



PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS
DELIVERED BY
HIS EXCELLENCY DR JULIUS MAADA BIO
PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF SIERRA LEONE
AHEAD OF THE VOTE ON
THE CONSTITUTION OF SIERRA LEONE
(AMENDMENT) BILL, 2025
SUNDAY, 9TH AUGUST, 2026

Fellow Sierra Leoneans,

- 1.** Today, I address you not only in my capacity as President, but also as a fellow citizen who has journeyed with this nation through some of its darkest and most defining moments.
- 2.** I want to speak to you today about the Constitution of Sierra Leone Amendment Bill — a historic piece of legislation that represents the culmination of decades of national dialogue and offers Parliament an opportunity to strengthen our democracy for generations to come.
- 3.** Thirty years ago, in 1996, I was entrusted with the responsibility of leading Sierra Leone as Head of State. During that period, I made decisions that shaped my life and, I believe, helped shape the

course of our nation. I initiated negotiations with the Revolutionary United Front, oversaw the conduct of democratic elections, and returned Sierra Leone to civilian rule.

- 4.** Those steps contributed to the Lomé Peace Agreement of 1999, which brought our brutal civil war to an end and gave our people the opportunity to rebuild on the foundations of peace, democracy, and national unity.
- 5.** The Lomé Agreement called for the review of our Constitution. By ratifying that Agreement into law through the Lomé Peace Agreement (Ratification) Act, 1999, we recognised that the 1991 Constitution, although historic and important, did not fully address the aspirations of

a nation emerging from conflict and seeking greater inclusion, justice, stability, and accountability.

- 6.** The Truth and Reconciliation Commission, established to examine the causes of our civil war, reached a similar conclusion. For more than two decades, successive governments, commissions, civil society organisations, and ordinary citizens have sustained the call for constitutional reform.
- 7.** The constitutional review process began under the late President Ahmed Tejan Kabba, of blessed memory, who established the Dr. Peter Tucker Constitutional Review Committee. That Committee submitted its report to former

President Ernest Bai Koroma, who concluded that a broader and more inclusive process was necessary. He therefore established the Justice Edmond Cowan Constitutional Review Committee.

- 8.** The Cowan Committee, an 80-member body, undertook the most extensive constitutional consultation in our nation's history. Between 2013 and 2017, it conducted more than 10,000 public consultations across the country, engaged 133 stakeholder groups, received 150 position papers, broadcast over 20,000 hours of airtime, and distributed more than 70,000 consultation forms throughout every district.
- 9.** This was a truly national process — not a partisan

exercise. The Committee submitted its report to former President Koroma in 2017.

10. When my Government assumed office in 2018, we did not abandon that work, nor did we seek to begin the process anew. We built upon the foundation already laid. As I have consistently stated, our determination has been to bring this long-standing national assignment to completion.

11. And in my recent capacity as Chairman of ECOWAS, I worked to uphold and defend the principles of democracy and good governance across the region.

12. Over the past several years, we have continued to consult widely with stakeholders across the

country. We have listened, considered, refined, and presented this Bill as part of a constitutional reform process that has crossed administrations, political parties, and generations.

- 13.** Now, that responsibility rests with Parliament — the institution entrusted by the people to represent their will and protect the national interest.

Fellow Sierra Leoneans,

- 14.** The Bill before Parliament is the product of years of consultation and engagement. It reflects the contributions of citizens from every district, community, and sector of our society. It also contains key reforms that have received agreement and support under previous

governments.

- 15.** Among the provisions, it introduces proportional representation to broaden participation and give women, young people, professionals, and minority groups a fairer opportunity to be represented in the corridors of power.
- 16.** It enshrines a minimum 30 percent quota for women in political nominations, transforming inclusion from a statement of aspiration into an enforceable constitutional commitment.
- 17.** It also strengthens the independence and accountability of our electoral institutions, helping to ensure that the rules governing our democracy are fair, transparent, credible, and trusted by all.

18. I commend citizens and stakeholders who have continued to attend the parliamentary debates, follow the proceedings, and contribute to this national conversation. Your patience, vigilance, and commitment demonstrate that constitutional reform belongs to the people.

19. I also recognize and commend the Honourable Members of Parliament who have remained in the Chamber through long hours of debate and deliberation. Your duty is demanding, but the significance of this moment requires perseverance, genuineness, seriousness, and a willingness to place the national interest above personal or partisan considerations.

20. Honourable Members of Parliament, I appeal to your sense of duty. The decision before you will not end with the vote. It will be remembered by generations yet unborn. It will help determine whether Sierra Leone continues to advance its democracy or allows constitutional uncertainty and exclusion to persist.

21. Your decision will influence whether our daughters inherit a Constitution that recognises their equal right to lead, whether our young people are given a meaningful voice in shaping their future, and whether citizens continue to believe that Parliament can rise above division and act in the interest of the entire nation.

22. Some may ask: Why now? Why focus on electoral reforms?

23. The answer is simple and clear. Our next general elections are approaching. If we delay, we risk conducting them under rules that the Government, the Opposition, civil society, citizens, and several election observer missions have all recognized as requiring reform. Constitutional and electoral changes must be made before elections — not when it is very close for voters to cast their votes. That is the principle recognized by the African Union, ECOWAS, and the United Nations, and it is essential to protecting democracy from uncertainty, manipulation, and confusion.

24. Let me also address those who believe that the present Constitution is perfect and that the only problem lies in how the Supreme Court has interpreted it. If that is the concern, then Parliament must now provide the necessary clarity. The responsibility of Parliament is not merely to defend the text of the Constitution, but to safeguard its meaning, strengthen its application, and ensure that it continues to serve the people of Sierra Leone.

25. A Constitution is not designed for one political party. It is not the property of one government, one institution, or one group. It must carry the aspirations, rights, hopes, and dreams of all

citizens. It must enable the country to move forward, promote inclusion, protect democracy, and make Sierra Leone more progressive.

26. Honourable Members, when you enter the Chamber to cast your votes, I ask you to look beyond the present political moment. Listen to the voices of the citizens who participated in the consultations. Remember the women who have waited for greater representation. Remember the young people who seek a place in determining their own future. Remember the communities that have contributed to this process with patience and hope.

27. Do not vote for me. Do not vote for this Government. Do not vote for any political party.

Vote for Sierra Leone.

Vote “Yes” for inclusion.

Vote “Yes” for women.

Vote “Yes” for the youth.

Vote “Yes” for credible elections.

Vote “Yes” for a stronger democracy.

Vote “Yes” for the future of our beloved nation.

28. In 1996, I took steps to return Sierra Leone to its people through the return of multi-party democracy. Now, I ask Parliament to take the next historic step: to give Sierra Leone a stronger and more inclusive Constitution.

29. This is the moment to rise above politics. This is the moment to honour the sacrifices of our people. This is the moment to complete a process that

has continued across successive administrations and endured for more than two decades.

30. I therefore make a clear and solemn appeal: let this Bill be passed now. Let Honourable Members vote “Yes”—not for a party, not for an individual, but for the people and the future of democracy in Sierra Leone.

31. May history record that, at this critical hour, Parliament chose country over division, progress over stagnation, and a stronger democracy for generations to come.

32. I thank you.

God bless you. God bless the Republic of Sierra Leone, the land that we love.