



GOVERNMENT OF SIERRA LEONE

PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS

DELIVERED BY

HIS EXCELLENCY

DR. JULIUS MAADA BIO G.C.R.S.L.

President of The Republic and Commander-in-Chief of

The Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces

**On the Occasion of the State Opening of the
Third Session of the Sixth Parliament of the Second
Republic of Sierra Leone**

In the Chamber of Parliament Building

Tower Hill, Freetown

On Thursday, 7th August 2025, at 10:00 a.m.

- **HONOURABLE VICE PRESIDENT,**
- **THE RIGHT HONOURABLE SPEAKER OF PARLIAMENT,**
- **THE HONOURABLE CHIEF JUSTICE,**
- **MADAM FIRST LADY,**
- **FORMER VICE PRESIDENTS,**
- **FORMER HONOURABLE SPEAKER OF THE ECOWAS PARLIAMENT,**
- **MEMBERS OF THE JUDICIARY,**
- **MINISTERS OF GOVERNMENT,**
- **HONOURABLE MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT,**
- **OUR REVERED TRADITIONAL AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT LEADERS,**
- **OUR RELIGIOUS LEADERS,**
- **THE MAYOR OF THE MUNICIPALITY OF FREETOWN,**
- **MEMBERS OF THE DIPLOMATIC AND CONSULAR CORPS,**
- **MEMBERS OF THE SECURITY, PUBLIC SAFETY, AND INTELLIGENCE SERVICES,**
- **CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS,**
- **MEMBERS OF THE FOURTH ESTATE,**
- **DISTINGUISHED LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,**
- **FELLOW SIERRA LEONEANS,**
- **GOOD MORNING.**

I. INTRODUCTION

1. I am before you today with deep humility and gratitude to open the **Third Session of the Sixth Parliament of the Second Republic of Sierra Leone**.
2. I do so fully aware of the sacred trust our people have placed in us — **to lead with integrity, wisdom, and courage**.
3. This **House is the beating heart of our democracy**. It is here that we make decisions which shape every home, every farm, every school, and every market across our nation.
4. It is here that we determine whether Sierra Leone's future will be defined by unity and progress — or by division and delay.

5. Over the past year, you have **chosen service above self**. You have **debated with vigour**, **legislated with purpose**, and **placed country before party**.
6. Whether stabilising our economy, reforming the petroleum sector, strengthening national security, or expanding opportunities for our young people and women, you have shown the true character of a Parliament that works for its people.
7. **I commend the leadership of this House, every Honourable Member, the heads of all Political Parties, and our Paramount Chiefs.** You have **fulfilled your mandate with honour** and earned **the gratitude of a proud and hopeful nation**.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members,

8. I will lay before this Honourable House a comprehensive report detailing our governance record and achievements from the past year.
9. I trust Parliament will give it the careful review it deserves, consistent with your oversight mandate and our shared responsibility for national transformation.
10. My Address, however, is not about reciting every figure. **It is a story — a story of progress and possibility.** It is **a snapshot of where we are, what we have achieved together, the challenges that remain, and the vision that guides us forward.**

11. As we open this new session, let us **renew our shared commitment** — to **serve above self**, to **put country before party**, and to **build a future worthy of the hopes of every Sierra Leonean**.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members,

12. We meet at **a moment of both optimism and responsibility**. Across every district, Sierra Leoneans look to us to deliver on the promise of development, opportunity, and stability. It is a profound responsibility and a sacred trust.

13. Through our **Medium-Term National Development Plan (2024–2030)**, we are translating bold aspirations into measurable progress — bringing services closer to our people, restoring confidence in public institutions, and laying the foundations of a

more inclusive, resilient, and prosperous Sierra Leone.

14. This mission is bigger than politics, bigger than any one of us. It is the task of a generation.

II. THE BIG FIVE GAME CHANGERS – OVERVIEW

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members,

15. Our vision is anchored in the **Big Five Game Changers** — the core priorities at the heart of our national transformation agenda.
16. I will highlight the key progress we have made in transforming agriculture, expanding human capital, empowering our youth, driving digital and infrastructure growth, and building a transparent and accountable public service.

- 17.** These are practical steps that are already changing lives — how we grow our food, educate our children, empower our youth, power our economy, and make governance more accountable.

III. GAME CHANGER 1 – FEED SALONE

A. AGRICULTURE AND FOOD SECURITY

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members,

- 18.** When we launched the **Big Five Game Changers** in 2023, we set out a simple truth: Sierra Leone must stand on its own feet. We cannot truly prosper if we depend on ships sailing to our shores for our daily bread.

- 19.** That is why **Feed Salone** sits at the heart of our agenda. **Food security** is about dignity, independence, and a future where every family can put food on the table.
- 20.** Last year, **rice production grew by 8 percent**, cutting imports by **13 percent** and saving us **15 million dollars** in foreign exchange. The price of rice has fallen by over **20 percent**, giving families some relief.
- 21.** We have opened three new rice mills, reducing waste and boosting local processing.

- 22.** For the first time, the **World Food Programme buys 30 percent of its rice from our farmers**, a dramatic shift from years of near-total import dependence.
- 23.** The story is similar for other foods. **Egg imports have decreased by 21 per cent, local onions are now cheaper than imported ones**, and we are **exporting vegetable oil for the first time**.
- 24.** Behind these results is real investment — **over 800 million dollars pledged**, with **205 million dollars already committed** to livestock, cassava, and rural roads. We launched a **10 million US dollar credit facility** for modern equipment and **Sierra Leone's first crop insurance scheme**.

- 25.** We have mapped our soils digitally for the first time and registered **300,000 farmers biometrically**, building a modern, accountable farming system. **420 kilometres of feeder roads and new bridges** are under construction to connect farmers to markets.
- 26.** Responding to climate change, we are embedding resilience into our food systems under the **Paris Agreement**.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members,

- 27. Feed Salone is a promise —** that Sierra Leone can feed itself, create jobs, and give farmers and young people a future worth staying for.

B. THE FISHERIES SECTOR

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members,

- 28.** Fishing sustains over a million Sierra Leoneans, especially women and young people in coastal communities.
- 29.** The sector **contributes 12 percent of our GDP** and must be managed wisely. In 2024, the sector earned **over 5 million US dollars**, already beating **revenue targets**. With our new **Quota Management System**, revenues will **more than double** while protecting our fish stocks.
- 30.** We have **digitised fisheries data**, launched an **Aquaculture and Inland Fisheries Policy**, and introduced a **closed fishing season** to help stocks recover. **Industrial fish production** is set to **rise to 150,000 metric tonnes**.

31. A **landmark partnership with Egypt** is opening doors for joint ventures in **commercial fishing** and **shrimp farming**.

32. The reforms in the fisheries sector will establish a modern Blue Economy that creates jobs now while safeguarding our oceans for the future.

IV. GAME CHANGER 2 – HUMAN CAPITAL DEVELOPMENT

C. BASIC AND SENIOR SECONDARY EDUCATION

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members,

33. No nation can rise above the quality of its people. Education is the ladder families use to climb out of poverty and the foundation on which nations build prosperity.

34. When I visit schools, I see children full of hope. Some walk for miles. Some study by candlelight. Yet they keep dreaming.

35. We promised that education would never again be a privilege for the few but a right for every child. Today, we are delivering on that promise.

- 36.** Since **2018**, enrolment, retention, and completion rates have all risen. We have built **over 1,500 classrooms** and upgraded school water and sanitation facilities. We have trained **more than 20,000 teachers**, including **14,500** in early-grade literacy and numeracy. We continue to pay **fees for NPSE, BECE, and WASSCE** for every child.
- 37. Girls are thriving as never before.** More girls are **completing school and passing exams**. Free sanitary pads, school feeding, and targeted support for child mothers are helping them return to school and succeed.
- 38.** Independent assessments show our students are now matching their peers in Africa's best-performing education systems.

39. Education is our moral duty. **An educated child is a free child, a productive citizen and a future leader.**

D. TECHNICAL AND HIGHER EDUCATION

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members,

40. Education must prepare our young people for the jobs of tomorrow.

41. In our first term, we laid the foundation. In this term, we are consolidating that work — building a competitive, future-ready workforce.

42. We are **reforming technical and higher education to match skills to jobs.** The **WokDonCam Project**, backed by the **African Development Bank**, is revitalising technical institutes to train youth in agro-processing,

waste management, digital skills, and entrepreneurship.

- 43. The Centre of Excellence for Automotive Training, a 3.5 million dollar partnership with Japan and UNIDO,** offers 960 hours of certified training in 39 modules — creating opportunities, especially for young women.
- 44. Through the Recognition of Prior Learning Programme,** informal workers in construction and HVAC are **getting certified for skills they already have.**
- 45. Digital connectivity** is transforming learning. With **ELCOME and Starlink,** we connected **nine universities across 23 campuses** to **affordable internet,** reaching **over 10,000 students** in just 90 days.

- 46.** This year, with **UNDP's Timbuktoo Initiative**, we will launch **UniPods** — hubs for digital entrepreneurship and innovation.
- 47.** We passed **two landmark laws** — the **revised Tertiary Education Commission Act** and the **National Council for Technical and Vocational Education Act** — to strengthen governance and quality. A **National Research and Innovation Policy** is being developed to position universities as drivers of industrialisation and climate science.
- 48.** We are upgrading **Milton Margai and Bunumbu campuses**, fast-tracking **Kono University of Science and Technology**, and producing **14,000 school furniture units locally**, creating employment.

49. The digitised Sierra Leone Student Loan Scheme has supported over 1,000 postgraduates and will soon extend to undergraduates, ensuring that no dream ends for lack of money.

50. Every country's greatest wealth is its people. By investing in their skills, we invest in Sierra Leone's future.

E. HEALTHCARE: BUILDING A RESILIENT AND INCLUSIVE SYSTEM

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members,

51. A nation's wealth means little if its people are unhealthy. No mother should die while giving life. No child should die due to a lack of care.

52. We have strengthened our healthcare system — building hospitals, training doctors, and expanding services to every district.

53. Domestic health spending is up by 2%. The Sierra Leone Social Health Insurance Scheme is reducing out-of-pocket costs.

54. The **National Public Health Agency** and our **real-time disease surveillance system** mean

outbreaks are detected faster and responses are better.

55. We recruited 15 percent more health workers, bringing the total to over 14,000, and doubled medical school enrolment. Over 40 doctors are training locally in specialist fields through the Postgraduate College of Health Specialties.

56. Key investments include:

- **The 166-bed Julius Maada Bio Paediatric Centre of Excellence** in Lumley,
- **Modernised regional and district hospitals,**
- **Ambulances in all 16 districts,** and
- **Oxygen plants** in regional hospitals for critical care.

- 57.** Maternal and newborn deaths have **fallen by 70 percent**, and immunisation coverage has improved nationwide.
- 58. Off-grid solar now powers rural health centres**, enabling safe night deliveries and vaccine storage.
- 59.** Healthcare is about **dignity, survival, and hope**.
- 60.** In January, when **Sierra Leone recorded its first Mpox case**, our response was swift — emergency systems were activated, testing was decentralised, and health workers trained. Today, there is no active outbreak, but surveillance remains strong.

F. GENDER EQUALITY & CHILDREN'S AFFAIRS

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members,

61. Gender equality remains central to our national agenda. The **Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (GEWE) Act** is being implemented through gender units in ministries, gender budgeting, and training.

62. We continue to fight **sexual and gender-based violence** with stronger legal systems, psychosocial support, and nationwide awareness campaigns.

63. We passed the **Prohibition of Child Marriage Act** and laid the **Child Rights Bill**, which will consolidate **legal protections for every child.**

G. SOCIAL WELFARE AND PROTECTION

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members,

64. My Government is committed to fostering a just and inclusive society by expanding social protection, promoting disability inclusion, enhancing mental health services, and providing support for the elderly and retirees.

65. Two landmark laws — the Social Work Regulatory Act and the Social Protection Act — are building stronger systems for the elderly, retirees, and persons with disabilities.

66. Through the National Social Safety Net, 84,000 elderly-headed households have been registered digitally, with cash transfers to over 11,000 elderly citizens aged 75+.

- 67. NASSIT** is expanding social security to provide protection to even informal workers.
- 68.** To combat drug abuse, rehabilitation centres in Hastings and Bo have **helped over 400 former drug users rebuild their lives**. We are also **addressing substance abuse among persons with disabilities** through programmes combining rehabilitation with vocational training — already **200 people are training in tailoring in Makeni and Freetown**.
- 69.** With a **US\$1 million India-UN grant**, we are establishing **skills centres and a disability village** to empower vulnerable citizens.
- 70.** A nation's strength is measured not by how it treats the powerful, **but by how it protects the vulnerable**.

H. WATER AND SANITATION

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members,

71. Clean water and adequate sanitation are basic rights.

72. We created the **Ministry of Water Resources and Sanitation**, launched the Western Area Peninsula Water Fund, and introduced new regulations on groundwater use, pollution control, and dam safety.

73. Across the country, systems are being rehabilitated in **Blama-Bandawor, Kailahun, and Kabala** to expand water supply to communities. We are building **100 solar-powered boreholes** with tanks and standposts for underserved communities.

- 74.** In **Freetown**, a multi-donor project is expanding supply — including a **60,000 m³ reservoir at Regent/Babadorie**, upgrades to **Kongo Dam**, and **new pipelines**.
- 75.** The **Guma Valley Allentown expansion** will **add new sources, 45 km of pipes, six reservoirs**, and **upgraded pumping stations**.
- 76.** Clean water does more than quench thirst — **it keeps children in school, reduces disease, and frees women and girls to build their futures**.

V. GAME CHANGER 3 – YOUTH EMPLOYMENT SCHEME

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members,

77. Everything we have achieved in education, healthcare, and skills development leads to one goal — **creating real opportunities for our young people.**

78. If our youth do not find hope at home, they will look for it elsewhere, or worse, fall prey to drugs and violence.

79. Two years ago, I launched the **Youth Employment Scheme** — a bold pledge to **create half a million jobs in five years.** This was a promise to fight for the right of every young Sierra Leonean to opportunity, dignity, and hope.

- 80.** Today, **we are delivering on that promise.** Jobs are being created across agriculture, mining, construction, energy, sports, the creative economy, and the digital sector.
- 81. Thousands of young people** are receiving technical training in various fields, including mechanics, construction, hospitality, welding, and entrepreneurship. Over **250 young women** have joined new programmes in digital literacy and business.
- 82.** Across the country, **youth-led farming and fisheries projects are thriving.**
- 83.** Under the **World Bank-funded PSSNYE project,** **8,000 young people will each receive seed funding** to start or grow their businesses.

84. But let me speak directly to our young people.

You are the hands that will build Sierra Leone's future. Your dreams matter more than our diamonds or our gold.

85. Do not let drugs like Kush steal your future. As we continue our fight to combat drugs and substance abuse, do not give in to hopelessness or anger.

86. We are giving you the tools to live dignified lives — free education, vocational training, digital skills, access to finance, and opportunities in agriculture, technology, and enterprise.

87. But opportunity alone is not enough. Discipline, courage, and self-belief must follow. When you choose to learn a skill, to start a business, to grow your own food, you are already shaping Sierra Leone's destiny. **Your hands must build; your minds must create; your voices must lead.**

88. This Government will stand with you, invest in you, and fight for you. But you, too, must rise and fight for yourselves. Because the story of Sierra Leone's next chapter will not be written by politicians or lawmakers alone.

89. It will be written by welders, coders, farmers, athletes, teachers, innovators, and scientists. The future is yours to claim — and we will walk that road with you, every step of the way.

VI. GAME CHANGER 4 – TECHNOLOGY AND INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members,

90. If we want Sierra Leone to compete in the modern world, we must invest in the tools of tomorrow — **technology and infrastructure.**

91. These are not luxuries; they are the foundations of jobs, opportunity, and national pride.

I. TECHNOLOGY

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members,

92. Technology is no longer optional. It is the engine of modern life, powering everything from farming and running businesses to delivering public services.

- 93.** At the **2025 Salone Innovates Digital Government Summit**, we celebrated the creativity of our people — young innovators, especially women, designing solutions in AI, cybersecurity, coding, and entrepreneurship.
- 94.** A young farmer even won the **Presidential Innovation Prize** for a digital farming hub — proof that our youth can lead in innovation when given the chance.
- 95.** **Government services** are now easier to access. Payroll and attendance are digitised, cutting ghost workers. A new **Government Yellow Page** connects citizens directly to contacts and services across ministries.

96. These reforms are backed by over **\$100 million in investments from China EXIM Bank and the World Bank**, funding fibre-optic expansion in **14 districts**, new digital skills programmes, and modern service platforms.

J. ENERGY: POWERING PROSPERITY AND NATIONAL RESILIENCE

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members,

97. **Energy is the backbone of a modern economy.** Without power, there can be no industry, no jobs, no future-ready nation. That is why I have taken charge of the energy sector. I believe leadership must be hands-on, as policy without action is ineffective.

98. Last year, we signed a **landmark \$480 million MCC Compact** to expand our transmission infrastructure, support electricity distribution, governance, and sector reform. In **January 2025**, the **US Government** launched a global review of **MCC compacts**.
99. As your **“Tok N Do” President**, I am proud to report that as of July 24, **Sierra Leone’s Compact** was among the few approved to continue — **a strong endorsement of our leadership, reforms, and US partnership**.
100. We joined the **Mission 300 Initiative in January 2025**, a global effort to halve energy poverty through innovative financing of renewable energy. We are finalising the **Mission 300 Energy Compact**, targeting **\$2.4 billion** to expand electricity access to **78%** of the

population and raise renewable energy to **52%** by 2030.

101. To meet **rising demand**, we are **expanding our national generation capacity** through strategic projects that are already underway:

- **108.5 MW NANT gas-to-energy plant** at Kissy Dockyard.
- A **Floating LNG hub** for the Mano River Union.
- The **40 MW RESPITE Solar Project** and the **40 MW SCATEC Solar Plant** at Kamakwie.

102. We are **upgrading existing generation assets at Kingtom and Blackhall Road, doubling capacity at the Dodo-Goma Hydro Plant** by converting it into a **hybrid hydro-solar facility**, and **expanding Bumbuna by an additional 50 MW with support from OPEC.**

103.Through **CLSG and ESLEAP**, power has reached schools, health centres, and rural communities.

104.Our goal is clear: **to generate over 1,000 MW of power by 2030.**

K. INFRASTRUCTURE – ROADS, BRIDGES, AND TRANSPORT

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members,

105.**Good roads** are more than asphalt and bridges — **they connect farmers to markets, students to schools, and patients to hospitals.** They give every Sierra Leonean a fair chance to thrive. That is why we are investing heavily across the country.

106.Through **public-private partnerships**, we are financing the **Koblo-Gulama (Mabang) Bridge** and the **86 km Moyamba-Gbangbatoke Junction Road**. Proposals for the **85 km Mano Junction-Tongo-Bumpeh (Koidu) Road** are also under review.

107.In 2024, the **Road Maintenance Fund** supported the upkeep of **1,403 km of roads, culverts, bridges, and ferries** and created a modern road condition database with the **ILO**. This year, **NLe 39.7 million** has been allocated to **local councils** for road maintenance and rehabilitation.

108.Beyond roads, transport is also **about connecting people and building inclusion**. We launched **50 Waka Fine buses**, serving **25,000 passengers daily** — nearly half of them women and people with disabilities.

109.At **Lumley**, we opened a **modern Public Transit Terminal** and are building a **marketplace with daycare for 2,500 traders** — giving working mothers a safer, more supportive space.

110.And because the **future must be green**, we are **developing a national policy for electric buses** in partnership with **South Korea**.

111.To **curb fraud and improve traffic security**, we introduced **RFID vehicle licenses, biometric driver's licenses**, and **digital number plates**.

112.New service centres and mobile registration units are bringing services closer to remote communities.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members,

113.These achievements ensure fairness, dignity, and shared prosperity. Development must reach every Sierra Leonean, not just those in Freetown.

VII. GAME CHANGER 5 – REVAMPING THE PUBLIC SERVICE

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members,

114. Good governance begins with a public service that truly serves the people — one that is efficient, fair, and accountable. A Government can only deliver when its institutions are strong, trusted, and focused on results.

115. Over the past year, we have taken bold steps to transform our public service into a modern, professional institution that delivers for every Sierra Leonean.

116. For the first time since 2011, we **updated the Civil Services Code**, introduced **clear performance appraisals**, and **digitised key HR processes** — from recruitment to training. These changes are building a culture of professionalism and accountability.

117. Soon, this House will receive a **new Public Service Policy and Bill** to strengthen the legal framework. For the first time, our **draft revised Constitution will dedicate an entire chapter to the public service** — embedding integrity and merit at the heart of governance.

L. ACCOUNTABILITY IN THE PUBLIC SERVICE

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members,

118. **Accountability is not optional.** Citizens deserve to know how their taxes are used. The **Anti-Corruption Commission** continues to act independently.

119. In **2024 alone**, it **recovered nearly NLe 35 million** and achieved **90% compliance** through its **online asset declaration system**. Sierra Leone is now **ranked among the Top 10**

most improved countries on the Mo Ibrahim Governance Index and 7th in Africa for anti-corruption.

120.We have launched a **5th Generation Anti-Corruption Strategy** — a homegrown, tech-driven plan to fight corruption in both the public and private sectors.

M. DIGITALISING PAYMENT SYSTEMS AND AUDIT SERVICES

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members,

121.We are also modernising how the Government manages money.

122.The **Integrated Financial Management Information System (IFMIS)** is now live in **20 MDAs**, making payments faster, more transparent, and harder to abuse.

123.**Gratuity payments to retirees are now automated**, ending years of frustrating delays.

124.**Audit Service Sierra Leone** has expanded its coverage to **88% of public spending** and now conducts **performance audits** to ensure that resources deliver real value for citizens.

125.These reforms boost **trust in our institutions**. A nation can only succeed when its people believe that public resources are used for the public good.

126.This is the Government we are building — **a Government that works, delivers, and remains accountable to the people it serves**. We are laying the foundation for a public service that is **honourable, professional, and citizen-focused**. Because good governance is not about grand speeches; **it is about results that people can feel in their daily lives**.

VIII. CRITICAL SECTORS AND CROSS-CUTTING AREAS

N. THE ECONOMY

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members,

127.Let me now highlight other critical sectors and cross-cutting areas, beginning with **the economy — the engine of our national transformation.**

128.Our **economy has weathered difficult global storms** — rising energy prices, supply chain disruptions, and the lingering effects of the pandemic. Yet, **Sierra Leone has remained resilient.**

129.In **2024, GDP** grew by **4%**, driven by mining, agriculture, construction, light manufacturing, and tourism.

130. Inflation fell sharply from 54.5% to 9.38% by April 2025, and the Leone depreciated by only 5.7% against the US dollar. These gains show that our fiscal and monetary reforms are working.

131. Domestic revenue reached **NLe 14.6 billion**, the fiscal deficit narrowed to **4.8% of GDP**, and **public debt declined to 39.5% of GDP** through disciplined repayment and exchange rate stability.

132. But let us be frank: we cannot build our future on aid. Sierra Leone must fund its own development. That is why we are expanding our revenue base, improving tax collection, and plugging illicit financial flows that rob us of billions of Leones each year.

133.Every **Leone** lost to tax evasion or illegal transfers is a classroom not built, a road not paved, a hospital not equipped. So, I call on every citizen and business to **pay their fair share in taxes. National pride** involves not just waving the flag; it also means contributing to the nation we aspire to create.

134.The **IMF's 243 million dollar Extended Credit Facility**, approved in November 2024, is not a handout. It is **a vote of confidence in our reforms and leadership.**

135.We are **diversifying our economy — investing in agriculture, tourism, and value-added mining** — while building a stronger private sector to create jobs and expand exports.

136.Progress is real, but the road ahead requires discipline, sacrifice, and shared responsibility.

O. TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members,

137.Sierra Leone is open for business. We have signed **new trade and investment agreements** with partners from **Türkiye** to **South Korea**, **Saudi Arabia** to the **UAE**.

138.We became the **first African country to complete the AfCFTA Readiness Assessment**, giving us a roadmap for regional trade and investor confidence.

139.To protect citizens from volatile global markets, we introduced **a transparent pricing formula** for essentials like **rice, flour, sugar, cement, and petroleum** — helping to stabilise living costs.

140.Our **manufacturing sector now contributes 22% to GDP**, with growth in food processing, cement, aluminium, copper, recycling, and plastics. This progress shows that smart policies and private enterprise can drive a more diverse, resilient economy.

P. DOWNSTREAM PETROLEUM SECTOR

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members,

141.We are **building a secure, competitive energy market** that gives citizens and businesses access to affordable, reliable fuel.

142.The new **National Petroleum Regulatory Authority (NPRA)**, strengthened by the **2025 NPRA Act**, now ensures a reliable fuel supply, better infrastructure, and fair competition.

143. Petroleum imports grew by **56% in 2024**, while storage capacity expanded by **86% to 250,000 metric tons**. With **World Bank** support, we modernised the **pricing formula**, making it transparent and responsive to global markets.

Q. UPSTREAM AND MIDSTREAM PETROLEUM SECTOR

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members,

144. Sierra Leone is boldly positioning itself as West **Africa's next frontier for oil and gas exploration**. Our offshore basin, though largely underexplored, holds immense geological promise. With the right investment, our **upstream petroleum sector** could be transformative for our economy and people.

145.A landmark offshore study identified over 80 deepwater exploration leads, with early estimates of **30 billion barrels of recoverable oil and gas.**

146.We completed a **\$30 million 3D seismic survey**, the first in over a decade, adhering to global safety and environmental standards. The **data will guide drilling decisions planned for 2026**, attract investment, and develop local expertise by offering training and capacity building for Sierra Leoneans in various fields.

147.Sierra Leone is one of 13 signatories to the **\$25 billion Africa Atlantic Gas Pipeline Project** — a transformative initiative to connect West African gas to European markets.

148.The project will spur regional industrial growth, create jobs, increase transit revenues, and develop a domestic gas market for power and exports, delivering affordable energy for households and industries.

149.With responsible management, our **upstream petroleum sector can usher in a new era of national prosperity.** My Government is committed to leading this effort with clear vision and accountability for the benefit of all Sierra Leoneans.

R. MINING

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members,

150. Mining remains a cornerstone of our economy. In 2024, mineral exports generated **\$1.12 billion**, with growth in iron ore, rutile, and mineral sands.

151. Reforms under the **2022 Mines and Minerals Development Act** have strengthened transparency and community benefits.

152. This year, we disbursed **\$6.7 million** in **Community Development Funds** for schools, clinics, and water systems in **Port Loko and Tonkolili**.

153.Non-tax mining revenues rose by **34% to \$28 million** due to better oversight and increased production. But our vision goes beyond exporting raw minerals. We are **adding value locally, diversifying exports, and ensuring sustainable practices.**

154.Our natural resources must work for the people — **today and for generations to come.**

S. THE ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members,

155.Climate change is not a distant threat — it is already here. Heavier rains, floods, and landslides are destroying lives and livelihoods. **That is why climate resilience is now a national priority.**

156.We are **embedding climate action** in all development planning, implementing our updated **Paris Agreement commitments**, reforesting degraded areas, protecting biodiversity, and tackling illegal construction on waterways.

157.Our approach is focused on **safeguarding homes, farms, and communities while securing the future of Sierra Leone.**

158.In July, **the Gola Rainforest National Park and the Tiwai Island Wildlife Sanctuary** — collectively called the **Gola-Tiwai Complex** — were officially designated as **Sierra Leone's first UNESCO World Heritage Sites**. This momentous achievement reflects **our nation's rich biodiversity** and underscores the global ecological importance of these **pristine natural ecosystems**.

T. NATIONAL COHESION AND DEMOCRACY

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members,

159. The true strength of a nation is not measured only in GDP figures or kilometres of new roads. It is **measured in the bonds that hold its people together** — in the trust that, no matter our differences, we share one destiny.

160. Over the past year, **national dialogue** has helped us confront hard truths, seek reconciliation, and reaffirm **a simple but powerful truth: Sierra Leone must always come first.**

161. Like our great rivers, which gather strength from many tributaries, **our nation draws power from its diversity — from every region, every faith, and every community.**

162.Sierra Leone today **remains one of Africa's most peaceful nations**. According to the **2025 Global Peace Index**, we are the **2nd most peaceful in West Africa, 5th in Africa, and 57th globally**. This is not by chance. It is **the result of years of tolerance, vigilance, and deliberate effort**.

163.Through the **Independent Commission for Peace and National Cohesion**, we have institutionalised peace. The **Commission** mediates disputes, promotes reconciliation, and strengthens early warning systems to prevent conflict.

164.But **peace is like a bridge** — it must be maintained constantly, or it will weaken and collapse.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members,

165.Let me **address the dangers of the persistent election denialism and reckless conspiracy theories.** We cannot love Sierra Leone while undermining the very institutions that allow our democracy to thrive.

166.**Denying legitimate elections is not free speech — it is a direct assault on our stability and future.** If we are to truly honour the sacrifices of those who built and preserved our peace, we must defend it with unity, courage, and unwavering resolve.

167.In addressing the **challenges within our electoral systems and institutions,** my Government has chosen the **more challenging yet commendable path: to reform what we have inherited as flawed.**

168.For decades, **inefficiencies in Sierra Leone's electoral systems** have **undermined public trust**. We are **the first administration bold enough to confront these systemic weaknesses head-on**.

169.The **Tripartite Committee on Electoral Systems and Management Bodies Review** is conducting a historic review of **more than 80 reform proposals**. This is **a thorough, citizen-informed process designed to enhance transparency, inclusion, and credibility**.

170.I commend the **multi-partisan collaboration** that has made this possible. Through **open consultations nationwide**, we are shaping reforms that will restore public trust, strengthen electoral justice, and leave behind a democracy that works for all Sierra Leoneans.

171. This Government will fully implement these reforms, because a democracy is only as strong as the systems that protect it.

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members,

172. As leaders entrusted with our nation's future, we must continually champion reforms that foster unity and inclusion. It is time to renew national dialogue on adopting proportional representation — not just for parliamentary elections, but across the executive and public sector.

173. This very House demonstrates its value, having increased women's participation across party lines. We must build a governance architecture that truly reflects the diversity and pluralism of Sierra Leone.

U. CIVIC ENGAGEMENT AND PUBLIC INFORMATION

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members,

174. Democracy thrives when citizens are informed and engaged. That is why we continue to work closely with **civil society and our independent press.** These institutions amplify citizens' voices, strengthen transparency, and hold leaders to account.

175. Through the Ministry of Information and Civic Education, we launched the **National Civic Education and Engagement Initiative** — a platform for **open, timely, and inclusive communication** between the Government and the people.

176.This includes weekly press briefings in Krio, nationwide civic events, an annual civic festival, and the Presidential Town Hall Meeting.

177.Our efforts are paying off. **Sierra Leone has risen nine places on the Global Press Freedom Index and now scores 91% on the MCC Freedom of Information indicator.**

178.This progress is proof that open governance and a free press are not threats to power — **they are the lifeblood of democracy.**

V. NATIONAL SECURITY AND THE RULE OF LAW

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members,

179.Peace is precious, and it is guarded every day by the men and women of our **security and intelligence services**. I extend my heartfelt gratitude to them for their **discipline, sacrifice, and patriotism**.

180.They ensure that **no ambition rises above the Constitution** and that **Sierra Leone remains stable and secure**.

181.Our **community policing model is reducing crime** — including homicide, robbery, trafficking, and drug-related offences. Strategic investments in infrastructure, communications, surveillance, and welfare have made our police more effective.

182. New legislation to **strengthen professionalism, accountability, and community engagement in policing** will soon come before this House.

183. The **Office of National Security** has improved early warning systems, crime response, private security regulation, and regional cooperation — **reinforcing internal stability**.

184. The **Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces (RSLAF)**, under its new **Tri-Service structure**, continues to defend our sovereignty while adapting to modern threats. Its **first National Defence Policy** now aligns its mission with national development.

W. FOREIGN RELATIONS AND INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members,

185.Today, **Sierra Leone** stands taller on the global stage than at any time in our history.

186.We are serving **simultaneously** as a **Non-Permanent Member of the United Nations Security Council** and as a **Member of the African Union Peace and Security Council**.

187.This rare dual role **allows us to shape conversations on peace, security, and global justice** — and to amplify Africa's voice where decisions are made.

188.During our **Presidency of the UN Security Council** last year, Sierra Leone convened **20 formal meetings, adopted four key resolutions, and led historic debates on Africa's representation** and a new global agenda for peace.

189.As **Coordinator of the African Union Committee of Ten on UN Security Council Reform**, we achieved a breakthrough long thought impossible. For the first time, the **United States publicly supported two permanent seats for Africa.** Hosting the **C-10 Retreat in Freetown** further reinforced our leadership on this vital reform.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members,

190.I am aware of the criticisms that sometimes follow my overseas travels. Detractors will say, ***“Di Pa don travel back.”***

191.Let me assure this **Honourable House** that **every mission I undertake serves the national interests of Sierra Leone.**

192.Sierra Leone must be present at the **global table** — not as a **mere spectator**, but as an **active contributor** — ensuring that **our voice** plays a role in shaping the decisions that will define our future.

193.The truth is that **investment, partnerships, and opportunities do not come to those who stay silent or invisible.**

194.As a small nation, **we must work twice as hard to secure our rightful place in the world**, and that is exactly what we are doing. I do not particularly enjoy flying — but I go because **Sierra Leone must be seen, heard, and respected.**

195.These **engagements have yielded tangible results**, unlocking financing for transformative projects in areas such as roads, energy, agriculture, digital infrastructure, and climate resilience.

196.Additionally, they have often **led to new trade agreements and strengthened international partnerships.**

197. To expand our reach and support Sierra Leoneans abroad, **we have opened new diplomatic missions in Algeria, France, and Ireland.**

198. On the current occupation of **Yenga**, **our position is peaceful but resolute.** We are **firmly committed to a diplomatic solution** — but we will **always defend our sovereignty through lawful means.**

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members,

199. And in **June 2025**, I was deeply honoured to assume the role of **Chairman of the ECOWAS Authority of Heads of State and Government.** This is a **national responsibility** and a source of pride.

200.It gives **Sierra Leone** a leading voice in advancing **regional peace, democratic transitions, economic integration, trade, and infrastructure development.**

IX. CONCLUSION

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members,

201.As we open this **new session of Parliament**, let us remember that **the strength and destiny of our nation lie not in the power of a few, but in the unity of all.**

202.For over six decades, Sierra Leone has known hardship and triumph. Yet through every trial, by the grace of God and by our collective will, we have stood — resilient, unbroken, bound by a shared purpose.

203.Today, **I call on every one of us** — across this House, across our political divides, across every district and community — to rise above division. Let us **choose cooperation over conflict, reconciliation over rancour, service over self.**

204.Our **Medium-Term National Development Plan** is not just a document; it is **a roadmap for a Sierra Leone that is just, inclusive, and prosperous.**

205.The **Big Five Game Changers** are laying that foundation — from education to agriculture, from youth employment to technology, from public service reform to stronger governance.

206.The **results are real:** inflation is falling, the Leone is stabilising, prices are easing, and investments are creating jobs.

207.Our **classrooms are full, our health systems are stronger, maternal and infant deaths are declining, and women and children are more protected than ever before. Press freedom thrives. The death penalty is gone. Justice is more accessible.**

208.Sierra Leone now stands tall — at the **United Nations**, the **African Union**, and **ECOWAS** — as a voice for democracy, peace, and principled leadership.

209.To our **Development Partners and friendly nations**, I express deep gratitude. Your trust and support have helped us build roads, light homes, grow food, and expand opportunity.

210.But the **greatest thank you goes to the people of Sierra Leone**. Our farmers and traders, teachers and nurses, soldiers and police officers, young people with dreams and elders with wisdom — whose daily sacrifices keep our nation moving forward.

211.Our development journey continues. Peace remains delicate. Democracy requires constant vigilance. Prosperity demands courage and sacrifice.

212.So let us celebrate how far we have come — but refuse to be complacent. Let us pledge to build a country where justice is not selective, where opportunity is not limited to the privileged, where every Sierra Leonean, regardless of background, can live with dignity, pride, and hope.

213.May the **Almighty God** bless our beloved Republic. May **God** guide our work in this Parliament and across our land. And may we always serve Sierra Leone with honour, humility, and unshakable integrity.

I THANK YOU.