



KEYNOTE ADDRESS

BY

HIS EXCELLENCY DR. JULIUS MAADA BIO

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AT THE

OPENING CEREMONY OF THE THIRD

AFRICA HIGH-LEVEL FORUM ON SOUTH-SOUTH AND

TRIANGULAR COOPERATION FOR SUSTAINABLE

DEVELOPMENT

THEME: “THE ROLE OF GLOBAL SOUTH IN RESHAPING

THE NEW INTERNATIONAL ORDER”

FREETOWN, SIERRA LEONE

7–9 May 2025

- YOUR EXCELLENCIES, HEADS OF STATE AND GOVERNMENT,
- MINISTERS AND DEPUTY MINISTERS OF GOVERNMENT AND POLICY MAKERS,
- DISTINGUISHED REPRESENTATIVES OF THE AFRICAN UNION,
- THE UNITED NATIONS, AND DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS,
- MEMBERS OF THE DIPLOMATIC AND CONSULAR CORPS,
- ESTEEMED DELEGATES, YOUTH REPRESENTATIVES, AND CIVIL SOCIETY LEADERS,
- LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

1. Today, as we gather in Freetown for the **Third Africa High-Level Forum on South-South and Triangular Cooperation (SSTrC) for Sustainable Development**, we are at a historic inflection point because **Africa is no longer waiting to be invited to the table.**

2. **AFRICA IS BUILDING THE TABLE – creating opportunities for itself.**

3. On behalf of the Government and people of Sierra Leone, I am honoured to welcome you to our beautiful capital city as we address our compelling theme: **"The Role of Global South in Reshaping the New International Order."**

4. **Honourable Delegates, take a moment to observe this room.**

5. The presence of leaders from **Africa, Asia,** the **Middle East,** and **Latin America** highlights an undeniable truth: **the future of global governance is being shaped not only in the traditional centres of power but also in the dynamic capitals of the Global South.**

6. Your presence here today demonstrates the enduring spirit of **South-South and Triangular Cooperation** — one that transcends borders, reflects shared experiences, and fosters equitable growth.

7. As we reflect on the lessons from Kampala and renew our commitments under **BAPA+40**, we must confront uncomfortable realities.

- 8.** The increasing levels of debt, the COVID-19 pandemic, growing threats from climate change, and recent geopolitical upheavals have exposed vulnerabilities in our economies and societies.

- 9.** Food insecurity is affecting our communities, while the gap in access to technology continues to widen, and youth unemployment is on the rise.

10. Global finance and trade structures continue to be biased against our interests, while our perspectives are frequently marginalised in global decision-making.

11. These challenges are interconnected and clearly show a global order designed without our input.

12. When we take a moment to consider the glaring inequity of vaccine distribution during the pandemic, it becomes even clearer that this was not an anomaly, but rather a symptom of deeper structural imbalances.

13. At the same time, the climate crisis, primarily caused by the earliest industrialised nations, threatens to devastate our economies before they can fully develop.

- 14.** Africa emits less than 4% of global carbon emissions, yet suffers the most severe consequences.
- 15.** The current situation is not only unsustainable but also fundamentally unfair.
- 16.** It requires not just small adjustments but significant, transformative change.
- 17.** This is why **South-South and Triangular Cooperation** are essential pathways forward.

18. It establishes a framework based on solidarity, mutual respect, and shared development.

19. These principles stand in sharp contrast to historical patterns of dependency.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

20. South-South Cooperation is already achieving concrete results.

21. We are creating African solutions for African challenges through knowledge exchange, technology transfer, and collaborative financing.

22. We are increasingly becoming agents of our own destiny in areas such as food systems, climate resilience, digital transformation, and democratic governance.

23. The emergence of new multilateral arrangements and financial institutions is reshaping the global economic architecture.

24. BRICS+, the Islamic Development Bank, the African Development Bank, and the New Development Bank are creating alternatives to traditional financing channels.

25. The African Continental Free Trade Area is building the world's largest free trade zone, potentially lifting 30 million people out of extreme poverty.

DISTINGUISHED DELEGATES,

26. Here in Sierra Leone, our **Medium-Term National Development Plan 2024-2030** embodies this spirit of self-directed development through five transformative Game Changers:

1) FEED SIERRA LEONE — Is our strategy for food security and agro-industrial transformation.

2) HUMAN CAPITAL DEVELOPMENT — Is our bold education and health systems reform agenda.

3) YOUTH EMPLOYMENT SCHEME — Is our commitment to creating dignified, sustainable jobs for our youth.

4) TECHNOLOGY AND INFRASTRUCTURE

DEVELOPMENT — Is our strategy to leapfrog development through digital transformation and infrastructure development.

5) PUBLIC SERVICE REFORMS — Is our pledge

to enhance governance and public service delivery.

- 27.** These carefully thought-out policies align seamlessly with the **AU Agenda 2063** and the **UN Sustainable Development Goals**, demonstrating how national strategies can advance continental and global ambitions.
- 28.** Equally important is our commitment to good governance through mechanisms like the **African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM)**.
- 29.** We recognise that sustainable development requires transparency, accountability, and citizen participation.

30. Sierra Leone has embraced this process thoroughly and advocates for universal accession to the **APRM**.

DISTINGUISHED GUESTS, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

31. When we fully harness the power of **South-South and Triangular Cooperation for Sustainable Development**, our collective strength will be undeniable.

32. Imagine an **Africa where intra-continental trade flows freely**, creating millions of jobs and prosperity within our borders, where African innovations address African challenges and can scale globally.

- 33.** Imagine an Africa where our youth are not forced to risk their lives crossing seas and deserts but can instead develop thriving businesses at home.
- 34.** Envision a Continent where governance is transparent and responsive; citizens have faith in their institutions, and development initiatives effectively reach the most vulnerable populations.

35. Envision an Africa where our natural resources drive industrialisation instead of benefiting others; where digital technologies link the most remote villages to global markets and knowledge.

36. Imagine an international order in which African nations speak with a unified, influential voice on climate action, trade rules, and global security.

37. A world where international financial institutions reflect our economic weight and development priorities, and cooperation among nations of the Global South creates a counterbalance to traditional power structures.

38. This is not a far-off utopia. The foundational elements are already being put together through initiatives such as the **AfCFTA**, the **APRM**, and various regional integration efforts.

39. The crucial question is not if this future is possible, but whether we will act with sufficient urgency, unity, and strategic vision to achieve it.

40. There is no doubt that the world needs this transformation as much as we do.

41. A prosperous and stable Africa leads to new markets, reduces migration pressures, and strengthens global cooperation on challenges like climate change and pandemics.

42. So, what must we do to accelerate this transformation, starting today in Freetown?

43. First, we must institutionalise South-South and Triangular Cooperation in our national governance structures.

44. I call on every nation represented here to establish dedicated agencies or units for **SSTrC** with clear mandates, adequate resources, and direct reporting lines to executive leadership.

45. Second, we must strengthen the financing mechanisms for South-South initiatives.

46. This involves enhancing domestic resource mobilisation and developing innovative financing instruments specifically designed for South-South projects.

47. I propose creating an **African South-South Cooperation Fund**, with contributions from member states based on their capacity.

48. Third, we must build robust knowledge management systems to document, analyse, and scale successful South-South practices.

49. This should encompass digital platforms, research collaborations between our universities, and regular exchanges among practitioners.

50. Fourth, we must prioritise youth engagement in South-South Cooperation.

51. The **Agenda 2063 Youth Exhibition** at this forum is only the beginning.

52. We should establish a **formal Youth South-South Network** with chapters in every African country, supported by dedicated mentorship and funding.

53. Fifth, we must ensure that the **Freetown Declaration** emerging from this forum includes **concrete commitments, measurable targets, and accountability mechanisms.**

54. I propose an annual scorecard to track implementation across participating nations.

55. Finally, we must speak with one voice in global forums.

56. Our influence becomes undeniable when Africa's 54 nations align their positions on trade, climate, or financial architecture reform.

57. The upcoming **COP29 climate negotiations** and **WTO Ministerial Conference** present immediate opportunities to demonstrate this unity.

58. DISTINGUISHED DELEGATES, ESTEEMED PARTNERS, AND FELLOW ARCHITECTS OF A NEW INTERNATIONAL ORDER: The path before us is challenging but clear.

59. South-South and Triangular Cooperation for Sustainable Development offers a strategy and a philosophy that recognises our shared destiny and collective power.

60. Ladies and Gentlemen, let us use this opportunity in Freetown as a rallying call to strengthen solidarity among the nations of the Global South in line with the spirit of the **Buenos Aires Plan of Action, BAPA+40,** and the recently adopted **Pact for the Future.**

61. Let the **Freetown Declaration** that arises from this forum be remembered not just as another diplomatic document, but as a pivotal moment **when Africa and the Global South moved decisively from aspiration to action, from potential to empowerment.**

62. I express my deep gratitude to the **African Union Commission**, the **APRM**, the **Islamic Development Bank**, **UNDP**, **GIZ**, and all our partners who made this event possible.

63. We thank our various Government Ministries and Officials for their tireless efforts in organising this forum; your dedication reflects the excellence we strive to project globally.

64. As we deliberate over the coming days, remember that AFRICA IS WATCHING, THE WORLD IS LISTENING, AND HISTORY IS WAITING.

65. Let us leave Freetown inspired and resolved to build the **Africa We Want** and the **International Order** we deserve.

66. May our discussions be fruitful, our commitments be honoured, and our vision be realised.

67. Together, we will **reshape the global order not through confrontation but through cooperation, not through dominance but through partnership, not for the benefit of the few but for the prosperity of all.**

68. May God bless the Republic of Sierra Leone, the African continent, and all the people of the Global South.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION.