



GOVERNMENT OF SIERRA LEONE

PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS

DELIVERED BY

HIS EXCELLENCY

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*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 MUNICIPALITIES 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,

I. INTRODUCTION

1. With profound gratitude and a deep sense of duty, I address this **Third Session of the Sixth Parliament of the Second Republic of Sierra Leone**. I do so in humility, fully aware of the solemn trust our people have placed in us. As President, and as a fellow citizen and father of this nation, I feel the weight of that trust and the responsibility it demands.

2. This chamber is the beating heart of our democracy. Here, through debate and decision, we shape the laws and policies that reach every Sierra Leonean life. Here, we choose whether the future we give our children will be defined by hope and opportunity, or by delay and division. You have shown, especially in critical moments, that you understand that responsibility, and I commend you for your service.

3. Over the past year, you have shown courage in adversity and resilience in the work of nation-building. You have chosen unity when division beckoned, and you have put the national interest above partisan gain. Whether advancing economic stabilisation, reforming our petroleum sector, enhancing national security, or strengthening frameworks for youth development and women's empowerment in vocational training, higher education, labour, and social protection, you have focused on what matters most to our people.

4. I want every Sierra Leonean to know **this Parliament matters. Your work matters. Your decisions touch every household, every farmer, trader, teacher, and student striving for a better life.** Because of this, our people rightly expect us to act with integrity, purpose, and compassion at all times.

5. I extend my heartfelt commendation to the leadership of this House, to all Political Parties represented here, to every Honourable Member, and to our Paramount Chiefs. You have carried out your mandate with distinction. You have shown that when we rise above partisanship and put Sierra Leone first,

we can deliver real, lasting progress. For this, you have earned not only my admiration but the gratitude of a proud and hopeful nation.

6. As we open this new session, let us renew our shared commitment - to service above self, to country above party, and to building a future worthy of our people's trust.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members,

7. This new session opens at a moment of renewed hope and shared purpose. Across every district, our people look to this Government and this Parliament to deliver development, expand opportunity, and protect stability. It is a sacred duty, and I do not take it lightly.

8. I appear before you to reaffirm our unwavering commitment to national transformation and to account for the progress we have made, as well as the challenges we must still confront.

9. We are steadily translating the bold vision of **Sierra Leone's Medium-Term National Development Plan (MTNDP) for 2024-2030** into real and measurable gains - bringing development closer to our people, restoring public trust in our institutions, and laying the firm foundations for a more inclusive, resilient, and prosperous Sierra Leone.

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members,

10. To strengthen transparency and accountability, I will lay before this Honourable House a comprehensive report detailing our governance record and sectoral achievements for the past year. I trust Parliament will give it the careful review it deserves, consistent with your oversight mandate and our shared responsibility for national transformation.

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members,

11. Allow me now to share with this esteemed House - and with the people of Sierra Leone - key highlights of the tangible progress we have achieved under our **Big Five Game Changers**. These priorities remain central to our nation's sustainable economic growth and social progress. What I present is proof of what can be accomplished when we lead with vision, govern with purpose, and act in unity.

II. THE BIG FIVE GAME CHANGERS

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members,

12. In 2023, we launched the **Big Five Game Changers** - bold and strategic priorities at the heart of our national transformation agenda. Together, they provide a clear blueprint to accelerate growth, foster inclusion, and secure lasting stability.

13. I am pleased to report **steady, measurable progress across all five pillars:**

- * **Feed Salone** is strengthening food security and reducing dependence on imports.
- * **Human Capital Development** is expanding access to quality education, healthcare, and opportunities for women.

- * **The Youth Employment Scheme** is transforming joblessness into opportunity, channelling the energy of our young people into enterprise and innovation.
- * **Technology and Infrastructure Development** is expanding digital access and enhancing national competitiveness.
- * **Public Service Reform** is delivering more transparent, efficient, and accountable institutions that build public trust and improve service delivery.

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members,

14. As we recommit to these priorities, I will now highlight key achievements under each of these transformative pillars.

GAME CHANGER 1 – FEED SALONE

AGRICULTURE AND FOOD SECURITY

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members,

15. We are **making strong and steady progress toward food self-sufficiency**. In 2024 alone, rice production rose by **8%**, resulting in a 13% reduction in rice imports and saving the nation over **US\$15 million** in foreign exchange. These gains have resulted in a **20% decline** in rice prices over the past year. Three new rice mills are now operational, boosting domestic processing capacity and reducing post-harvest losses.

16. The impact is clear: the **World Food Programme (WFP)** has cut its reliance on imported rice from **90% to 60%**, sourcing the remaining **30%** directly from Sierra Leone's resilient smallholder farmers.

17. Beyond rice, we are diversifying our food economy. Over the past two years, **egg imports have fallen by 21%**, and locally produced eggs are now **10% cheaper**. Strategic market interventions and increased domestic supply have also made local onions **20% more affordable** than imported varieties. For the first time, Sierra Leone has begun exporting vegetable oil and other agricultural products - a sign of a more competitive and resilient agri-economy.

18. **Flagship programmes**, such as the **Agricultural Value Chain Development Project**, are expanding value chains, raising farmer incomes, and enabling the cultivation of **9,000 additional hectares of cocoa** - boosting export potential and rural prosperity. Also, the **Livestock and Livelihoods Development Project** is modernising animal health systems, upgrading livestock infrastructure, and increasing farmers' income.

19. Last year, my Government secured over **US\$800 million in international pledges** to support agricultural productivity and food sovereignty. Already, **US\$205 million** has been committed, including **US\$105 million for livestock development**, **US\$45 million for cassava production**, and **US\$55 million for critical agricultural road infrastructure**.

20. To support mechanisation, we launched a **US\$10 million credit facility** to increase access to equipment, build **industrial-grade poultry feed mills**, and roll out **Sierra Leone's first-ever Weather-Index Crop Insurance scheme**, beginning with rice and maize farmers.

21. We are proud to have completed the **first nationwide digital soil mapping exercise**, guiding targeted fertiliser and seed delivery. In addition, our **biometric National Farmers Registry now includes over 300,000 farmers**, with expansion underway. These innovations form the foundation of a modern agricultural ecosystem.

22. Infrastructure remains a key enabler. We have commenced the construction of **420 kilometres of feeder roads** and essential rural bridges. Under the **Smallholder Commercialisation and Agribusiness Development Project (SCADEP)**, four major bridges are under construction. The **Mattru-Senehun Bridge** has already been commissioned, while the **Gendema Bridge in Kenema**, the **Manowa Bridge in Kailahun**, and the **Tomparie Bridge in Karene** will soon be inaugurated.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members,

23. We also recognise that sustainable food systems require urgent and integrated climate action. I have directed the **Ministries of Agriculture and Food Security, Environment, and the Environment Protection Agency (EPA)** to embed food systems resilience into Sierra Leone's **third Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs)** under the **Paris Agreement**. Relevant policies and legislation will soon be laid before this Honourable House.

24. Strengthening our food systems also means investing in climate-resilient communities. We are advancing sustainable land use, forestry management, reforestation, and community-led biodiversity conservation, empowering local communities to take greater ownership of natural resource management and enforce environmental protection.

THE FISHERIES SECTOR

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members,

25. The fisheries sector remains a **vital pillar of our economy - contributing 12 percent to national GDP** and supporting the livelihoods of over one million Sierra Leoneans, particularly women and youth.

26. In 2024, the sector generated over **US\$5 million in foreign exchange**, surpassing 2023 revenue targets. With the introduction of a new **Quota Management System (QMS), based on catch volumes**, **we expect to more than double this revenue** in the coming years, while ensuring sustainability and equitable access to marine resources.

27. Key reforms include the **digitisation of fisheries data collection** and the launch of a dedicated **Aquaculture and Inland Fisheries Policy** to promote commercial investment in aquaculture and accelerate the development of inland fisheries. This will lay the foundation for long-term sector growth and higher domestic revenue.

28. In line with regional best practices, we have introduced a **closed fishing season** for artisanal and industrial fleets to allow depleted fish stocks to regenerate, ensuring the long-term health of our marine ecosystems.

29. **International partnerships** have expanded significantly. A **landmark investment agreement with the Republic of Egypt** now supports joint ventures in **commercial fisheries and shrimp aquaculture**, strengthening regional cooperation and private sector engagement.

30. Marine governance has been enhanced through additional **Vessel Monitoring System (VMS)** units, integrated with **Automatic Identification System (AIS)** technology. These systems now enable continuous, real-time tracking of all licensed vessels operating in our **Exclusive Economic Zone**.

31. Our fight against **Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated (IUU) fishing** has intensified. The Monitoring and Compliance Division has operationalised the **Port State Measures Agreement (PSMA)**, ensuring rigorous inspections of all industrial vessels at our ports in line with international governance standards.

32. Domestic revenue collection has improved through intensified **registration and licensing of artisanal fishing canoes**. We are also working to increase annual industrial fish production **from 120,000 to 150,000 metric tonnes**, boosting output, processing, and exports.

33. Construction of the **Black Johnson Industrial Fish Harbour Complex** is progressing. An **implementation agreement** has been signed, financing arrangements with the Government of the People's Republic of China are nearing completion, and site clearance is underway following the conclusion of international bidding for engineering firms. This modern facility will host **large industrial vessels, including tuna ships**, and drive **value addition across the fisheries value chain**.

34. **Certification of Sierra Leone's aquatic products for export to China** is at an advanced stage. Once finalised this year, it will unlock **direct market access** and significant trade opportunities, positioning Sierra Leone as a growing force in regional and global seafood markets.

35. Finally, we continue to modernise **policies and regulatory frameworks** to attract investment, conserve marine biodiversity, strengthen food security, and support inclusive job creation - particularly for youth. These reforms lay the foundation for a **resilient, sustainable, and competitive Blue Economy**.

GAME CHANGER 2 -- HUMAN CAPITAL DEVELOPMENT

36. **No nation can rise above the quality of its people**. That is why my Government **continues to invest boldly in education, healthcare, and skills development** - the true engines of productivity, innovation, and opportunity. These foundations are essential for a just, resilient, and globally competitive Sierra Leone.

BASIC AND SENIOR SECONDARY EDUCATION

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members,

37. In 2024, student enrolment, retention, and completion rates rose significantly, supported by expanded e-learning, improved internet access, solar solutions for underserved schools, and support for learners with special needs - **ensuring that no child is left behind**.

38. We have **built over 1,500 classrooms** and improved WASH facilities in schools nationwide. Retention, especially among **girls and returning child mothers**, has increased through the provision of sanitary pads, first aid kits, and the **School Feeding Programme across 15 districts**.

39. To improve learning outcomes, more than **20,000 teachers** have been trained since 2018, including 14,500 in early-grade literacy and numeracy. We have also deployed **200 Quality Assurance Officers** nationwide to monitor and support teaching quality.

40. Our Government **fully covers NPSE, BECE, and WASSCE exam fees**. We provide tuition subsidies for all public and Government-assisted schools, including institutions for learners with special needs, ensuring no child is denied education due to financial hardship.

41. Today, more girls are **completing senior secondary school and passing national exams at record levels**. Independent assessments confirm that our students are now matching peers in Africa's top-performing education systems.

42. These gains reflect strong political will, effective partnerships, community engagement, and local innovation. We remain committed to inclusive, quality education as a key driver of empowerment, national transformation, and resilience.

TECHNICAL AND HIGHER EDUCATION

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members,

43. Over the past year, my Government, through the **Ministry of Technical and Higher Education (MTHE)**, has advanced our vision of an inclusive, skills-based, innovation-led education system to empower youth and drive national development.

I. Transformative Skills Development for Youth Empowerment

44. We are equipping young people - especially women and vulnerable groups - **with practical, future-ready skills**. With **US\$990,000 from the African Development Bank**, the **WokDonCam Project** is revitalising three Technical Institutes to train youth in agro-processing, waste management, digital technology, entrepreneurship, and soft skills.

45. Through the **BEAR III Programme**, supported by **SIDA** through **UNESCO**, we are strengthening agricultural value chain training and piloting a **Sector Skills Council** to align certification and lifelong learning with our **Feed Salone strategy**.

46. Through a **US\$3.5 million partnership with UNIDO**, the Government of Japan, **MTHE**, and the **Ministry of Youth Affairs**, we established a Centre of Excellence for Automotive Training at the Government Technical Institute, offering 960 hours of certified instruction in 39 modules, prioritising women and disadvantaged youth.

47. With UNDP support, we piloted a **Recognition of Prior Learning Programme** in Freetown and Kenema, certifying 100 informal workers in construction and HVAC. Its success led to the development of a national plumbing curriculum, soon to be rolled out nationwide.

II. Digitalisation and Technology-Driven Learning

48. To bridge the digital divide in higher education, in partnership with **ELCOME**, we launched a nationwide connectivity programme **linking nine universities across 23 campuses to affordable internet via Starlink, benefiting over 10,000 students in just 90 days**. This is reinforced by expanding the **Sierra Leone Research and Education Network (SLREN)**, integrating more institutions into national and global research networks.

49. This year, in collaboration with **UNDP's Timbuktoo Initiative**, we will launch **UniPods** - modern hubs for digital entrepreneurship, innovation, and student-led, market-driven solutions.

III. Strengthening Governance, Quality, and Research

50. This House passed **two landmark laws** - the **revised Tertiary Education Commission Act** and the **National Council for Technical and Vocational Education Act** - to modernise governance and ensure quality across both sectors.

51. To strengthen research and innovation, MTHE, with **UNESCO** support, is developing a **National Research and Innovation Policy** to position our universities as drivers of industrialisation within the **Science, Technology and Innovation** framework.

52. We completed the **West African Science Service Centre on Climate Change and Adapted Land Use (WASCAL)** assessment, unlocking new PhD scholarships and boosting climate science research capacity.

53. With **€2.1 million support from AISPO**, we are launching postgraduate training in haematology and blood transfusion through the **College of Medicine and Allied Health Sciences (COMAHS)**, the University of Sierra Leone Teaching Hospital Complex, and the School of Postgraduate Health Specialties.

IV. Strategic Infrastructure Investments.

54. We are upgrading learning environments through the **Education Sector Support Programme**, with 60% of works completed at **Milton Margai and Bunumbu campuses**, and a new ministerial complex underway.

55. The Government has provided **US\$2 million** to fast-track **Kono University of Science and Technology**, now 80% through its preparatory phase. Construction will soon begin under the **EXIM Bank-funded EBID facility**.

56. Through a **US\$2 million local content initiative** with the **People's Republic of China and UNDP**, we are producing 14,000 furniture units for educational institutions - boosting local industry and jobs.

57. With **GIZ support**, we have rehabilitated and upgraded **three Government Technical Institutes** into modern, career-focused training centres.

V. Expanding Access, Inclusion, and Student Support

58. To expand access to higher education, we have **digitised the Sierra Leone Student Loan Scheme** via the **WanGov platform** - improving transparency and ease of application. Over 1,000 postgraduates have benefited, and the scheme is now being extended to undergraduates.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members,

59. The heartbeat of Sierra Leone is its youth. My Government remains firmly committed to investing in their skills and innovation - our most sustainable path to inclusive prosperity and national renewal.

HEALTHCARE: BUILDING A RESILIENT AND INCLUSIVE SYSTEM

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members,

60. A **healthy population is essential to national prosperity**. My Government is therefore strengthening health governance, financing, service delivery, and emergency preparedness to build a resilient system that serves every Sierra Leonean.

61. To advance **Universal Health Coverage**, domestic health spending increased by 2%, and the **Sierra Leone Social Health Insurance Scheme (SLeSHI)** has been operationalised to reduce out-of-pocket costs by 20% by 2026, especially for low-income families.

62. We have enhanced health security by establishing the **National Public Health Agency (NPHA)** to coordinate emergency response and deploying the **electronic Integrated Disease Surveillance and Response (eIDSR) system** for real-time outbreak monitoring. A nationwide weekly surveillance system now covers hospitals, health centres, and communities.

63. Human resources for health remain a priority. Healthcare worker recruitment has increased by 15%, bringing the total workforce to over 14,000. Medical school enrolment has doubled, raising annual graduates from 40 to 80.

64. To reduce dependence on foreign professionals, we established the **Postgraduate College of Health Specialties**, where over 40 doctors are now trained locally, and construction of its permanent campus is underway.

65. We are investing heavily in **hospital infrastructure**. Key projects include the **166-bed Julius Maada Bio Paediatric Centre of Excellence in Lumley** and the modernisation of regional and district hospitals to expand specialist services.

66. To strengthen emergency and critical care, we are building oxygen generation and distribution systems at regional facilities - crucial for maternal and newborn survival.

67. **Emergency Obstetric and Newborn Care centres in Mongor (North), Yengema (East), and Gbondapi and Pujehun (South)** are being upgraded to provide lifesaving care in underserved areas.

68. Our efforts are paying off: **maternal and newborn deaths have fallen by 70%**, supported by expanded immunisation, improved nutrition programmes, better access to essential medicines, and stronger WASH services at last-mile facilities.

69. To further reduce maternal mortality, we are establishing a **100-bed Maternal School of Excellence in Kono** and new **training hubs in Bo, Kenema, and Freetown**.

70. We continue to deploy **off-grid solar systems** to rural health centres, enabling safe nighttime deliveries, vaccine refrigeration, and reliable emergency services.

71. The **National Emergency Medical Service now operates 104 ambulances in all 16 districts**, ensuring timely emergency response.

72. Meanwhile, the **Pharmacy Board** continues to regulate medicines to ensure safety, affordability, and accessibility.

73. **Tertiary hospitals** are being equipped with modern diagnostic tools, expanded telemedicine services, and a **Centralised Maintenance Management System (CMMS)**. We have also launched a life-course vaccination strategy, now including HPV, malaria, measles, rubella, polio, COVID-19, and Mpox vaccines.

74. Our strengthened **digital health information systems, built on the District Health Information Software 2 (DHIS2)**, are improving data management and guiding evidence-based decision-making nationwide.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members,

75. In January, Sierra Leone recorded its first confirmed case of Mpox. The **Ministry of Health** responded swiftly with emergency activation, decentralised testing, health worker training, public updates, and anti-stigma campaigns. While no active outbreak exists, enhanced surveillance, cross-border monitoring, and national preparedness remain in place to protect public health.

GENDER EQUALITY AND CHILDREN'S AFFAIRS

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members,

76. **Gender equality remains a national priority** - central to justice, inclusion, and sustainable development.

77. We are actively implementing the **Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Act, 2022**, through new regulations, institutional frameworks, and Gender Units across MDAs. Focal points are being trained in **gender mainstreaming, budgeting, and equity**.

78. We continue to combat **Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (GBV)** through nationwide awareness campaigns, stronger legal and psychosocial support systems, and robust accountability mechanisms, working closely with civil society and international partners.

79. Following the passage of the **Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2024**, we are finalising enforcement regulations. This Honourable House has also passed the **Child Rights Act, 2025**, which now awaits Presidential Assent. Once enacted, it will create Sierra Leone's first **National Children's Law**, consolidating and strengthening legal protections for every child.

SOCIAL WELFARE AND PROTECTION

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members,

80. My Government is committed to building a just and inclusive society, expanding social protection, promoting disability inclusion, improving mental health services, and supporting the elderly and retirees.

81. Domestically, **two landmark laws** have been enacted:

- * The **Social Work Regulatory Act, 2025**, establishing a professional council to standardise and regulate social work practice; and
- * The **Social Protection Act, 2024**, creating the **National Social Protection Authority** to coordinate and expand social protection programmes nationwide.

82. Sierra Leone has secured a **US\$1 million India-UN grant** to establish **skills centres and a disability village** for economic empowerment and reintegration. We are among the **first signatories of the Amman-Berlin Declaration**, committing to prioritise disability inclusion in **at least 15% of international development programmes**.

83. To combat drug abuse, **rehabilitation centres in Hastings and Bo** have reintegrated over **400 former users** into society.

84. We are also addressing substance abuse among persons with disabilities through programmes combining **rehabilitation with vocational training**; **200 individuals** are currently training in tailoring at the **Polio Persons Development Association in Makeni** and the **Freetown Orthopaedic Rehabilitation Centre** with UNDP support.

85. Through the **National Social Safety Net**, **84,000 elderly-headed households** have been digitally registered, and cash transfers provided to over **11,000 elderly citizens aged 75+**, improving access to healthcare, nutrition, and dignified ageing.

86. **NASSIT** continues to expand social security coverage to the informal sector, ensuring that all Sierra Leoneans - regardless of employment status - can access essential protections.

WATER, SANITATION, AND HYGIENE (WASH)

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members,

87. Access to clean water, sanitation, and hygiene is a basic right and essential for health, education, climate resilience, and development.

88. To drive progress, we created the **Ministry of Water Resources and Sanitation** in June 2023, aligning national strategies with **SDG 6** and embedding climate adaptation in WASH planning.

89. For long-term water security, we launched the **Western Area Peninsula Water Fund**, using nature-based solutions to protect catchments and ecosystems. The **National Water Resources Management Agency** has introduced regulations for pollution control, groundwater management, catchment protection, water use, and dam safety.

90. We prioritise pollution prevention and equitable access, supported by a new community-based management framework for local ownership and sustainability.

91. To expand supply, we are rehabilitating water infrastructure in Blama-Bandawor, Kailahun, and Kabala, and building 100 solar-powered boreholes with tank towers, distribution networks, and standposts in underserved communities.

92. In Freetown, a multi-donor **AfDB-led WASH project** includes the Angola Town Water Supply System, a **60,000 m³ reservoir** at Regent/Babadorie, and rehabilitation of Kongo Dam, Tacugama, Sugarloaf weirs, and transmission pipelines.

93. With **OPEC funding**, Guma Valley is expanding the Allen Town system with new water sources, 45 km of pipes, six reservoirs, and upgraded pumping stations. A mountain bulk water system is also under construction.

94. To increase private sector participation, Guma Valley - supported by the **African Legal Support Facility and FCDO** - is reviewing legal frameworks for **public-private partnerships**, and **new WASH investment regulations** will soon be tabled in this House.

SPORTS: UNITY, OPPORTUNITY, AND NATIONAL PRIDE

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members,

95. Sports is a powerful tool for nation-building. Through investments in schools, communities, and professional sports, we are fostering discipline, teamwork, healthier lifestyles, and social cohesion, while creating opportunities for young people.

96. Reviving the **male and female Premier Leagues** and rehabilitating key facilities has created thousands of jobs and boosted local economies. Sports also promote tourism and district development.

97. With the support of the Government of the People's Republic of China, we are investing over **US\$40 million to transform Sierra Leone's 50-year-old National Stadium** into a world-class facility by 2027, featuring all-seater stands, upgraded tracks and fields, a modern practice pitch, a 1,500-seat stand, a four-star athletes' hostel, and refurbished courts - a symbol of national renewal and pride.

98. Our **athletes continue to excel** - from the women's football and cricket teams to the U20 squad's 4-1 win over Egypt and the U16 basketball team reaching an international final for the first time in 20 years. These victories inspire confidence, unity, and national pride.

99. Internationally, Sierra Leone is aligning with global initiatives using sport as a tool for inclusion, peacebuilding, and transformation.

GAME CHANGER 3 -- YOUTH EMPLOYMENT SCHEME

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members,

100. Two years ago, I launched the **Youth Employment Scheme** - a national mission to create 500,000 jobs in five years.

101. We are generating jobs across agriculture, mining, construction, energy, sports, the creative economy, and digital skills. By expanding access to finance, vocational training, and entrepreneurship support, we are empowering youth, reducing poverty and crime, and securing Sierra Leone's future.

102. In addition to **Free Quality School Education**, we are providing practical skills training in income-generating sectors to empower our youth.

103. Through the **National Youth Commission**, thousands of young people have received technical training in mechanics, construction, hospitality, and welding. Over 250 young women have joined digital literacy and entrepreneurship programmes. Youth-led farming and fisheries initiatives are expanding nationwide.

104. Under the **World Bank-funded Productive Social Safety Nets and Youth Employment (PSSNYE) project**, 8,000 young persons will each receive US\$300 to grow their businesses.

105. **Agriculture remains central to youth employment**, with investments in modern farming, agro-processing, and agribusiness to improve livelihoods and food security.

106. At the same time, **technology and digital literacy programmes** are preparing youth for the global knowledge economy, while vocational training is producing skilled professionals in critical trades to drive national development.

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members,

107. Despite our progress, we face a grave and growing threat - the rise of synthetic drug use, especially Kush. This is more than a social issue; it is a **public health emergency** that takes lives, destabilises communities, and endangers our national future.

108. My Government **unequivocally condemns** those who manufacture, traffic, and sell these deadly substances. Since declaring a **National Emergency on Drug and Substance Abuse in April 2024**, we have intensified enforcement, tightened border controls, and strengthened legislation to hold perpetrators accountable.

109. Our **national strategy** is clear: **prevention, public education, rehabilitation, and enforcement**. But success requires a united national response.

110. I call on **parents, teachers, faith leaders, civil society, and communities** to stand with us in creating safe, supportive spaces where our young people can flourish.

111. And to **our young people**, I say this: **stay focused, stay healthy, stay resilient**. You are not only the **leaders of tomorrow** - you are **leaders of today**. Your courage, discipline, and vision will shape the Sierra Leone we all dream of. Do not let drugs steal your future. **Your hands must build; your minds must create; your voices must lead**.

112. Together, let us build a nation where every young Sierra Leonean has opportunity, skills, and support to live with dignity, purpose, and hope.

GAME CHANGER 4 – TECHNOLOGY AND INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT

TECHNOLOGY: DRIVING DIGITAL INCLUSION, INNOVATION, AND NATIONAL EFFICIENCY

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members,

113. My Government is committed to digital transformation as a catalyst for inclusive growth, efficient governance, and transparent service delivery.

114. At the **2025 Salone Innovates Digital Government Summit**, we showcased local innovation - especially by **youth and women** - and delivered **38 specialised courses** in AI, cybersecurity, coding, and digital entrepreneurship. A young entrepreneur received the **Presidential Innovation Prize** for a groundbreaking digital farming hub.

115. Government systems are now interoperable, reducing bureaucracy and eliminating the need for repeated document submissions across ministries. The **GoSL HR Hub** is digitising payroll and attendance, cutting ghost workers, while the new **Government Yellow Page** provides real-time access to services and contacts across agencies.

116. These gains are underpinned by over **US\$100 million in investments from China EXIM Bank and the World Bank**, funding fibre-optic expansion in **14 districts**, digital skills training, and upgraded service platforms.

TELECOMMUNICATIONS: EXPANDING CONNECTIVITY AND SECURING DIGITAL IDENTITY

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members,

117. Sierra Leone's telecom sector is now more inclusive and secure. The **National Communications Authority (NatCA)** has rolled out new frameworks for **Non-Geostationary Satellite Orbit (NGSO)** operators and advanced the **NIN-SIM integration** in partnership with the **National Civil Registration Authority**, ensuring verified digital identities for mobile users.

118. To expand connectivity, **NatCA** has approved **West Africa's first 5G standalone trial**. Within three years, we expect 80% of mobile services to operate on fast, low-latency networks.

119. We are implementing the **ECOWAS Roaming Regulations** through agreements with Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia, and The Gambia, enabling seamless cross-border SIM use, 30 days of free incoming calls, and harmonised tariffs across West Africa.

120. Our **telecoms landscape continues to grow**:

- * 4 Mobile Network Operators and 1 fixed operator licensed;
- * 32 ISPs, 20 TV stations, and 194 FM radio stations are operational;
- * Infrastructure providers like Zoodlabs and Leonecom are expanding national connectivity under an open-access model.

121. **Mobile coverage now exceeds 97%. Over the past year, voice subscriptions grew by 18% and data subscriptions by 65%**, reflecting stronger services and rising demand.

122. The new **NatCA headquarters** at Southridge, set to open this year, reflects the sector's shift from oversight to innovation.

123. My Government will soon introduce new reforms to strengthen regulation, protect consumers, and consolidate Sierra Leone's leadership in digital connectivity and innovation.

INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT

ENERGY: POWERING PROSPERITY AND NATIONAL RESILIENCE

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members,

124. Reliable, affordable energy is essential for industry, innovation, and inclusive growth. Ending energy poverty has been a core priority in our development agenda.

125. In **September 2024**, we signed a **US\$480 million MCC Compact** to expand transmission infrastructure, including the **225-kV Southern Corridor**, and support electricity distribution, governance, and sector reform.

126. In **January 2025**, President Donald Trump launched a global review of MCC compacts.

127. As your **"Tok N Do" President**, I am proud to report that as of **July**, **Sierra Leone's Compact** was among the few approved to continue - a **strong endorsement of our leadership, reforms, and U.S. partnership**.

128. We also joined the **Mission 300 Initiative in January 2025**, a global effort to halve energy poverty through innovative financing of renewable energy.

129. We have finalised the **Sierra Leone 300 Energy Compact**, targeting to **mobilise US\$2.4 billion** to:

- * Expand electricity access to 78% of the population,
- * Increase renewables to 52% by 2030, and
- * Strengthen governance, private investment, and regulatory independence.

130. We will sign the **Sierra Leone 300 Energy Compact** at the **2025 UN General Assembly in September**.

131. To meet growing demand, we are **expanding generation capacity** through key projects:

- * The **108.5 MW NANT gas-to-energy plant at Kissy Dockyard**, fully privately funded and set for commissioning in early 2027.
- * A MoU to develop the **Mano River Union's first Floating Storage Regasification Unit (FSRU) LNG hub** - reducing energy costs and enabling cross-border electricity trade.

132. We are also **upgrading existing generation assets**:

- * **Two 5 MW Niigata generators** at Kingtom have been rehabilitated,
- * Critical maintenance has been completed on the **16 MW Wartsila engines at Blackhall Road**, and

* The **1 MW solar PV plant** in Moyamba has been refurbished.

133. Our energy sovereignty push continues with the **40 MW RESPITE Solar Project** - comprising **30 MW at Newton and 10 MW at Lungi** - which is expected to be online by early 2026.

134. We have secured **60% financing from the OPEC Fund** to expand **Bumbuna by 50 MW**. Plans are underway to upgrade the **Dodo-Goma Hydro Plant from 6 MW to 12 MW**, converting it into a **hybrid hydro-solar facility**. In Bo, **6 MW thermal generators** have been installed to provide backup during **CLSG outages**.

135. The **40 MW SCATEC Solar Plant in Kamakwie** is in final negotiations to join the national grid. Under the **Government-funded Seven District Towns Electrification Project**, power has been commissioned in Moyamba, Kailahun, Pujehun, and Bonthe, with Kambia, Kabala, and Matru Jong set for completion by year-end.

136. We are enhancing transmission and distribution across the nation. The **Bo-Kenema Upgrade Project**, funded by **AfDB and FCDO**, is nearly complete, **doubling capacity and connecting 37,000 households**. In Freetown, the **ESURP Project** added **100 MW capacity and four substations**, with **JICA-supported expansion** to Peninsula communities. A new **66kV line from Teloma to Bandajuma via Bandama** is being tested to boost power supply in the southeast.

137. Through the **CLSG Rural Electrification Programme**, **31 rural sites now serve over 10,000 households**. Under **ESLEAP**, **199 health centres and 206 schools** have been electrified with standalone solar systems, and a **1 MW solar mini-grid** is operational in Moyamba, with nine more in progress.

138. To boost reliability and reduce losses, a national concession process is engaging the private sector in the distribution sector. Supported by the **World Bank**, we are also implementing a unified revenue collection system to enhance transparency and financial sustainability.

139. Yet, we recognise that **generation still falls short of rising demand**, particularly in the mining and agriculture sectors. To remedy this, we have set **an ambitious target to exceed 1,000 MW of generation capacity by 2030**.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members,

140. We recognise that there is still much to be done. However, with my hands-on leadership and the steadfast dedication of our energy sector team, we are making steady progress toward ending energy poverty. Sierra Leone cannot afford to remain energy-poor - not when our goal is to be a competitive, prosperous, and climate-resilient nation.

ROADS AND BRIDGE INFRASTRUCTURE: CONNECTING SIERRA LEONE, ACCELERATING PROGRESS

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members,

141. For too long, inadequate roads and bridges have hindered access to essential services, markets, and opportunities - slowing economic growth and weakening national cohesion. My Government is tackling this head-on through sustained investments in modern, climate-resilient infrastructure.

142. Our roads and bridges connect our people to opportunity, reduce poverty, and strengthen national unity - town by town, district by district.

143. So far, we have completed **418 kilometres of roads and built 17 bridges**. I have already highlighted four major bridges supported by **SCADEP in Mattru Jong, Gendema, Manowa, and Tomparie** in the **Feed Salone** section. Construction of four more is imminent, expanding our ferry-replacement bridge programme to eight in total.

144. With support from the **Kuwait Fund**, we have completed or nearly completed several strategic road projects, including:

- * The 2.2km Hill Side Bypass 4-Lane Dual Carriageway (Phase 2),
- * The 27km Lumley-Tokeh Road,
- * The 10km Bo-Tikonko Junction Road,
- * The 25km Bandajuma-Pujehun Road, and
- * Urban upgrades such as the Freetown Ring Road (Hill Cot), Bonthe township roads, and works in Sea Coach, Sea Bird (Lungi), and parts of eastern and western Freetown.

145. Major ongoing road projects supported through partnerships with the **AfDB, BADEA**, and the **Government of Sierra Leone** include the following:

- * 61km Kabala-Falaba-Limbaya Road,
- * Kailahun-Koindu Road (Lot 1),
- * 72.5km Tikonko Junction-Kpetema-Mattru Jong Road, and
- * 8km Serabu Spur Road.

146. Township road upgrades are also underway in Bo, Kenema, Freetown (East and West), Waterloo, Jui, and Bonthe.

147. Several major road projects are in advanced stages, with co-financing discussions ongoing with the **AfDB, Islamic Development Bank, BADEA, JICA, and the European Investment Bank**. These include:

- * Kailahun-Koindu Road (Lot 2, 39km)
- * Kambia-Madina-Tomparie-Kamakwei Road (105km)
- * Bauya-Benducha Road (65km)
- * Kenema-Zimmi Road (87km)
- * Malema Junction-Sulima Road (25km)

* Blama-Koribondo-Sumbuya-Tormabum Road (120km)

148. We continue to embrace innovative public-private partnerships. Parliament has ratified a concession agreement with SIETRA to finance the Koblo-Gulama (Mabang) Bridge and the 86km Moyamba-Gbangbatoke Junction Road. Proposals for the 85km Mano Junction-Tongo-Bumpeh (Koidu) Road are under review.

149. The **Road Maintenance Fund** remains critical to our infrastructure agenda. In 2024, it supported the **maintenance of 1,403 km of roads**, construction of **culverts and bridges**, **ferry rehabilitation**, and the development of a **national road condition database** in partnership with the **ILO**.

150. These interventions have improved road safety, reduced travel times, and enhanced access to schools, health facilities, and markets. In 2025, the Fund allocated **NLe 39.7 million** to local councils for road maintenance and rehabilitation.

151. Our investments in roads and bridges are central to national transformation - reducing rural-urban disparities, boosting economic activity, and connecting Sierra Leoneans to opportunities and progress.

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION: MOVING PEOPLE, DRIVING INCLUSION

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members,

152. Accessible and inclusive public transport is vital for national productivity and mobility. Through **IRUMP and the Public Transport Authority**, we launched **50 Waka Fine buses**, now serving over **25,000 passengers daily** - nearly half of whom are women and persons with disabilities. Real-time arrival displays are now active at all designated stops to improve the commuter experience.

153. As part of our urban mobility strategy, we commissioned a new **Public Transit Terminal** at Lumley to ease congestion. Nearby, we are building a modern marketplace with daycare facilities for 2,500 traders, creating safer spaces for women and families.

154. To support climate goals, we are developing a **national policy to introduce electric buses**, working with partners such as **South Korea**.

155. **IRUMP** has also constructed four pedestrian bridges at Jui Junction, Shell New Road, Lumley, and Wilberforce, installed traffic lights at key intersections, upgraded major road corridors, and expanded solar street lighting across Freetown to promote safer night travel.

156. Building on **IRUMP's** success, we secured **US\$74 million** for the Connectivity and Agricultural Marketing Infrastructure Project (CAMIP), which will link rural producers to urban markets through four major bridges and marketplaces in Sumbuya (Bo), Moselolo (Moyamba), Komrabai (Tonkolili), and Kabba (Karene).

ROAD SAFETY: MODERNISING SYSTEMS, SAVING LIVES

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members,

157. Road safety is a national priority. **The Sierra Leone Road Safety Authority (SLRSA)** has introduced digital RFID vehicle licences, digital number plates, life cards, fitness certificates, and biometric driver's licences to curb fraud and improve traffic security. New systems enhance vehicle traceability, reduce identity fraud, and strengthen accountability.

158. **SLRSA** has opened new service centres in eastern and western Freetown and deployed a mobile registration unit to serve remote communities.

159. **Modern queuing systems** at Kissy Road and Mile 6 have reduced congestion, while **three new inspection stations** have been established at **Milton Margai, Mile 91, and Jui**, with **two more planned for Bo and Kenema**.

160. A real-time service monitoring dashboard, developed with **Autospect**, will soon improve transparency. Enforcement has been intensified, with abandoned and illegally parked vehicles in central Freetown routinely clamped or towed.

161. The new **Highway Management Unit at Mile 91** now oversees **expanded patrols**, ensuring safer and more efficient intercity travel.

AIR TRANSPORTATION: EXPANDING ACCESS, ELEVATING STANDARDS

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members,

162. To boost connectivity, Air Sierra Leone, a public-private partnership, now operates flights from Lagos and London Gatwick to Freetown. Ethiopian Airlines has also launched thrice-weekly passenger flights to Freetown, enhancing tourism and business travel.

163. We achieved a 74% score on the **ICAO safety audit**, demonstrating our alignment with global aviation safety and compliance standards. We have signed an **MoU** with **IATA** to enhance safe and efficient air transport. Passenger traffic at the new **Freetown International Airport** continues to grow, reflecting public confidence.

164. Additionally, **Bilateral Air Service Agreements** with **Ethiopia, Saudi Arabia, and the Czech Republic** are expanding Sierra Leone's global aviation links.

MARITIME TRANSPORTATION: EXPANDING TRADE AND CONNECTIVITY

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members,

165. To boost trade and regional integration, I commissioned the new **Maforki Port in Port Loko District**, developed by **CTC Ports and Logistics**.

166. The **Ports and Harbours Authority** has implemented a new **Port Security Plan** aligned with the **ISPS Code**. As a result, the **Port of Freetown** passed international security audits and earned certification from **the IMO and U.S. Coast Guard**.

167. In support of greener shipping, an agreement with **Trans Africa Marine Services** will implement the **IMO 2020 Sulphur Cap**, promoting the adoption of cleaner marine fuels.

168. The **Ports Authority** has unveiled plans for a modern headquarters, reinforcing its institutional renewal.

169. The **Sierra Leone Maritime Administration (SLMA)** has formed a **National Search and Rescue Committee** to improve emergency response times to 40 minutes. It is also rolling out the **Maritime Single Window system** to digitise ship-port data exchange in line with **IMO standards**.

170. We have finalised the country's first **National Hydrographic Plan** to support local chart production and safer navigation. Additionally, **SLMA** has partnered with the Regional Maritime University to implement **Standards of Training, Certification, and Watchkeeping (STCW)** for seafarer training and certification.

171. Meanwhile, construction of a new jetty and terminal at Yargoi in Bonthe District is advancing, enhancing coastal connectivity for island and riverine communities.

THE PORTS AND HARBOURS AUTHORITY

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members,

172. Under my administration, the **Sierra Leone Ports and Harbours Authority (SLPHA)** has experienced a **158% surge in container traffic between 2023 and 2024**, boosting revenue, creating jobs, and enhancing investor confidence. Containerised exports **rose by 37%**, strengthening foreign exchange reserves and stabilising the Leone.

173. With **36% gender representation**, increased youth leadership, and over 80% of staff professionally trained, SLPHA is now one of West Africa's top-performing ports. The completion of Maforki Port and **Berth 8 at Queen Elizabeth II Quay** has expanded cargo capacity and reduced logistics costs, with **Freetown Terminal Limited (FTL)** remitting **US\$7 million** to the state in 2024.

174. We have halved vessel turnaround times, simplified cargo clearance, and renewed key concessions. By **2026**, we will have digitised operations and implemented the **Maritime Single Window**, further streamlining trade and enhancing governance.

RAILWAY DEVELOPMENT: LAYING THE TRACKS FOR NATIONAL CONNECTIVITY

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members,

175. Modern rail infrastructure is crucial for enhancing trade, industrial development, and national competitiveness. To this end, we have established the **Sierra Leone Railways Development and Regulatory Authority** to oversee all railway planning and regulation.

176. A reputable international firm is being recruited to conduct feasibility studies that will guide a **National Railway Master Plan** aligned with our development and regional integration priorities.

GAME CHANGER 5 - REVAMPING THE PUBLIC SERVICE

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members,

177. My Government is committed to building a modern, professional, and citizen-focused public service - an institution that drives national development and upholds accountability at every level.

178. Over the past year, with support from our partners, we have advanced **far-reaching reforms** to restore efficiency, professionalism, and inclusiveness in the public sector.

179. Our **transformation roadmap** focuses on **eight priorities**:

- * Clarifying institutional mandates,
- * Strengthening HR management,
- * Improving coordination,
- * Enhancing monitoring and evaluation,
- * Expanding e-governance,
- * Reforming pay and incentives,
- * Promoting gender inclusion, and
- * Deepening citizen engagement.

180. We have upgraded the **Individual Performance Appraisal System (IPAS)** and completed the first major review of the **Civil Service Code** since 2011, leading to the adoption of the **2024 Civil Service Code and Rules**, aligned with modern governance standards.

181. Core public service functions are being **digitised**, with a new platform managing **recruitment, appraisals, records, and training**. The **Human Resource Management Office (HRMO)** is now taking a stronger leadership role, working closely with oversight institutions.

182. In the coming year, we will introduce a **new Public Service Policy and Bill** to reinforce the legal framework. A dedicated **public service chapter** has also been included in the **draft revised Constitution**, embedding professionalism and accountability into national governance.

ACCOUNTABILITY IN THE PUBLIC SERVICE

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members,

183. Public service transformation must be rooted in integrity, transparency, and accountability.

184. Citizens deserve to know how public funds are spent and who is responsible for delivering results. Thus, we continue to strengthen oversight institutions, enforce anti-corruption laws, and expand performance-based systems across MDAs.

185. Corruption is a threat to development, security, and democracy. My Government reaffirms full support for the **Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC)** to operate independently and decisively - without fear or favour.

186. Our progress is clear. **The 2024 Mo Ibrahim Index ranked Sierra Leone among the Top Ten most improved in governance (2014-2023).** With an **anti-corruption score of 54.5%**, we placed **7th out of 54 African countries** - above both continental and **ECOWAS** averages.

187. In 2024, the **ACC recovered nearly NLe 35 million Leones** and achieved **90% compliance with its online asset declaration system.**

188. We also launched the **Fifth Generation National Anti-Corruption Strategy** - a **homegrown, tech-driven plan aligned** with the **UN Convention against Corruption**, covering both public and private sector reforms.

DIGITALISING PAYMENT SYSTEMS AND AUDIT SERVICES

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members,

189. To promote fiscal discipline and transparency, we have accelerated the digitalisation of public financial systems, ensuring funds are managed and accounted for efficiently.

190. In 2024, the **Integrated Financial Management Information System (IFMIS)** was rolled out to **20 MDAs**, streamlining payment processing and strengthening internal controls. New modules for **fixed assets and inventory management** are now being implemented.

191. We expanded **Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT)** to **five key institutions - the Sierra Leone Police, Correctional Services, Ministry of Defence, Office of the Ombudsman, and Accountant General's Department** - speeding up payments and improving traceability. **EFT** for foreign payments is being tested, and gratuity payments to retirees are now automated, removing delays.

192. **Audit Service Sierra Leone** has **increased audit coverage to 88%**, including **performance audits** to assess service delivery and ensure value for money.

193. Digitising audit processes, building capacity, and engaging stakeholders have **strengthened oversight and public trust.**

194. **The National Public Procurement Authority** is reforming procurement systems to promote transparency, improve service delivery, and attract investment, ensuring that public resources achieve maximum impact.

III. CRITICAL SECTORS AND CROSS-CUTTING AREAS

195. Having highlighted **key achievements under the Big Five Game Changers**, I now turn to other critical sectors and cross-cutting areas, beginning with the economy - the engine of our national transformation.

THE ECONOMY

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members,

196. Despite global and domestic challenges, **Sierra Leone's economy remains resilient. Real GDP grew by 4.0% in 2024, driven by strong performances in mining, agriculture, construction, light manufacturing, and a rebound in services, particularly tourism.**

197. Though slightly below 2022 and 2023 growth due to temporary declines in iron ore prices and mining output, **the outlook remains positive.**

198. **Inflation fell sharply** - from 54.5% in October 2023 to 13.8% by December 2024, and further to 7.10% by June 2025. This reflects disciplined monetary policy, stronger fiscal governance, exchange rate stability, increased food production, and lower global energy prices.

199. Interest rates on government securities rose in 2024 (34.71% to 41.28%) but have since declined, while lending rates saw modest increases and savings deposit rates adjusted downward.

200. The Leone depreciated by only 5.7% against the US dollar in 2024, a marked improvement over 2023, reflecting effective monetary management by the Bank of Sierra Leone.

201. **Domestic revenue reached NLe 14.6 billion (8.8% of GDP)**, slightly below target, while total expenditure and net lending (**NLe26.9 billion, 16.3% of GDP**) marginally exceeded the budget (**NLe26.4 billion, 16.0% of GDP**). **Grants totalled NLe 5.0 billion (3% of GDP)**, with **EU and World Bank budget support amounting to US\$70.3 million** to reinforce development efforts.

202. Overall fiscal performance improved, with higher revenue, slightly lower spending, and a reduced deficit of **4.8% of GDP**, down from **5.3% in 2023**.

203. Public debt declined from **46.6% of GDP in 2023 to 39.5% in 2024**, supported by focused repayments and exchange rate stability, though **domestic debt rose slightly** to finance the budget and public investment.

204. In November 2024, the **IMF** approved a 38-month, **US\$243 million Extended Credit Facility** to support our reforms, with an **initial disbursement of US\$25 million**. The first and second programme reviews are ongoing ahead of the September 2025 assessment.

205. The **Bank of Sierra Leone** continues to maintain price stability and promote inclusive growth through **sound monetary policy and oversight**. We are advancing **financial sector reforms** -modernising payment systems, improving credit referencing, and expanding **digital financial services** to boost inclusion and private sector development.

206. While **structural challenges remain**, our **economic fundamentals are strengthening**. My Government remains committed to **prudent macroeconomic management, fiscal discipline, and targeted reforms** to sustain growth, reduce poverty, and expand opportunities for all Sierra Leoneans.

DOMESTIC REVENUE MOBILISATION

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members,

207. Long-term development cannot depend on aid alone. Domestic revenue mobilisation remains central to our national strategy.

208. While the **National Revenue Authority (NRA)** has improved performance, challenges persist - non-compliance, illicit financial flows, and inefficiencies.

209. In response, we have deployed a digital tax system, expanded the taxpayer registry, and strengthened audits and enforcement. These reforms are already delivering results. We are also partnering internationally to strengthen customs, close loopholes, and enhance compliance in the informal sector.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY SECTOR

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members,

210. Sierra Leone is open for business. We have signed **ten trade and investment agreements** with key partners, including **Türkiye, South Korea, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE**.

211. We concluded the **WTO Fisheries Subsidies Agreement**, underscoring our commitment to fair and sustainable global trade.

212. In a landmark step, Sierra Leone became the **first African country to complete the AfCFTA Readiness Assessment**, providing a roadmap for implementation and aligning our policies with AfCFTA standards - boosting **investor confidence and regional integration**.

213. To stabilise living costs, we **introduced a pricing formula for essential goods - rice, flour, sugar, cement, and petroleum products**. Combined with exchange rate stability and public-private dialogue, these measures have helped reduce prices.

214. The manufacturing sector now contributes **22% to GDP**, with strong growth in food processing, cement, aluminium, copper, recycled materials, and plastics - **signalling a revitalised industrial sector**.

DOWNSTREAM PETROLEUM SECTOR

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members,

215. To create an open, competitive, and secure energy market, we transformed the National Petroleum Agency into the **National Petroleum Regulatory Authority (NPRA)**.

216. The **2025 NPRA Act** strengthens regulation - ensuring fuel supply security, combating anti-competitive practices, promoting cost efficiency, and enforcing safety and environmental standards.

217. The sector has expanded rapidly: **petroleum imports rose by 56.35% to 540,000 metric tons in 2024**, and distribution volumes reached 524 million litres.

218. We now operate **three jetties and four regional offices**, with **14 District Monitoring Officers** deployed to enforce standards and engage communities.

219. **Storage capacity has increased by 85.9% to 250,000 metric tons**, removing barriers to market entry and attracting new investors.

220. With **World Bank** support, we modernised the pricing formula, making it transparent and responsive to global and local conditions.

UPSTREAM AND MIDSTREAM PETROLEUM SECTOR

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members,

221. 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 transformational for our economy and people.

222. In May 2025, **PVE Consulting (UK)**, working with our Petroleum Directorate, completed a major offshore prospectivity study, identifying over 80 deepwater exploration leads. Early estimates suggest **over 30 billion barrels of recoverable oil and gas - potentially worth more than US\$2 trillion**.

223. This breakthrough strengthens investor interest, informs regulatory reform, and positions Sierra Leone as a **frontier exploration hotspot**.

224. Already, **F.A. Oil Limited**, in partnership with **GeoPartners (UK) and BGP (China)**, has completed a **US\$30 million, 3,000km² 3D seismic survey** - the first in over a decade - meeting global safety and environmental standards.

225. 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.

226. **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. 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.

227. 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.

THE MINING SECTOR

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members,

228. Mineral exports remain a key pillar of our economy, **generating US\$1.12 billion in 2024**.

229. **Non-tax mining revenues rose by 34% to US\$28 million in 2024**, driven by increased production of iron ore, rutile, and mineral sands.

230. The **2022 Mines and Minerals Development Act** has enhanced community benefits, regulatory oversight, and transparency. Companies are now legally obligated to invest in host communities.

231. In early 2025, we **disbursed US\$6.7 million in Community Development Funds** to improve schools, health centres, and water systems in **Port Loko (\$3.7 million)** and **Tonkolili (\$3 million)** Districts.

232. We are enforcing environmental standards, promoting safer mining practices, and encouraging the adoption of renewable energy across our operations.

233. Between 2025 and 2028, we anticipate sustained growth through value addition, local beneficiation, and diversified exports, supported by enhanced geological data, digital licensing, and full alignment with the **Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI)**.

TOURISM, CULTURE, AND HERITAGE

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members,

234. Tourism continues to drive economic diversification, job creation, and international recognition. In 2024, international arrivals, tourism revenues, and local employment all increased.

235. Public-private collaboration, particularly through the **"Tourism for All"** campaign, has led to expanded investment, enhanced destination offerings, and increased community participation.

236. Visitor numbers are increasing at sites such as **Tacugama Sanctuary, Tiwai Island, and Banana Island**, reinforcing Sierra Leone's status as a premier eco-tourism destination.

237. Eight new sites have been developed, including Bush Garden (Bo) and Karefey Island (Port Loko), boosting local economies and diversifying tourism experiences.

238. New regulatory frameworks will soon be introduced to promote sustainable tourism, improve beach and island management, and protect our cultural and natural heritage.

THE ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members,

239. Climate change is a present and urgent threat. This year's rainy season has already brought tragedy. We extend our deepest condolences to the bereaved families.

240. Intensifying weather patterns, worsened by human actions such as illegal construction, deforestation, and waste dumping, have made communities - especially in Freetown - more vulnerable to disasters.

241. My Government is responding decisively by:

- * Enforcing bans on illegal logging, sand mining, and dumping;
- * Restoring waterways to reduce flood risks;

- * Regulating construction in high-risk zones; and
- * Advancing our **National Climate Change Adaptation Plan** focused on reforestation, ecosystem restoration, and renewable energy.

242. We are leveraging international climate finance to build resilience and promote climate justice.

243. But this fight requires all of us. I call on citizens, Paramount Chiefs, councils, and local leaders to respect environmental laws and act responsibly.

244. Let us work together to build a climate-resilient Sierra Leone - one that protects nature, safeguards communities, and secures our children's future.

245. In addition, Sierra Leone now proudly hosts its **first UNESCO World Heritage Site - Gola Rainforest National Park and the Tiwai Island Wildlife Sanctuary (the Gola-Tiwai Complex)** - recognising its rich biodiversity and global ecological importance. This momentous achievement reflects our nation's rich biodiversity and underscores the global ecological importance of these pristine natural ecosystems.

NATIONAL COHESION AND DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members,

246. The strength of our democracy lies not in uniformity, but in our shared resolve to confront challenges together through mutual respect, hope, and an unyielding commitment to unity as the engine of national progress.

247. Over the past year, national dialogue has helped us confront hard truths, promote inclusion, and reaffirm our shared purpose: **to place Sierra Leone above all else.**

248. Like our great rivers, which draw their strength from many tributaries, **our nation draws power from the contributions of all its people - across every region, faith, and background.**

249. Our diversity is not a weakness but a source of resilience. When united, our differences enrich our democracy, strengthen our resolve, and propel us forward with greater purpose.

250. I am proud to report that Sierra Leone remains one of Africa's most peaceful nations. According to the **2025 Global Peace Index**, we are the **second most peaceful country in West Africa, the fifth most peaceful in Africa**, and 57th globally. We remain a model of religious tolerance and social harmony, and we will safeguard this legacy for generations to come.

251. We have institutionalised peace through the **Independent Commission for Peace and National Cohesion**, established in 2021. With strong community engagement and partner support, the Commission has mediated disputes, promoted reconciliation, and strengthened early warning systems.

252. But peace is never self-sustaining. It demands constant vigilance, courage, and responsibility from us all.

253. That is why I must speak plainly about a serious and growing threat: **the politics of election denial.**

254. **Let us be clear - denying legitimate elections is not democratic dissent; it is a direct assault on our peace, our stability, and the very foundations of our Republic.**

255. **Sierra Leone has chosen the path of democracy.** We must therefore reject the toxic language of division, the false comfort of conspiracy, and the reckless narratives that undermine our unity.

256. Our disagreements must be resolved through dialogue and due process - **not through denial or destruction.**

257. If we are to honour the sacrifices of those who built and defended this peace, we must protect it - firmly, fearlessly, and together.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members,

258. 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.**

259. 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.

260. I commend the multipartisan collaboration of the **Tripartite Committee**, which is undertaking a critical review of our Electoral Systems and Management Bodies to enhance inclusion, transparency, and credibility.

261. Through **national consultations on more than 80 reform proposals**, we are shaping citizen-informed changes that will restore trust and strengthen electoral justice. My Government is committed to fully implementing these reforms for the long-term health of our democracy.

262. The **National Commission for Democracy** continues to promote civic education and democratic accountability through nationwide assessments and outreach.

263. Institutions such as the **Political Parties Regulation Commission**, the **Inter-Religious Council**, **labour unions**, and **traditional and community leaders** all play vital roles in expanding civic space and deepening cohesion. Where cohesion thrives, peace endures - and with peace, prosperity follows.

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members,

264. As Leaders entrusted with the nation's future, it is our solemn duty to champion political reforms that unite rather than divide. To this end, we must reignite a meaningful dialogue on adopting proportional representation - not only within parliamentary elections but extending into the makeup of the executive branch and the wider public sector.

265. Proportional representation stands as a powerful force for inclusive governance. It guarantees fair representation of all regions, ethnicities, and genders. It broadens political participation and reduces electoral tensions and polarisation. This esteemed House itself is a living proof of proportional representation's

impact - elevating women's participation across political parties. It is imperative that we build a state architecture that truly reflects the rich pluralism and diversity of the people of Sierra Leone.

DELIVERING ACCESS TO JUSTICE FOR PEACE

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members,

266. **My Government is committed to building a just, inclusive, rights-based society** - one where fair and timely justice strengthens the rule of law, reduces conflict, and secures national stability.

267. Following a national study on barriers to justice, particularly for vulnerable groups, the **Justice Sector Coordinating Office** introduced gender-sensitive recruitment, training, and courtroom practices in line with the **Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Act 2022**.

268. We have **appointed 13 new magistrates and 7 new judges**, significantly increasing women's representation, with **10 women magistrates and 12 women judges** now serving nationwide.

269. A major milestone was the **Criminal Procedure Act 2024**, which replaced colonial-era laws with a **modern, rights-based framework**. **Over 200 legal professionals** have been trained to implement it.

270. To reduce backlogs and improve access, we are digitising court systems, upgrading infrastructure, and deploying magistrates to remote areas - many now holding regular sessions for the first time in decades.

271. The **Sierra Leone Law School** has begun building a **modern training facility** for future legal professionals.

272. We have appointed specialised judges to tackle transnational crimes such as human trafficking and migrant smuggling, supported by the **Human Rights Commission**. These measures are disrupting criminal networks and strengthening regional security cooperation.

273. With **UNICEF support**, **Sexual Offences Model Courts** have been established in Bo and other regions to **improve access to justice for survivors**. The **Judiciary has launched a new e-library** to support legal research and professional growth.

274. The **Attorney General and Minister of Justice** is leading ambitious legislative reforms to modernise Sierra Leone's justice system. New laws will be presented to this House in the coming year.

NATIONAL SECURITY AND THE RULE OF LAW

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members,

275. I extend heartfelt gratitude to the men and women of our security and intelligence services, whose dedication protects our peace and upholds the Constitution. Their service ensures that no ambition ever rises above the law.

276. Our **community policing model** has reduced crime, including **homicide, robbery, trafficking, and drug-related offences**.

277. Strategic investments in infrastructure, communications, surveillance, and welfare have strengthened police effectiveness.

278. Our officers continue to serve with distinction in **UN peacekeeping missions**. Legislation to **enhance professionalism, accountability, and community engagement** within the **Sierra Leone Police** will soon be laid before this House.

279. The **Office of National Security** has boosted early warning systems, rapid response mechanisms, private security regulation, and regional cooperation - reinforcing internal stability.

280. Public safety has improved through new fire stations, modern emergency equipment, and expanded disaster preparedness, increasing resilience to natural and human-made threats.

281. Correctional reforms are reducing overcrowding, improving infrastructure, and providing inmates with agricultural and industrial training, thereby promoting rehabilitation and reducing reoffending.

282. With EU support, the **National Civil Registration Authority** has implemented a **secure, real-time digital ID system**, now accessible nationwide. All MDAs are urged to integrate this platform to improve **data management and service delivery**.

283. Our **immigration system** has been fully **digitised and professionalised**, improving revenue, border control, and international cooperation. **New immigration legislation** will soon be tabled.

284. The **Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces (RSLAF)**, operating under an efficient Tri-Service structure, continues to defend our sovereignty and adapt to emerging threats with discipline and resolve. The **first National Defence Policy** now aligns the RSLAF mission with national development. Reforms are advancing to improve troop welfare, digitise operations, and create income-generating activities for sustainability.

CIVIC ENGAGEMENT AND PUBLIC INFORMATION

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members,

285. I commend the vital role of civil society and our vibrant, independent press. My Government remains committed to engagement with these actors, who amplify citizens' voices, promote transparency and strengthen democratic governance.

286. Through the **Ministry of Information and Civic Education**, we launched the **National Civic Education and Engagement Initiative**, using trusted platforms to foster timely, inclusive communication between the Government and citizens.

287. This includes weekly press briefings in Krio, nationwide civic events, an annual civic festival, and the **Presidential Town Hall Meeting**. These initiatives deepen dialogue, build trust, and bring governance closer to the people.

288. Our commitment to press freedom has yielded results: Sierra Leone has risen nine places on the **Global Press Freedom Index** and now scores **91% on the MCC Freedom of Information indicator** - evidence of our dedication to open governance and a free, independent media.

289. Looking ahead, we will:

- * Invest in the digital transformation of TV broadcasting;
- * Revitalise the Government Printing Press in partnership with Paper Evo of Canada; and
- * Launch a **New Inclusive National Civic Education Agenda** to promote national values, civic responsibility, and participation - particularly around Feed Salone, climate action, digital literacy, and public health.

290. We will also introduce legislation to protect personal and public data, modernise records management, and align public information systems with global best practices.

291. A **National Film Policy** will soon be finalised to energise Sierra Leone's creative industries. In addition, a **Youth in Entrepreneurship Initiative** will be launched - focusing on digital innovation, climate awareness, and job creation to empower the next generation to lead.

FOREIGN RELATIONS & INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members,

292. Sierra Leone's international standing has never been stronger. We currently serve as a **Non-Permanent Member of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC)** and as a **Member of the African Union Peace and Security Council**. This rare dual role allows us to shape global peace and amplify Africa's voice in international affairs.

293. During our **UNSC Presidency in August 2024**, we convened 20 formal meetings, adopted four major resolutions, and championed high-level debates on "**Historical Injustice and Africa's Representation**" and "**A New Agenda for Peace**". We also led a historic briefing on **Women, Peace, and Security**, reaffirming our commitment to gender inclusion in global peacebuilding.

294. On the continent, we chaired the **AU Peace and Security Council in May 2025**, leading the first field mission to Conakry since Guinea's 2021 coup and reinforcing our commitment to peace and democratic transitions in Africa.

295. As **Coordinator of the African Union Committee of Ten (C-10) on UN Security Council Reform**, Sierra Leone achieved a historic breakthrough: **for the first time, Security Council reform was introduced as a high-level agenda item during our UNSC Presidency**. This unprecedented move helped secure **U.S. support for Africa's demand for two permanent seats - a milestone in global diplomacy**.

296. We consolidated this momentum by **hosting a landmark C-10 Retreat in Freetown**, which strengthened the **Common African Position** and reaffirmed Sierra Leone's leadership in the reform process.

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members,

297. I acknowledge the criticisms that sometimes arise regarding my overseas travels. However, I assure this Honourable House that **every mission I undertake serves the national interests of Sierra Leone**.

298. **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.

299. 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.

300. These **engagements have yielded tangible results**, unlocking financing for transformative projects in areas such as roads, energy, agriculture, digital infrastructure, and climate resilience. Additionally, they have led to new trade agreements and strengthened international partnerships.

301. As part of our diplomatic expansion, new missions have been opened in **Algeria, France, and Ireland**, bringing our total missions to 26 and enhancing our global reach and services to citizens abroad.

302. On the current **occupation of Yenga by the Guinean Armed Forces**, our position remains peaceful but resolute. We are **committed to a diplomatic resolution while defending our sovereignty through legal and peaceful means**.

303. Finally, **Sierra Leone's Chairmanship of the ECOWAS Authority of Heads of State and Government**, assumed in June 2025, is a defining milestone. It places **our country at the forefront of regional peace, economic integration, trade, and infrastructure development**.

304. This moment is one of strategic opportunity and national pride - **proof that Sierra Leone is not only rebuilding from its past, but actively shaping the future of our region and the world**.

IV CONCLUSION

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members,

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

306. 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.

307. 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.

308. Our **Medium-Term National Development Plan** is not merely a document; it is a roadmap for a Sierra Leone that is just, inclusive, and prosperous. The **Big Five Game Changers** are laying that foundation - from agriculture to education, from youth employment to technology, from public service reform to stronger governance.

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

310. Press freedom thrives. The death penalty is gone. Justice is more accessible. Sierra Leone now stands tall - at the **United Nations**, the **African Union**, and **ECOWAS** - as a voice for democracy, peace, and principled leadership.

311. 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.

312. 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.

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

314. 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.

315. May the **Almighty God** bless our beloved Republic.

316. May **He** guide our work in this Parliament and across our land.

317. And may we always serve Sierra Leone with honour, humility, and unshakable integrity.

I THANK YOU

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