



STATEMENT

BY

HIS EXCELLENCY DR. JULIUS MAADA BIO

PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF SIERRA LEONE

ON THE OCCASION OF

**THE 178TH INDEPENDENCE ANNIVERSARY OF THE
REPUBLIC OF LIBERIA**

**THEME: "ONE PEOPLE, ONE DESTINY: HEALING
THE PAST, BUILDING THE FUTURE"**

MONROVIA, LIBERIA

SATURDAY 26TH JULY 2025

- **YOUR EXCELLENCY JOSEPH NYUMAH BOAKAI,**
- **YOUR EXCELLENCIES, COLLEAGUE HEADS OF STATE,**
- **AMBASSADORS AND MEMBERS OF THE DIPLOMATIC CORPS,**
- **HONOURABLE MINISTERS OF GOVERNMENT,**
- **DISTINGUISHED LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,**

1. I bring you warm greetings from the people of Sierra Leone — your neighbours, your kin, and your steadfast companions in struggle and triumph.

2. First and foremost, I would like to express my deep gratitude for the honour extended to the Republic of Sierra Leone on this significant occasion.

3. To be formally recognised by the Government and people of Liberia — not only for our contribution through ECOWAS, but for the enduring spirit of solidarity that guided us through Liberia's most difficult years — is a deeply meaningful gesture.

- 4.** It is a tribute to all the Sierra Leonean men and women, in uniform and out of uniform, who answered the call of duty in the name of peace and democratic stability.
- 5.** We receive this honour with humility, with pride, and with a renewed commitment to the ideals of regional unity, democratic stability, and the shared peace that binds us.

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

**6. I stand before you not only as a Head of
State, but as a friend and brother, as your
great nation marks 178 years of
independence.**

**7. 178 years of resilience. Of striving. Of
rebirth.**

**8. This is more than a historical milestone. It is
a testament to the strength of a people
who have endured much, yet never lost
faith in their ability to rise again.**

9. For me, this is not merely a diplomatic courtesy — it is also a personal homecoming.

10. I once stood on this sacred soil in uniform — **not in ceremony, but in service; not as a visitor, but as a peacemaker.**

11. I walked the streets of **White Plains, Gardnersville and Monrovia Freeport within Montserrado County**, as part of the **first ECOMOG contingent**, during a time of profound hardship.

12. I looked into the eyes of a people
burdened by war — **yet still searching for
hope.**

13. I remember those days with solemn clarity.

14. Even when the air was heavy and the
nights uncertain, I could sense the
endurance of this nation.

15. Even in despair, Liberia carried within her a
quiet dignity and a deep yearning to be
whole again.

16. Each time I return to Liberia, I see a people
who refuse to be broken.

17. A nation that has turned its scars into symbols of strength.

18. My journey into Monrovia by road this morning, as President of the Republic of Sierra Leone, was more than a matter of protocol.

19. It was an emotional reminder of an earlier journey — one I made as a young military officer in the **Sierra Leone Armed Forces**.

20. Then, I entered this city not in a motorcade, but in a convoy; not bearing a flag of state, but carrying the solemn duty of peace.

21. The roads were different, the times uncertain, but the mission — to help restore hope and dignity — was one I embraced with conviction.

22. To return now, in peace, as a guest of a sovereign and democratic Liberia, is a deeply personal and humbling experience.

23. It affirms how far we have come — as individuals, as nations, and as a region united by history, sacrifice, and shared aspirations.

YOUR EXCELLENCIES, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

24. For those of us who have worn military uniforms **to safeguard the sovereignty of our nation**, and for those who have sent their sons and daughters to do the same, **PEACE IS NEVER AN ABSTRACT IDEA.**

25. Peace is a duty we live by. A dream we protect. A promise we defend with everything we have.

26. Peace is not simply the absence of conflict. It is the presence of dignity.

27. It is what allows our children to learn, our traders to trade, our democracies to flourish, and our cultures to thrive.

28. Peace and stability are the breath of our nations. Without it, nothing can grow.

29. That is why I say: **the price of peace is eternal vigilance. Not fear. Not suspicion.**

30. But a sacred commitment — never to repeat the mistakes of the past, never to allow hatred to bloom where understanding should grow, and never to take for granted the fragile gift of stability.

YOUR EXCELLENCIES, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

31. Liberia and Sierra Leone are not just neighbouring Republics on a map.

32. We are twin souls. Our rivers flow into each other. Our languages echo one another.

33. Our songs speak of shared joys and common grief.

34. Whether **Gola, Kissi, Mende, Sherbro, or Vai** — our people are bound by ancestry, by marriage, by trade.

35. A song in one country is often known by heart in the other.

36. A proverb spoken in Pujehun District finds its echo in the mountains of Lofa County.

37. When your land trembled under the weight of war, we felt the tremors too.

38. And when we cried out in our own agony, you mourned with us.

39. This is not coincidence. This is kinship.

40. YOUR EXCELLENCY, PRESIDENT BOAKAI,
when I call you “my brother,” it is not a word
of courtesy — it is a truth of blood and
struggle.

41. A recognition that the peace of Liberia
strengthens the peace of Sierra Leone, and
vice versa.

42. Acknowledging that the freedom of Sierra
Leone reinforces the freedom of Liberia,
and vice versa.

43. This is why the Government of Sierra Leone sent peacekeepers during your time of need.

44. Not out of charity, but out of duty. The African duty to care for one's neighbour as oneself.

45. The duty to restore dignity where it was stolen. To protect life. To silence the guns.

46. To offer a hand where harm had been done.

47. As we say in our region (**I QUOTE**): “***When your neighbour’s house is on fire, don’t waste time fetching water — carry your own bucket.***” (**END QUOTE**)

48. We understood this. We did not hesitate.

49. Our soldiers came not to conquer, but to serve.

50. **To protect Liberians, yes** — but also to defend the belief that no African nation should walk alone through the valley of war.

YOUR EXCELLENCIES, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

51. Today, I speak with deep humility and pride in the **sons and daughters of Sierra Leone** who stood shoulder to shoulder with the brave **Armed Forces of Liberia**, with **ECOWAS**, and with **International Partners**, in the slow, painful, but necessary work of peace and stability.

52. We honour their sacrifice. Some never came home. Others returned forever changed by what they experienced. Their families were changed.

53. But every one of our brave men and women contributed to the quiet miracle we now witness — A PEACEFUL, DEMOCRATIC LIBERIA ALIVE WITH PROMISE.

54. This year's theme — ***“One People, One Destiny: Healing the Past, Building the Future”*** — speaks not just to nationhood, but to the human condition.

55. HEALING THE PAST and BUILDING THE FUTURE is not instant.

56. It is not achieved with slogans or treaties. It demands tenderness. It demands courage.

57. It asks us to view the past not with bitterness,
but with resolve.

**58. Democracy, too, must be part of that
healing.**

59. Not just democracy in form — with ballots
and Constitutions — **but in spirit: where
every voice counts, where disagreement
does not become enmity, and where
power is held as a trust, not a prize.**

**60. We must always remember: democracy
cannot thrive without peace. And peace
cannot last where democracy is hollow.**

YOUR EXCELLENCIES, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

61. In every family — and that is what we are,
a regional family — there will be
disagreements.

62. Sometimes they are loud. Sometimes they
hurt. But the family must remain.

63. We may argue, but we must not abandon
one another.

64. We may differ, but we must not destroy
what we share.

65. General elections are not wars. They are not contests of intimidation or noise.

66. They are sacred moments to renew our social contract, to hear the people's voice, and to recommit to national service.

67. When politics becomes poisoned by bitterness, tribal suspicion, or the hunger for power at any cost, it threatens the peace.

68. And if peace fails, everything that democracy hopes to build collapses.

69. I commend the successive Governments and the people of Liberia for their commitment to democracy.

70. Since the end of the civil war, you have successfully and peacefully transferred power from the incumbent political party to the opposition party, honouring the will of the people.

YOUR EXCELLENCIES, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

71. Let us remember that the strength of our neighbour is our own strength.

72. Justice in one land fortifies justice in another.

73. When one of us prospers, we all stand taller.

74. As Chairman of the ECOWAS Authority of Heads of State and Government, I implore us all to recommit to REGIONAL COOPERATION, not only in times of crisis, but in the daily business of development.

75. Our youth are crossing borders in search of opportunity.

76. Let us build systems that allow them to do so safely, legally, and with dignity.

77. Let us align our goals — in trade, in education, in security.

78. Let the **Mano River Union** not remain a bureaucratic structure but become a living promise of solidarity.

79. Let our borders bind, not divide.

80. Let the farmer, the fisherman, the student,
the trader, the mother, the soldier — **feel at
home on either side.**

81. Because when Liberia prospers, Sierra
Leone is strengthened.

82. And when Liberia struggles, Sierra Leone
cannot stand untouched.

83. I look forward to peace on both sides of the
border.

84. I look forward to healing on both sides of
the border.

85. I look forward to sustainable growth on both sides of the border.

86. I look forward to prosperity on both sides of the border.

87. And above all, I look forward to the day — not far off — when the scars of our shared wars are not erased, but transformed into wisdom.

88. Transformed into vigilance and transformed into the unshakable belief that never again must we lose our children to hatred.

89. Never again must we test the limits of our
unity.

90. To the youth of Liberia: know that your
freedom was purchased at great cost.

91. Honour it in every choice you make.

**92. Your Excellency, President Boakai, I thank
you for the honour of your invitation.**

**93. I thank you for your friendship. For your
wisdom. And for your enduring
statesmanship.**

**94. TO THE GREAT PEOPLE OF LIBERIA: THANK
YOU.**

**95. Thank you for your strength. For your
resilience. For welcoming us with warmth.**

**96. Thank you for reminding the world that
PEACE IS NOT ONLY POSSIBLE — IT IS
POWERFUL.**

97. May God bless the Republic of Liberia.

**98. May God bless the Republic of Sierra
Leone.**

**99. And may God bless the deep, enduring
friendship that binds us.**