORPS,
- DISTINGUISHED DELEGATES,
- GOOD MORNING.

1. I am honoured to address the leaders and policymakers in Africa's mining industry at this **10th Ordinary Meeting of the ADPA Council of Ministers and Committee of Experts** during the **Sierra Leone Mining Week and Exhibition 2025**.

- 2.** We stand at a crucial juncture in the history of diamond production on our Continent — **one where the decisions made today will echo like the brilliance of a well-cut diamond for generations to come.**
- 3.** I extend a warm welcome to all, especially to our distinguished guests who have travelled from afar to visit our beautiful Sierra Leone.
- 4.** As you admire our breathtaking natural landscapes I also look forward to you experiencing the genuine warmth of our hospitality.

5. **DISTINGUISHED DELEGATES**, I begin by commending the outgoing Chairman of the **ADPA Council of Ministers, Honourable Winston Chitando** — who also serves as **Zimbabwe's Minister of Mines and Mining Development**.

6. I also acknowledge the **ADPA Vice Chair and Minister of Mines and Mineral Resources of Sierra Leone, Honourable Julius Mattai**, who is taking up the leadership of this esteemed organisation.

7. My sincere thanks go to the **ADPA Secretariat** for organising this important meeting in our beloved nation.

DISTINGUISHED GUESTS, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

8. Africa's diamond industry is steeped in a storied history, intertwined with our diverse cultures, vibrant economies, and soaring aspirations.

9. With some of the richest deposits in the world, our diamonds are not merely resources; **they are the sparkling jewels of our heritage, fueling opportunity in our economies and igniting hope in our communities.**

10. **Yet, despite this brilliance, our diamond industry has yet to fully empower our people.**

11. It is here that **ADPA** serves as a beacon — uniting our nations to unlock the true potential of our diamond sector.

- 12.** Enhanced partnerships will ensure that the benefits of our diamond resources contribute to meaningful and sustainable socio-economic transformation across our Continent.

- 13.** As custodians of these precious treasures, we must lead in ethical sourcing and ensure that every diamond mined in Africa promotes equitable wealth distribution and community development.

14. As we gather here in Freetown, we must redouble our efforts to achieve **ADPA's four main objectives**, which are to:

- i.** Foster cooperation among Member Countries.
- ii.** Adopt harmonised legal solutions across Member Countries.
- iii.** Promote mutual technical assistance.
- iv.** Transform conflict diamonds into symbols of peace and sustainable development.

15. As we work to place Africa's diamond industry on its rightful global pedestal, **we must also enhance governance, transparency, and accountability.**

16. Persistent challenges — such as illicit trade, widespread smuggling, opaque practices, market fluctuations, and climate change — continue to deprive our nations of the full benefits of these invaluable non-renewable resources.

- 17. Yet, from these challenges emerge opportunities for innovation and renewal.**
- 18. Our natural resources, the very bedrock of our shared prosperity, must be harnessed to drive sustainable development and empower every citizen — rather than perpetuating the legacy of the resource curse.**

DISTINGUISHED DELEGATES,

- 19.** It is essential to recognise that our mineral resources are abundant, and infrastructural development is crucial — especially in our local mining communities.
- 20.** We must empower these communities by providing essential infrastructure such as well-maintained roads, adequate hospital facilities, quality schools, reliable power and water supply, community buildings, and alternative livelihood projects.

21. Corporate Social Responsibility initiatives must extend well beyond the lifespan of our mines, ensuring that communities thrive both during and after mining projects.

22. A harmonious relationship between mining companies and local communities is essential, as it grants companies the vital social license to operate.

23. Moreover, by embracing technological advancements — through blockchain, digital tracking systems, and improved certification mechanisms — we can **ensure**

that our diamonds remain conflict-free and that the revenues generated are directed toward our national development priorities.

DISTINGUISHED LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

24. Since 2018, my Government has made significant strides in **strengthening the legal and regulatory frameworks that are essential to fully harnessing the potential of our mining sector — for the benefit of both our people and our investors.**

- 25.** We have strengthened governance in the mining industry through enhanced oversight, increased community engagement, and comprehensive legal and institutional reforms.
- 26.** We have rigorously **reviewed the Ministry of Mines and Mineral Resources' legislative framework to address both existing and emerging challenges.**

- 27.** A landmark achievement was the enactment of the **Mines and Minerals Development Act of 2022**, replacing the outdated **Mines and Minerals Act of 2009**.
- 28.** This new legislation not only enhances provisions for exploration, mining, and mineral development but also aims to deliver tangible social and economic benefits to the people of Sierra Leone.

- 29.** It promotes transparent and accountable management of the minerals sector, environmental stewardship, and community development in line with international best practices.
- 30.** Complementing this **Act** are other key policies, including the **National Minerals Agency Act 2023** and the **Extractive Industries Revenue Act 2018**.

31. Together, these measures demonstrate our resolve to elevate the mining sector as a driver of sustainable development, ensuring that our resources are managed with both prudence and vision.

DISTINGUISHED LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

32. Diamonds have long been among Sierra Leone's most valuable natural resources and a major source of export revenue.

33. In response, **my Government has taken bold steps to regulate the diamond sector** — ensuring responsible extraction, enhanced transparency, and heightened accountability to foster long-term economic growth.

34. **Recognising that our citizens are at the heart of our national development,** we have incorporated the **Diamond Area Community Development Fund** into our Mining Policy.

- 35.** This Fund enables us to invest a portion of the revenues generated from diamond mining and exports directly into the development of local communities.
- 36. DISTINGUISHED DELEGATES, our shared vision must now shift from merely producing and exporting raw diamonds from our countries to actively engaging in value-added activities such as cutting, polishing, and jewellery manufacturing.**

- 37.** This strategic evolution will create jobs, expand our industrial base, and increase revenue — ultimately reducing our dependency on raw commodity exports.
- 38. Africa is the primary source of over 60% of the world's natural rough diamonds, and the Continent's voice must be heard and respected in global markets.**
- 39. We must focus on negotiating better trade agreements, improving investment conditions, and ensuring that the wealth**

generated from our diamonds contributes to sustainable development for all.

DISTINGUISHED GUESTS, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

40. No sector — especially one as critical as mining — can thrive without a solid foundation of predictable, stable democratic governance.

41. True stability is not measured by the absence of disputes but by the presence of robust, fair, and transparent mechanisms to resolve them.

- 42.** In every nation and in every arena of human endeavour, **negotiations, renegotiations, and conflicts are inevitable.**
- 43.** What distinguishes a resilient democracy is not the elimination of conflict but its capacity to address it lawfully and legitimately.
- 44.** In our mining sector, recent tensions in Koidu have drawn both public and investor attention.

- 45.** While concerning, these disputes are not a sign of systemic failure but a reflection of the complex realities inherent in managing a high-stakes industry.
- 46.** Under the **Minister's leadership**, our **Ministry of Mines and Mineral Resources** remains the competent authority to address these challenges — with balance, fairness, and legal clarity — in **close coordination with other relevant Ministries and Government Agencies.**

47. While every citizen has the right to voice opinions and frustrations, **no one may supplant or bypass our constituted democratic authority**; our nation holds the principle of the rule of law in the highest regard.

48. My Government is unwavering in its commitment to resolving every dispute constructively — upholding the rights of our workers while safeguarding the legitimate interests of businesses that have entrusted us with their confidence.

49. We are determined to address these issues with the wisdom and deliberation that our nation and the world demand.

50. As a Government, we are engaging all relevant stakeholders with a single purpose: to forge a solution that is both sustainable and just.

51. We believe that the credibility of our entire mining sector hinges on our ability to navigate this moment with dignity and foresight.

DISTINGUISHED GUESTS, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

52. Today marks a significant milestone in Sierra Leone's mining sector as we officially inaugurate the **Sierra Leone Mining Week** and the **10th ADPA Council of Ministers and Community of Experts Meeting**.

53. This week is not merely an event — it is a dynamic platform to showcase Sierra Leone's abundant natural resources, ignite meaningful dialogue that spurs investment and technological advancement, and

reaffirm our unwavering commitment to global best practices in mining operations.

54. Let us remember that our Continent's natural resources are not burdens but sacred gifts from God.

55. They promise to uplift our nations, empower investors, and honour the hardworking men and women who labour in our mines.

56. When managed responsibly, these gifts become the bedrock of prosperity for our people.

- 57.** I assure you of **Sierra Leone's steadfast commitment to this Association's objectives** and to forging stronger regional and international partnerships that will sustain and elevate our industry for generations to come.
- 58. In closing,** I extend my deepest gratitude to the **African Diamond Producers Association Secretariat**, the **Ministry of Mines and Mineral Resources**, the **National Mineral Agency**, and our **Sponsors** for organising this conference and to all **Participants** for your attendance.

- 59.** Your dedication to advancing the mining sector's development agenda is truly commendable.
- 60.** We applaud the **ADPA Member States** for the remarkable progress and positive impact they have achieved in the global diamond industry.
- 61.** In recent years, the collective efforts of **ADPA Members** have strengthened our commitment to ethical mining practices, ensured the responsible management of our

resources, and promoted the welfare of our communities.

62. Sierra Leone is proud to host this significant meeting, and I am confident that our collective resolve will ensure its success and lasting impact.

63. Together, let us reaffirm our commitment to a future where our diamonds shine as a true source of prosperity, peace, and development for all Africans — transforming lives and illuminating our shared destiny by

steadfastly adhering to global best practices.

64. Thank you for your attention, and I wish you a wonderful stay in Sierra Leone.

65. I now have the **singular honour of FORMALLY DECLARING OPEN the TENTH ORDINARY MEETING OF THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS AND COMMITTEE OF EXPERT OF THE AFRICAN DIAMOND PRODUCERS' ASSOCIATION** and the **SIERRA LEONE MINING WEEK.**

THANK YOU!