



**INDEPENDENCE DAY BROADCAST BY  
HIS EXCELLENCY DR JULIUS MAADA BIO,  
PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF SIERRA  
LEONE ON THE OCCASION OF THE  
REPUBLIC OF SIERRA LEONE'S 63RD  
INDEPENDENCE CELEBRATION  
SATURDAY, APRIL 27, 2024**

**MY FELLOW SIERRA LEONEANS,**

- 1.** As we commemorate the 63<sup>rd</sup> anniversary of our cherished independence, we give thanks to the Almighty God for enabling us to mark another year of our nation's freedom and the opportunity to shape our future and destiny.
- 2.** I am deeply humbled and grateful to you, my fellow citizens. Your cooperation and steadfast dedication to peace and harmony are the pillars that make my role as your President possible.
- 3.** Today, we proudly honour the immense courage and determination of our forefathers, whose unwavering struggles and sacrifices secured the freedoms we enjoy today. We must never take these freedoms for granted, for they were bought with the sweat and blood of those who came before us.
- 4.** As we mark another Independence Day, we are confronted with significant economic challenges, including high food prices, elevated fuel costs and persistent energy shortages, that impact daily lives of every Sierra Leonean.
- 5.** In the face of the economic challenges confronting us, my Government is taking decisive actions across key sectors. These actions are aimed at boosting our nation's growth and prosperity, and we are committed to their success.
- 6.** Our unwavering focus remains on our sworn duty to Sierra Leoneans and our collective determination to overcome challenges as they arise. Together, we can and will build a stronger and more prosperous Sierra Leone.

**MY FELLOW SIERRA LEONEANS,**

- 7.** To tackle the high cost of living, we have recalibrated our fiscal and monetary policies to stabilise the exchange rate and reduce inflationary pressures. From a peak of 55% in October 2023, inflation has declined to 42% as of February 2024.
- 8.** We anticipate that this downward trend will continue, enhancing the purchasing power of our people and effectively lowering the overall cost of living.
- 9.** In our determination to resolve the ongoing energy crisis affecting every aspect of our lives, from our homes to our businesses, we are proactively engaging with partners and stakeholders, including the private sector, to ensure the provision of stable and reliable electricity to sustain our nation's growth.
- 10.** Our Government has also invested significantly in energy subsidies since 2018 to help reduce the energy costs to citizens.
- 11.** As part of our commitment to an energy-secure future, we are advancing our Energy Mix Strategy, aiming for 75% of our energy portfolio to be derived from renewable sources. This move supports our vision for economic stability and underscores our dedication to environmental stewardship.

**FELLOW SIERRA LEONEANS,**

- 12.** Our flagship **FEED SALONE** Programme is decisively underway with the twin objectives of achieving **food self-sufficiency** and **sustainable economic growth**.

- 13.** This Programme is designed to close the gap between the production of our major staple foods and local demand, increase export earnings, create employment, and establish a resilient food system.
- 14.** In the short to medium term, we are channelling substantial investments into agriculture to help reduce the prices of basic food items, especially rice.
- 15.** For the **2024 Fiscal Year**, we have increased the National Agricultural budget allocation from 2% to 7%, dedicating NLe 836 million to various agricultural projects, particularly rice production.
- 16.** As part of our radical inclusion strategy for this planting season, we are introducing new financial instruments, including the first-ever **Crop Insurance and Credit Facilities** worth approximately NLe 658 million (US\$28 million), specifically targeting women and youth.
- 17.** This comprehensive approach will mitigate price volatility, strengthen food sovereignty, boost resistance against external shocks, and significantly contribute to food security and hunger reduction in our nation.
- 18.** To scale up this **FEED SALONE** initiative, we are relying on the private sector, alongside international partners and NGOs, to play a crucial role.
- 19.** The donor-funded agriculture projects worth NLe 3.2 billion (US\$136 million) targeted for 2024 will enhance local production of crops like rice, onions, cassava, cocoa, and

cashews and develop vital agricultural infrastructure, such as feeder roads to improve market linkages.

20. Our long-term agriculture vision is that we pave the way towards a future where Sierra Leone celebrates complete food sovereignty — a time when no Sierra Leonean worries about their next meal.

### **FELLOW CITIZENS,**

21. On the serious issue of drugs and substance abuse, we have intensified our efforts in combating the Kush epidemic and other lethal synthetic drug abuse by declaring a National Emergency and establishing the **National Task Force on Drugs and Substance Abuse**.
22. We are mobilising all necessary resources to address this crisis. This battle requires the cooperation of every community, traditional leader, family, patriot, and especially our young Sierra Leoneans.

### **FELLOW SIERRA LEONEANS,**

23. To cushion some of the effects of our economic challenges on the most vulnerable among us, such as women, the elderly, and people with disabilities, we continue to mobilise domestic resources and collaborate with our Development Partners to implement social safety net programmes.
24. This includes cash transfers and labour-intensive projects that create employment opportunities for our youth.
25. In our quest for economic autonomy, the critical role of international partnerships is vital. Our rich land necessitates

both internal and external investment to meet our economic realities.

- 26.** My overseas travels are not undertaken for leisure but are crucial in securing the necessary investments and partnerships essential for our national development. These efforts are already producing substantial results.
- 27.** Just as our Founding Fathers acknowledged that independence would not bring immediate transformations, we too understand that the fruits of our international engagements may take time to manifest fully.
- 28.** These combined efforts I have enumerated are only some of the initiatives aimed at demonstrating our commitment to a sustained future and a stronger economy.
- 29.** On this Independence Day, I assure every Sierra Leonean that your patience and tenacity are recognised and deeply appreciated.
- 30.** Your acknowledgement of our noble development efforts and constructive critiques are invaluable, and our commitment to nation-building and preserving the freedom of speech, especially at a time like this, remains unwavering.

**FELLOW SIERRA LEONEANS,**

- 31.** We envision a Sierra Leone where every citizen proudly identifies with their national heritage and experiences what it truly means to be the "**Athens of West Africa**".

- 32.** My Government remains dedicated to developing an educated and competitive workforce and ensuring a healthy population as we build a prosperous Sierra Leone.
- 33.** Our duty to industrialise our nation is clear. A thriving Sierra Leone needs a robust energy infrastructure and a dynamic manufacturing sector supported by local, foreign, and diaspora investments.
- 34.** Through all these challenges, my Government steadfastly upholds transparency and accountability.
- 35.** We are firmly committed to peace. It is the bedrock of our democratic progress, and we believe democracy will prevail.
- 36.** Recent events have sharply reminded us of the fragility of our freedoms. In responding to any attempts to undermine our democracy, we recall that to keep enjoying our independence and the freedoms we now have, we must stay in a state of vigilance. Our security forces remain ever-prepared to defend our nation against any threat.
- 37.** I affirm that peace and freedom are universal rights, not privileges for the few. Our unity transcends political and religious divisions and endures through different Governments.
- 38.** I renew my pledge to serve and protect every citizen of Sierra Leone, regardless of their background.
- 39.** Our country has moved from the shadows of war and autocracy to enjoy the liberties of free elections, a free press,

and free speech — freedoms that my administration vigorously upholds.

- 40.** As your President, it is my primary duty to uphold our democracy and Constitution. In doing this, I reflect on the words of our **first Prime Minister, Sir Milton Margai**, in his inaugural Independence Message: **"We believe in the dignity of every citizen and the sovereignty of our nation, and we will oppose to the limit of our power any movement of aggression which may conflict with these ideals."**

**FELLOW SIERRA LEONEANS,**

- 41.** There is profound hope for our future. A hope based on the concrete actions we undertake now for a better Sierra Leone.
- 42.** I call upon all citizens, professionals, and investors at home and abroad to sustain your faith in our national mission. Our shared belief in Sierra Leone, strengthened by the Government's diligence and Divine Grace, will guide us through these challenging times.
- 43.** Let us remain united and firmly dedicated to our collective aspirations for economic freedom, political liberty, and social freedom.
- 44.** With unity, freedom and justice as our banner, our journey progresses towards honouring the legacy of our forefathers who fought for Sierra Leone's independence.
- 45.** Together, we aim for a future where every Sierra Leonean enjoys the full fruits of freedom and prosperity. Let us advance with hope and firm faith in our nation.

- 46.** Thank you again for your unwavering support. May God bless each of you, and may God continue to bless the Republic of Sierra Leone.
- 47.** I wish you all a peaceful and happy 63<sup>rd</sup> Independence Anniversary.