

INAUGURAL ADDRESS BY HIS EXCELLENCY PRESIDENT DR JULIUS MAADA BIO AT
THE NATIONAL STADIUM ON SATURDAY 12th MAY 2018

Colleague Heads of State and Government,
Honourable Vice President,
Honourable Speaker of Parliament,
Honourable Chief Justice,
The First Lady of the Republic,
Ministers of Government,
Honourable Members of Parliament,
Your Worship the Mayor of Freetown,
Your Excellencies, Members of the Diplomatic Corps,
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

22 Years ago, I organised the first democratic elections in nearly 30 years and peacefully handed over political power to the elected Sierra Leone People's Party Government. Today, I am here as the recipient of that democratic advancement. This day is momentous and historic. I have every reason to thank the Almighty God for making this day happen.

First, I thank God for the opportunity to be elected as President of the Republic of Sierra Leone and the unique privilege to serve this great nation.

Second, I thank God for the unique opportunity to serve this great nation twice in 22 years. This is the first in the history of Sierra Leone and I will forever cherish this democratic mandate. I am humbled by the trust and confidence the people of this great nation have reposed in me and I will never betray your trust and confidence.

Third, who would have imagined that today I will be inaugurated on my Birthday as President of the Republic of Sierra Leone. This is a privilege and I am humbled by the abundant grace and blessing of God Almighty for sparing my life to see this day. If you had asked me to make a birthday wish, I will ask for God's guidance to lead our country in the paths of those three sacred words of our Coat of Arms: unity, freedom and justice.

Let me take this opportunity to sincerely thank the people of Sierra Leone for electing me as their President. This is a sacred position and today, I want to reaffirm my commitment that I am President for All Sierra Leoneans. I therefore faithfully pledge to diligently work for, to protect and defend all Sierra Leoneans irrespective of political, tribal, religious, gender, sectional, regional and socio-economic background.

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, as I stated in my State Opening of Parliament Address on Thursday, 10th May 2018, my election is not only a victory for myself and the Sierra Leone People's Party but also for the people of Sierra Leone. This historic victory clearly

demonstrates the progress that we have made as a nation to peacefully defend and consolidate our nascent democracy.

Let me therefore take this opportunity to thank the out-going President, Dr. Ernest Bai Koroma, for ensuring that we keep faith in our young democracy through peaceful transfer of power from one civilian administration to another.

On behalf of the people of Sierra Leone and on my personal behalf, I welcome my colleague Heads of State and Government, the various distinguished representatives of friendly countries, bilateral partners and organisations that are present to witness this historic occasion.

You have honoured us with your presence and we take this as a true manifestation of the fraternal relationship that exists between our countries and people. I sincerely look forward to working with you all in the coming years to build on and advance our mutual friendship and co-operation.

Fellow Sierra Leoneans, in my State Opening of Parliament Address, I clearly set out the main policies and programmes of my New Direction administration in the areas of the economy; agriculture; marine resources; tourism; mineral resources; the manufacturing sector; fiscal prudence and domestic revenue mobilisation; human and social development; youth development and empowerment; governance; peace, security and the justice sector.

My New Direction administration has prioritised Free Quality Education as the Flagship policy programme of my government. We have made education the bedrock and foundation for Development in Sierra Leone and the main strategy to create a ladder of opportunity for all Sierra Leoneans to climb and achieve their greatest potentials.

As a new administration, we now have the unique opportunity to develop and implement a new Development Plan for Sierra Leone and I am pleased to announce that the theme and focus for our national development plan for the next 5 years is: 'Education for Development.' This is our first step to lay the foundation to reclaim the historic educational reputation as the 'Athens of West Africa'.

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, the strategic objective of the policies and programmes outlined in our New Direction agenda is to change and transform Sierra Leone into a country that we can all be proud of. The Audacious Vision of our New Direction revolution is to provide efficient political and economic management of the state and our abundant natural resources for the benefit of all Sierra Leoneans. That is why, the underlying principles of our New Direction agenda are based on Disciplined Leadership, Integrity, Professionalism, Efficiency and competent service Delivery for the People of Sierra Leone.

Fellow Sierra Leoneans, since my election as President on the 4th April 2018 and despite having inherited the worse economic situation in the country since independence in 1961, I

am optimistic that change is possible in Sierra Leone. Since assuming the reigns of state governance, the policies, programmes, Presidential Directives and Executive Orders implemented relating to domestic revenue mobilisation; fiscal prudence and implementing the National Cleaning Day exercise have clearly demonstrated that indeed change is possible in Sierra Leone and that the people are ready and prepared for change.

In just two weeks of my new administration, my Government was able to pay public sector salaries in April on time without having to rely on Central Bank Overdraft facility. My Government is therefore committed to build on and consolidate the small gains that we have made to change and transform Sierra Leone.

I am aware that we have been elected on the ticket for change with huge, if not, immediate expectations to deliver not only basic and essential services but also to bring meaningful change in the lives of the people of Sierra Leone. While the task to change and transform Sierra Leone is monumental, with our collective determination that task is not insurmountable.

In Sierra Leone today, everything or sector area is a priority that needs immediate attention; from the dilapidated State House premises to the lack of sustainable electricity supply across the country.

Fellow Sierra Leoneans, let me assure you that this change is not impossible and I believe in the will and commitment of the people to change and transform Sierra Leone. I cannot do it alone, so today I ask all of you to believe in your capacity as citizens that together we can change Sierra Leone.

Fellow compatriots, today, I call on you in every walk of life to ask yourself individually: what can I do, to make this change and transformation happen?

During my campaigns and since my election, I have said time and time again that this is not going to be the Business-as-Usual Politics and Governance of the state. My new Government is therefore launching 3 peaceful democratic wars: First, a War on Indiscipline; Second, a War on Corruption; and Third, a War on Poverty. These Peaceful democratic wars on Indiscipline, Corruption and Poverty will define my tenure of Office and I am determined to deliver on my promises.

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, I will provide the disciplined leadership to drive and sustain our New Direction revolution. To make this change possible, my Government will tirelessly work for and remain committed to inclusive politics; inclusive development; inclusive economic growth and inclusive governance.

I therefore call on our young people, our youth, to be at the forefront in promoting our peaceful democratic wars on Indiscipline, Corruption and Poverty. My administration will invest in our youth to create jobs and new opportunities to develop themselves and their families. We will provide the resources and skills training needed to empower our youth so

that they are able to make meaningful contribution to the development of our country today and become future leaders tomorrow.

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, I also call on all our partners to join us to deliver change. My Government will continue to build on and strengthen our existing bilateral relationships with all our friends and neighbours. I particularly want to commend the warm fraternal relations with our immediate neighbours, our sister republic of Liberia and Guinea. My Government will continue to work and build strong and durable partnership with regional organisations such as the Mano River Union, ECOWAS and African Union as well as multilateral institutions such as the United Nations, the Commonwealth and the European Union to promote our common values and commitment to peace, democracy, justice and multilateral diplomacy.

Fellow Sierra Leoneans, we have only one country, Sierra Leone, so let us work to change and transform this beloved nation into a place that our children and our grandchildren will be proud of.

Let me leave you with the immortal words of one of Africa's greatest sons and global icon, Nelson Mandela, who once said, 'It always seems impossible until it's done.'

As you go home today or from where ever you are watching this inaugural address, do not forget that Sierra Leone belongs to you and that it is your responsibility to change and transform this country. Together, we can make this happen and the journey begins today.

I thank you all

And God bless Sierra Leone