KEYNOTE ADDRESS

BY

HIS EXCELLENCY DR JULIUS MAADA BIO

PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF SIERRA LEONE

AS GUEST OF HONOUR AT THE

COMMISSIONING OF THE MATERNAL CENTER

OF EXCELLENCE, KOIDU GOVERNMENT

HOSPITAL, KONO DISTRICT

SATURDAY, 25TH OCTOBER 2025

— **Distinguished Guests,**

— **Partners in Development,**

— **Members of the Diplomatic Corps,**

— **Esteemed Health Professionals,**

— **Traditional and Religious Leaders,**

— **The People of Kono District,**

— **Ladies and Gentlemen,**

— **GOOD MORNING.**

1. **Every generation is remembered for the foundations it lays.**

2. Today, here in Kono, we **lay a foundation for life itself**.

3. This ***Maternal Centre of Excellence*** is a symbol of our nation's belief that **every mother deserves safety, every child deserves a chance, and every Sierra Leonean deserves to live in health and dignity.**

4. Kono has long been known for its diamonds. But today, this land gives the nation something even more precious — **the sparkle of *life, health, and hope***.

5. The true wealth of Kono and of Sierra Leone lies not in the precious stones beneath our soil, but in the people who walk upon it **— in the strength of our women, and in the future of every newborn child**.

6. This ***Centre of Excellence*** **stands at the heart of our Human Capital Development agenda — one of the Big Five Game Changers** — because a nation's progress begins with healthy mothers and children.

7. When we invest in their well-being, we invest in the future of education, productivity, and national prosperity.

8. **For too long, too many mothers have died while giving life.**

9. But that story is changing. Over the last two decades, Sierra Leone has **reduced maternal deaths by more than 70 percent**, and our **immunisation rates are among the highest in West Africa**.

10. However, **one preventable death is still too many**.

11. **This Maternal Centre of Excellence marks a new beginning.**

12. It brings together all the stages of maternal and child care — **from pregnancy and delivery to newborn and early childhood** — under one roof.

13. With **120 beds, advanced surgical and neonatal facilities, and training spaces for health professionals**, it will deliver safe,

respectful, and world-class care right here in Koidu.

14. **When it becomes fully operational early next year,** this Centre will more than double the capacity of **Koidu Government Hospital** and introduce **Sierra Leone's first rural-based neonatal intensive care unit**.

15. It will also serve as a **national training hub** for doctors, nurses, and midwives — proving that **quality healthcare does not depend on geography, but on vision and commitment**.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

16. This achievement is **the result of true partnership.**

17. I thank ***Partners in Health*** for their steadfast collaboration with the ***Ministry of Health***.

18. You stood with us after the Ebola outbreak and have remained a trusted ally in building a stronger, more resilient health system.

19. We also honour the memory of the **late Dr Paul Farmer, co-founder of Partners in Health**, whose belief that ***"health care is a human right"*** continues to inspire us.

20. Opening this Centre on his birthday makes this moment particularly meaningful — a living tribute to his compassion, courage, and humanity.

21. To **Build Health International**, and to our **generous friends and partners worldwide** — including the **vlogbrothers community** led by **John and Hank Green** — I express my heartfelt gratitude.

22. Your belief in Sierra Leone and your investment in its people have built more than a hospital; **you have built hope and possibility**.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

23. This project was **built not only with bricks and mortar, but with trust.**

24. Trust between Government and partners, between health workers and communities.

25. It reflects what we can achieve when we **work together with a shared purpose: to protect life and to build the future.**

26. As a nation, **we are making steady progress.**

27. In 2019, Sierra Leone's **maternal mortality ratio stood at 717 deaths per 100,000 live births**. Today, that figure has **fallen to 354**.

28. Guided by our **Human Capital Development Agenda**, we aim to **reduce that number below 70 by 2030**.

29. This Centre will be at the heart of that transformation.

30. Our progress also strengthens Sierra Leone's leadership in advancing Africa's health and Human Capital Agenda **— proof that even nations once defined by fragility can become beacons of resilience and reform.**

31. **I commend the Ministry of Health** for its strong leadership through the **National Steering Committee** and for ensuring that this project aligns with our national development priorities.

32. I also **acknowledge my Government's support** — from policy facilitation to tax waivers on imported medical equipment — that helped make this dream a reality.

33. I also commend the leadership of the Kono District authorities, our Paramount Chiefs, traditional healers, and community health volunteers.

34. Your trust and cooperation have made this Centre possible. **You are the true partners of progress.**

35. **To our doctors, nurses, and midwives:** this Centre belongs to you.

36. Use it to heal, to teach, to innovate, and to serve with compassion.

37. Let your hands restore health, your minds advance knowledge, and your hearts renew the sacred bond between caregiver and patient.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

38. **Empowering women and youth is central to building a just and prosperous Sierra Leone.**

39. Through this Centre, our young nurses, midwives, and health professionals — especially women — will lead the next generation of medical excellence.

40. **To the women across Sierra Leone:** this Centre was built for you.

41. It is a promise that you will bring life into the world safely, with dignity and skilled care.

42. Every mother we save, every child who takes a first breath here, will be **a story of victory over despair — a story of life renewed**.

43. As your President, I reaffirm my Government's commitment to ongoing investment in **Koidu Government Hospital**.

44. We aim to elevate it to a national model of excellence that meets international standards, ensuring that the people of Kono

and Sierra Leone receive the healthcare they deserve.

45. **We are also ensuring that this Centre remains sustainable** — equipped with renewable energy systems, digital health records, and continuous training programs to maintain excellence for decades to come.

46. **Every life saved here brings us closer to the Sierra Leone we dream of** — a nation where **NO WOMAN DIES GIVING LIFE**, and **EVERY CHILD BORN IS A SYMBOL OF OUR NATION'S PROMISE.**

CONCLUDING REMARKS

47. My brothers and sisters of Kono District, this hospital belongs to you.

48. It was built for the mothers, for the children, and for every family that has prayed for better health.

49. Let us protect it, cherish it, and ensure that it serves generations to come.

50. Today, we have proven that development is not only for our capital, Freetown — it must reach every corner of Sierra Leone.

51. From Kono to Tonkolili, from Kabala to Kailahun, every woman deserves to give birth safely, with dignity and love.

52. Let this Centre be a light from Kono that guides our journey to a healthier, stronger nation — **one filled with life, hope, and opportunity for all**.

53. This Centre is not only a gift to this generation — it is a promise to the next, that Sierra Leone will always choose life, hope, and human dignity above all else.

DISTINGUISHED GUESTS, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

54. I now have the singular honour to declare the **Koidu Government Hospital's Maternal Centre of Excellence** officially open.

MAY GOD BLESS YOU, AND I THANK YOU!