



SIERRA LEONE PEOPLE'S PARTY



75TH ANNIVERSARY DINNER — DIAMOND JUBILEE CELEBRATION

KEYNOTE ADDRESS

**BY HIS EXCELLENCY DR JULIUS MAADA BIO
PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF SIERRA LEONE
LEADER OF THE SIERRA LEONE PEOPLE'S PARTY**

TUESDAY 28TH APRIL 2026

**THEME: 75 YEARS OF LEADERSHIP, LEGACY AND
SERVICE**

A. SALUTATIONS:

- THE HONOURABLE VICE PRESIDENT,
- THE NATIONAL CHAIRMAN AND THE NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COUNCIL MEMBERS,
- OUR COUNCIL OF ELDERS,
- MINISTERS OF GOVERNMENT AND PUBLIC SERVANTS PRESENT,
- HONOURABLE MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT,
- OUR REVERED PARAMOUNT CHIEFS AND TRADITIONAL LEADERS,
- OUR FOUNDING FAMILY MEMBERS,
- OUR LOYAL PARTY MEMBERS AND SUPPORTERS,
- OUR HONOURED GUESTS,

- **FELLOW SIERRA LEONEANS,**
- **GOOD EVENING TO YOU ALL.**

A. OPENING REMARKS

1. Seventy-five years ago, in the closing years of colonial rule, a group of Sierra Leoneans gathered around a simple but radical idea: **that the people of this land, from every region, every chiefdom, every community, belonged to one another and had the right to govern themselves.**

2. From that idea, they built a Party. From that Party, they helped build a Nation.
3. Tonight is a reckoning with inheritance and duty.
4. **Seventy-five years on, the Sierra Leone People's Party endures.**
5. It has endured pressure, exile from power, internal trials and national storms.
6. Our Party has endured because it was built on something deeper than convenience.

7. Tonight, we gather under **a theme worthy of that history: LEADERSHIP, LEGACY and SERVICE.**
8. I commend the **National Chairman** and his team for the **Diamond Jubilee celebrations.**
9. I also honour all who have led this Party across generations.
10. Some are remembered in our books. Some are remembered in our homes.
11. Some are remembered only in the hearts of those who knew their sacrifice.

12. All of them have kept this Party standing.

13. But to understand what they were keeping
alive, we must return to where it all began.

B. THE MAKING OF A NATIONAL MOVEMENT

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

14. On **Friday, 27th April 1951**, in Bo, a national idea took shape, following earlier consultations in Kambia and Freetown.

15. Three movements came together: **the Protectorate Educational Progressive Union, the Sierra Leone Organisation Society, and the People's Party of Freetown, led by Reverend E. N. Jones, known to many as Lamina Sankoh.**

16. What emerged was bigger than a Political Party. **It was a National Compact.**

17. At the centre of that founding moment stood men of vision and courage, including: **Milton Margai, Albert Margai, Albert J. Momoh, Siaka Stevens, Gideon Thomas, Rev. Paul Dunbar, Robert B. Kowa, A. G. Caulker and Mohamed S. Mustapha.**

- 18.** Alongside them stood **Paramount Chiefs** who carried the authority of the land and the trust of the people: **Bai Farama Tass II, Bai Shebora Yumkella II, Julius Gulama, Raymond Brima Koker, Bai Koblo Pathbana, Alikali Modu, Alimamy Dura, Kenewa Gamanga and Jaiah Kaikai.**
- 19.** At the heart of that movement also stood **women of strength, dignity, and political purpose.**

20. From the **Freetown-based People's Party** came pioneers like **Regina James and Constance Cummings-John.**

21. From the chiefdoms came figures such as **Yabome Posseh, Ya Alimamy of Magbema Chiefdom, and Chief Honoria Bailor-Caulker of Moyamba.**

22. And then there were the women whose names we may never know.

23. The market women. The Mammy Queens. The Organisers. The Mobilisers.

- 24.** The women who carried the Party into their homes, chiefdoms and ordinary life.
- 25.** They organised without platforms. They led without titles. They sustained the Party with their labour and conviction.
- 26.** We remember too the wider circle of institutional builders: **Ella Koblo Gulama, Dr John Karefa-Smart, Banja Tejan-Sie, Herbert E. B. John, Albert J. Randall, Newman Pratt, Teacher A. S. Koker, Amadu Wurie, and Lamina Sankoh himself.**

27. We remember **the young pioneers** who stepped forward to shape history: **Mannah Kpaka, Alimamy Baba Sillah, Mohamed Tejan George, Salia Jusu-Sheriff, Luseni A. Brewa, and Kutubu Kaisamba.**

28. The **Sierra Leone People's Party** was built as an act of national unification, affirming that this nation does not belong to a single region or people.

29. Our rallying call, **ONE COUNTRY, ONE PEOPLE**, rejected division and challenged the very foundation of colonial rule.

- 30.** Seventy-five years later, these words remain our compass and our answer to every force that seeks to divide us along ethnic, religious, or regional lines.
- 31. Tonight, we celebrate both the named and the unnamed — those whose courage, conviction, and quiet sacrifice set Sierra Leone firmly on the path to self-governance, independence, and national unity.**

32. But celebration without memory is incomplete.

33. And the memory of this Party is not only of triumph.

C. THE YEARS THAT TESTED US

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

- 34.** Endurance has sometimes come at a price.

- 35.** In 1978, under the one-party state imposed by the Siaka Stevens-led All People's Congress (APC), the SLPP was formally banned.

- 36.** Our leaders were threatened, persecuted, and, in some cases, killed.

- 37.** Our supporters were denied the ordinary rights of political life. To be identified with this Party was to accept great risk.
- 38.** For over two decades, the SLPP endured a wilderness of exclusion, pressure, and fear.
- 39.** But our Party did not die. It endured through people and through memory.
- 40.** It endured through homes where its values were taught, through elders who refused to renounce what they believed, and through families who carried conviction from one generation into the next.

- 41.** For many in this room, this is a living personal history.
- 42.** It lives in the stories of parents and grandparents who kept faith even when it came at a cost.
- 43.** The strength of a political movement is not measured only when it holds power.
- 44.** Its strength is measured by what remains when power is taken away.

- 45.** When multi-party democracy was restored in 1996, and the Sierra Leone People's Party returned to the people under the leadership of **Ahmad Tejan Kabbah**, Sierra Leoneans did not need persuasion to recognise that this Party still had life. They already knew.
- 46.** The flame had been kept burning, and the inheritance had been preserved.

- 47.** Tonight, we honour the **late President Ahmad Tejan Kabbah and all the men and women** who stood with him and guided this nation with dignity.
- 48.** Every generation of this Party has passed a flame to the next.
- 49.** What President Kabbah's generation preserved and restored was then entrusted to those who came after.

IV. THE BIO ERA: A COVENANT WITH PARTY AND COUNTRY

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

50. That trust was passed to me in 2011. And I have tried, every single day since, to be worthy of it.

51. I came to this Party by conviction. I stayed by conviction.

- 52.** The SLPP believes that the ordinary people of this country — the farmer in Kambia, the trader in Bo, the fisherman in Bonthe and the miner in Kono — deserve a Government that sees them not as voters to be managed, but as citizens to be served.
- 53.** That is a principle I could not walk away from.

- 54.** Since 2011, my duty has been clear as the Leader: **to rebuild what had weakened, to restore discipline where it had frayed, to strengthen our national appeal, to keep the Party rooted in its founding values, and to prepare it for leadership in a changing Sierra Leone.**
- 55.** That work has not always been easy. Leadership never is.
- 56.** As we say in Krio: **How di bata de bit, na so di dans de go. As the drum beats, so the dance goes.**

- 57.** The tone set at the top shapes everything below it.
- 58.** When leadership is steady and disciplined, the Party moves with confidence, even through the most difficult times. When it is not, everything crumbles.
- 59.** I have given this Party my best years. I would give them again.
- 60.** But I say this clearly: **the Sierra Leone People's Party is greater than any one Leader, including me.**

61. Public Office passes. Stewardship remains.
62. Titles pass. Service remains.
63. The duty to counsel, to steady, and to protect the institution does not end when one leaves the State House.
64. I will remain, by God's grace, **a loyal servant of this Party and this nation.**

E. OUR ENDURING VIRTUES

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

65. Loyalty to our Party and Country should be our moral compass.

66. Loyalty does not mean blindly praising the Leader or Party.

67. It is the willingness to strengthen the house even when you are not in the driver's seat.

68. It is the patience to build an institution, whether there is victory or defeat.

- 69.** It is the refusal to abandon what leaders before us built just because our own moment has not yet come.
- 70.** No Party reaches seventy-five years without disappointments, grievances, bruised egos and hard decisions. That is the truth of political life.
- 71. As Leader of our great Party, I have had to make difficult decisions.**
- 72.** Some have been welcomed. Others have caused discomfort. No serious leader takes such decisions lightly.

- 73.** But leadership cannot be exercised only at the point where everybody is pleased.
- 74.** Politics is long work. It requires patience. It requires discipline. It requires memory.
- 75.** Some will win today. Some will win tomorrow. Some will have to wait longer.
- 76.** But if those who do not get their moment immediately decide to weaken the house, then in the end, we all lose together.

- 77.** A great Party survives because its people understand timing.
- 78.** A great Party survives because its people understand that loyalty is tested most severely when ambition is disappointed.
- 79.** There is a saying I have always respected:
the stone by the waterside does not fear the rain — it has endured it before.

80. This Party has stood in rain before. It has stood in storms and withstood pressure because its foundations run deep, like the roots of a palm tree.

81. So, let us always remember this: **when the rain comes, the palm tree must stand.**

F. THE ROAD TO 2028 — CHOOSING OUR NEXT LEADER

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

82. As we celebrate seventy-five years, we are also summoned to look forward with a clear understanding of what this Party must now prepare for.

83. 2028 is closer than it feels. **The SLPP must arrive at that moment united, prepared, and disciplined.**

84. Our next Flagbearer and Leader cannot be chosen by sentiment or faction.

- 85.** We must set aside entitlement and choose with clarity and discipline.
- 86.** The question we must ask ourselves honestly is: **who can unite the Party, win the country, govern competently, and carry Sierra Leone forward?**
- 87.** **Our next Leader must be a unifier.** They must command respect across generations, regions, and divides.
- 88.** They must be able to build trust beyond our traditional base.

- 89.** Our next Leader must also show proof of their vision, their capacity to deliver and the moral authority that this office demands.
- 90.** Whoever seeks this office must be able to handle criticism maturely and keep the Party together while making difficult decisions.
- 91. They must represent continuity with renewal:** protecting what has been built, correcting what must be improved, and leading with fresh energy rooted in our

founding principle — **One Country, One People.**

92. Our greatest challenge in 2028 may not come from the opposition — it may come from within.

93. Divisive rhetoric, incitement, and disruptive conduct that undermine the unity, discipline, and integrity of the Party must cease.

- 94.** No individual interest, ambition, or grievance can be allowed to weaken the collective foundation we have built together.
- 95.** The SLPP is a democratic party, not a monarchy; our next leader will emerge through a transparent and credible democratic process.

G. THE NEW DIRECTION MANDATE

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

96. Until a new Flagbearer and Leader is duly elected, **I remain fully in charge as Leader of the Party**, with the **National Chairman** at the helm of its day-to-day affairs.

97. Our duty as the ruling Party remains clear: to serve the people of Sierra Leone diligently, selflessly, and without distraction — delivering results that speak for themselves.

- 98.** When we came to power in 2018, we made a covenant with the people of Sierra Leone.
- 99. We called it the NEW DIRECTION.** That duty remains.
- 100.** The progress we have made is real. It is visible in classrooms, in fields, in communities that once waited in vain for Government to arrive.
- 101.** And yes, the distance we still have to cover is real.

102. We do not pretend otherwise, and we do not shrink from the work it demands.

103. We will not rest until every commitment made is a commitment kept.

VIII. THE NEXT CHAPTER — A CHARGE TO THE NATION

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

104. As we mark seventy-five years, we must look ahead.

105. The next seventy-five years will not be built by this generation alone.

106. It will be shaped by young Sierra Leoneans.

107. In classrooms and chiefdoms. On farms and in laboratories. In markets and local councils across our nation.

108. Tonight, this call goes beyond our membership.

109. It goes to every young Sierra Leonean. To every undecided citizen. To every Sierra Leonean who has never been part of this movement before.

110. I invite you to look closely at what the SLPP stands for.

111. A Party founded on unity, grounded in social justice and convinced that your future must not be determined by where you come from.

112. If you believe in a Sierra Leone where unity is stronger than division, where opportunity is broader than privilege, and where leadership is defined by service, then this is your Party.

113. Join us today as participants and as builders.

114. Help us renew this movement and strengthen our democracy.

IX. CONCLUSION — LEADERSHIP, LEGACY AND SERVICE

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

113. Seventy-five years is both an achievement and a beginning.

114. An achievement because it proves that what was built in 1951 was built to endure.

115. This Party has survived suppression and wilderness.

116. It has survived disappointment and pressure.

117. It remains standing because it has remained rooted in purpose.

118. And it is a beginning because the work is unfinished.

119. The progress and unity of Sierra Leone are not automatic.

120. They must be renewed in every generation. They must be protected in every season.

121. And they must be honoured in how we govern, how we organise, how we compete, and how we serve.

122. The **Sierra Leone People's Party** is rightly called Sierra Leone's political diamond.

123. Diamonds are formed under pressure. They are shaped over time. They endure because what is within them does not break.

124. On this **Diamond Jubilee, we celebrate our unbreakable political movement.**

125. To the **Founding Fathers and Mothers:** your vision was not in vain. May the souls of our dearly departed continue to rest in eternal peace.

126. To those who kept faith in difficult years:

your courage was not wasted.

127. To those serving now: your responsibility is

clear.

128. And to those who will lead after us:

remember that you inherit not a machine,
but a moral trust.

129. The next seventy-five years will demand
courage. They will demand discipline. They
will demand renewal.

130. They will demand fidelity to the founding instruction that has carried us this far: **One Country. One People.**

131. Tonight, we do not just look back with pride. We raise a glass to what is still to be built.

X. MAKING THE TOAST

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

132. On the **twenty-seventh of April, Sierra Leone marked sixty-five years of independence.**

133. Tonight, we honour the generation that chose that date and declared a nation free.

134. The same conviction that built this Party helped give birth to this Republic.

135. The **Sierra Leone People's Party** did not merely participate in the independence movement.

136. It helped shape it and anchor it in the belief that this land, though divided by history, could still become one people.

137. Seventy-five years ago, a movement was born with that belief.

138. Sixty-five years ago, it became a free country.

139. Tonight, **we celebrate both the Party that helped light the fire and the nation that continues to carry its light.**

140. To the **Sierra Leone People's Party** — may the next seventy-five years be worthy of the first.

141. To the **Founding Fathers and Mothers** — your faith was not misplaced.

142. And to **every Sierra Leonean** — wherever you are, however you vote, whatever language you speak — this independence is yours. This Republic is yours.

143. Let us rise and lift our glasses.

144. To Sierra Leone: sixty-five years free.

145. To the SLPP: seventy-five years strong.

146. God bless the **Republic of Sierra Leone.**

147. God bless the **Sierra Leone People's Party.**

148. ONE COUNTRY. ONE PEOPLE.