



KEYNOTE ADDRESS

BY

**HIS EXCELLENCY DR JULIUS MAADA BIO
PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF SIERRA LEONE
AND CHAIR OF THE ECOWAS AUTHORITY OF
HEADS OF STATE AND GOVERNMENT
AT THE OFFICIAL COMMISSIONING OF THE
NEWTON AND LUNGI SOLAR POWER PROJECTS
UNDER THE REGIONAL EMERGENCY SOLAR
POWER INTERVENTION (RESPITE) PROJECT**

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 10, 2026

- **HONOURABLE VICE PRESIDENT,**
- **HONOURABLE SPEAKER OF PARLIAMENT,**
- **HONOURABLE CHIEF JUSTICE,**
- **HONOURABLE MINISTERS OF GOVERNMENT,**
- **MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT,**
- **REPRESENTATIVES OF THE WORLD BANK GROUP,**
- **REPRESENTATIVES OF THE DIPLOMATIC AND
DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY,**
- **TRADITIONAL AUTHORITIES,**
- **LEADERSHIP OF THE MINISTRY OF ENERGY, EDSA AND
EGTC,**
- **DISTINGUISHED GUESTS,**
- **LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,**
- **GOOD MORNING.**

1. There are moments in the life of a nation that speak not only to where a country is, but to where it is determined to go.
2. **Today is such a moment.**
3. We gather here to commission the **Newton and Lungi Solar Power Projects** and to mark another decisive step in Sierra Leone's journey towards energy security, economic transformation, and sustainable development.
4. But today is more than the commissioning of two energy projects. It is a statement of national ambition and a declaration that Sierra Leone is investing in its future.
5. And it is proof that when vision is matched by determination, partnership, and action, transformation becomes possible.

6. Today is a proud day for our nation.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

7. I have travelled extensively across Sierra Leone and witnessed firsthand how unreliable electricity affects the daily lives of our people.

8. I have visited schools where students struggle to study after sunset. I have seen healthcare workers striving to save lives under difficult conditions.

9. I have spoken with entrepreneurs and business owners who bear the high cost of generators to remain operational.

10. Those experiences have reinforced a simple truth:
Electricity is not a luxury. It is a necessity.

11. It powers opportunity, strengthens livelihoods, drives enterprise, supports innovation and fuels national development.
12. For too long, energy poverty has constrained the full potential of our people and our economy.
13. For too long, many Sierra Leoneans have had to adapt to darkness, uncertainty, and inadequate infrastructure.
14. That is not the future we accept. Today, Sierra Leone sends a clear message: **We are moving forward.**
15. We are building an energy future that is cleaner, more reliable, more resilient, and more inclusive.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

- 16.** When my Government assumed office, fewer than thirty percent of Sierra Leoneans had access to electricity.
- 17.** Entire communities remained disconnected from the opportunities that reliable power creates.
- 18.** The infrastructure we inherited faced significant constraints, and the sector remained heavily dependent on imported fuel, exposing our economy to external shocks and rising global energy prices.
- 19.** These challenges were real. But so was our determination to address them.
- 20.** No nation can modernise, industrialise, create sustainable jobs, or compete effectively in the twenty-first century without reliable energy.

21. Energy security is not simply a sectoral priority. It is a national imperative.

22. Today, while challenges remain, I want every Sierra Leonean to know that this Government hears you, understands your concerns, and is acting decisively.

23. Across the energy sector, we are undertaking bold reforms and strategic investments to expand access, improve reliability, and build a stronger foundation for future growth.

24. These are not future ambitions. They are actions already underway.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

- 25.** From the outset, **my Government adopted a clear vision: To build an energy-secure Sierra Leone.**
- 26.** A Sierra Leone where every home, school, health facility, business, and community has access to reliable, affordable, and sustainable electricity.
- 27.** A Sierra Leone that harnesses its abundant natural resources to power development, strengthen resilience, and accelerate economic growth.
- 28.** That vision continues to guide our actions.
- 29.** **The projects we commission today represent the largest single addition to renewable energy generation capacity in Sierra Leone's history.**

- 30.** They will strengthen our national grid, improve reliability, increase resilience, and expand access to electricity for hundreds of thousands of Sierra Leoneans.
- 31.** More importantly, they represent a major milestone in our broader effort to build a modern energy sector capable of supporting the aspirations of our people and the ambitions of our nation.
- 32.** The electricity generated by these projects will do more than power homes and businesses.
- 33.** It will help preserve medicines in clinics, enable children to study after sunset, support farmers and agro-processors, strengthen small and medium-sized enterprises, and create new opportunities for investment and employment.

34. In short, it will improve lives, expand opportunities, and strengthen the foundations of national development.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

35. These projects directly advance our **Big Five Game Changers Agenda.**

36. They reflect the same philosophy that underpins **our Big Five Game Changers Agenda: that sustainable development requires bold investments in the foundations of national progress.**

37. Reliable and affordable energy is one of those foundations. Reliable energy powers productivity. It supports food systems transformation. It accelerates technology and innovation.

- 38.** It creates jobs. It strengthens healthcare and education. And it drives industrial growth.
- 39.** The true value of these investments lies not only in the electricity they generate, but in the opportunities they create.
- 40.** These are not simply energy projects. **They are nation-building projects.**
- 41.** To every student who has studied in darkness, every healthcare worker who has served without reliable power, every entrepreneur who has persevered through repeated outages, and every family that has waited patiently for better service: **This achievement is for you.**
- 42.** We are building a future in which reliable electricity is not a privilege for a few, but a service available to all.

- 43.** The benefits of this transformation belong to every Sierra Leonean.
- 44.** When one community advances, the nation advances. When one district prospers, Sierra Leone prospers.
- 45.** And when every citizen has the opportunity to thrive, our country becomes stronger, more united, and more prosperous.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

- 46.** Our commitment to renewable energy extends beyond economics. It is also about responsibility.
- 47.** The world is undergoing a profound energy transition, and Sierra Leone is determined to be part of that future.

48. By diversifying our energy mix and reducing dependence on imported fuel, we strengthen energy security, reduce long-term costs, and build resilience against future shocks.
49. The **Newton and Lungi Solar Power Projects** demonstrate that economic growth and environmental stewardship can advance together.
50. Today, Sierra Leone joins a growing community of nations demonstrating that clean energy can be a catalyst for development, resilience, and prosperity.
51. This achievement reflects what is possible when a nation has the courage to think boldly, act decisively, and invest confidently in its future.
52. And Sierra Leone is proving precisely that.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

53. As **Chair of the ECOWAS Authority of Heads of State and Government**, I am encouraged by the growing commitment across our region to sustainable energy solutions.

54. Energy security remains critical to economic integration, industrial development, and shared prosperity throughout West Africa.

55. Sierra Leone is proud to contribute to this regional transformation.

56. The story of Sierra Leone's energy sector is changing. We are moving from energy scarcity to energy security. From dependence to resilience. And from constraint to opportunity.

- 57.** Today, we are not just commissioning power plants. We are demonstrating that Sierra Leone can deliver complex infrastructure projects, mobilise strategic partnerships, and execute a clear vision for national development.
- 58.** That achievement should give confidence to every investor, development partner, and institution looking to engage with our country.
- 59.** Today's commissioning is not only a celebration of what has been achieved. It is also an invitation to what is possible.
- 60.** Sierra Leone possesses extraordinary renewable energy potential. We are blessed with abundant sunshine, significant hydropower resources, and growing opportunities in clean energy technologies.

- 61.** I therefore extend a clear invitation to investors, development partners, international financial institutions, climate finance institutions, technology providers, and innovators across the world to join us in accelerating Sierra Leone's energy transformation.
- 62.** To the private sector, both domestic and international, I say: **Sierra Leone is open for investment. Sierra Leone is open for partnership.**
- 63.** The success of the **RESPITE Project** demonstrates what can be achieved when strong national leadership is matched by effective international partnership.
- 64.** My Government remains committed to strengthening the policy, regulatory, and investment environment necessary to support long-term growth and investment.

65. The opportunities before us are substantial. And our renewable energy potential remains largely untapped.
66. Government cannot achieve this transformation alone.
67. The future we seek will be built through strong partnerships among government, the private sector, development partners, financial institutions, local communities, and the people of Sierra Leone.
68. To all those seeking opportunities to invest in sustainable development, climate resilience, and economic growth, I say: **Sierra Leone is ready.**

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

- 69.** No nation succeeds alone. And no project of this scale is delivered without partnership.
- 70.** I therefore **extend my profound appreciation to the World Bank Group for its unwavering support, technical expertise, and partnership in bringing the RESPITE Project to fruition.**
- 71.** I **thank the current and former Ministers of Energy, the staff of the Ministry of Energy, EDSA, and EGTC for their leadership and dedication.**
- 72.** I commend the contractors, engineers, consultants, technicians, and project implementation teams whose expertise and commitment made these projects possible.

73. I thank the traditional authorities and the people of Newton and Lungi for their cooperation and support.

74. And above all, I thank the people of Sierra Leone for their resilience, patience, and unwavering belief in a brighter future.

MY FELLOW SIERRA LEONEANS,

75. Imagine a Sierra Leone where every citizen has access to opportunity. Where every community is connected to progress.

76. Where every young person can fulfil their potential. Where businesses can grow with confidence. Where innovation can flourish. And where prosperity is shared more broadly among our people.

- 77.** That is the Sierra Leone we are building. Not for ourselves alone. But for generations yet to come.
- 78.** And today, with the commissioning of these projects, we move one step closer to that future.
- 79.** Sierra Leone did not arrive at this moment by accident. We arrived here through vision, determination, partnership, and perseverance.
- 80.** We chose reform over complacency. Investment over delay. Progress over excuses.
- 81.** Today we stand at the crossroads of challenge and opportunity.
- 82.** Behind us lies a history of energy insecurity. Before us lies a future of greater access, greater reliability, and greater opportunity.

- 83.** Let history record that Sierra Leone chose progress over delay. Innovation over complacency. And opportunity over limitation.
- 84.** Let history record that we invested in our people.
- 85.** Let history record that we harnessed the power of the sun to power the ambitions of our people, unlock the potential of our economy, and illuminate the future of our nation.
- 86.** And let history record that we refused to accept darkness as destiny.
- 87.** Because our ambition is greater than our challenges. Our determination is stronger than our obstacles. And our future is brighter than our past.
- 88.** Years from now, when future generations look upon these facilities, may they see more than solar panels and battery storage systems.

- 89.** May they see a nation that believed in itself. A nation that embraced innovation. A nation that invested boldly in its future.
- 90.** That is the story we are writing today. That is the legacy we are building together. And that is the Sierra Leone we will proudly pass on to generations yet unborn.
- 91.** It is therefore with profound gratitude to our partners, deep appreciation to all who made these projects possible, and unwavering confidence in the future of our beloved nation, that I hereby officially commission the **Newton 30-Megawatt Solar Power Plant with a 15-Megawatt-hour Battery Energy Storage System and the Lungi 10-Megawatt Solar Power Plant with a 6-Megawatt-hour Battery Energy Storage System under the Regional Emergency Solar Power Intervention (RESPITE) Project.**

92. May these facilities bring light where there was darkness. Opportunity where there was limitation. Hope where there was uncertainty. And prosperity where there was stagnation.

93. May they stand as enduring symbols of what Sierra Leone can achieve when vision is matched by partnership and ambition by action.

94. Let history record that Sierra Leone chose its future and built it.

95. Let the light shine. Let opportunity flourish. Let Sierra Leone rise.

96. May God bless you all. May God bless the Republic of Sierra Leone.

I THANK YOU.