

**STATEMENT BY HIS EXCELLENCY, DR
JULIUS MAADA BIO, PRESIDENT OF THE
REPUBLIC OF SIERRA LEONE AND
CHAIRPERSON OF THE AFRICAN PEER
REVIEW FORUM OF HEADS OF STATE
AND GOVERNMENT**

**EXTRAORDINARY SUMMIT OF THE AFRICAN UNION ON
TERRORISM AND UNCONSTITUTIONAL CHANGES OF
GOVERNMENT**

Malabo, Equatorial Guinea

27-28 May 2022

Your Excellency, Teodoro Obiang Nguema, President of The Republic of Equatorial Guinea;

Your Excellency, Paul Biya, Chairperson of the Peace and Security Council;

Excellencies, Heads of State and Government;

Your Excellency, Moussa Faki Mahamat, Chairperson of the AU Commission;

Excellencies, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen;

Good morning:

1. Let me, from the outset, thank His Excellency, President Nguema, for the excellent hospitality accorded me and my delegation since our arrival, and the outstanding facilities he has so generously put at our disposal.
2. I also wish to thank your Excellencies for the confidence reposed in me for appointing me as Chairperson of The African Peer Review Forum of Heads of State and Government. I wish to commend my predecessor, His Excellency, President Cyril Ramaphosa, for the excellent manner in which he chaired the proceedings of the forum during his tenure. We have made great progress and we will continue building on our successes.
3. I embrace this weighty task not just with gratitude, but with modesty. I spend time thinking of what this illustrious body, the African Union, has come to mean to us, especially in a fast-changing world. But beyond that, I dwell constantly on what great potential exists through this body.
4. We are not here to wag fingers at fellow leaders or member states; I am not one, who, in the words of Theodore Roosevelt, "points out how the strongman stumbles, or where the doer of deeds could have done them better. I am actually in the arena, my face is marred by dust, sweat, and blood; striving valiantly."

EXCELLENCIES,

5. We have made commendable gains in advancing democracy and human rights for our people since attaining independence. With the reintroduction of multiparty democratic politics, we further consolidated those gains. Democracy is not necessarily sustaining. Its survival depends on consistent, conscious efforts; on the blood, sweat and tears of patriots who ensure that questions of governance and resource distribution, as well as disputes, are resolved through democratic processes.
6. Accordingly, the Constitutive Act of the African Union is underpinned by key principles that condemn and reject unconstitutional changes of Government, impunity and political assassination, and acts of terrorism and subversive activities.
7. To concretise those principles in our states, we have put in place AU Shared Values as contained in various instruments and normative frameworks such as the Lomé Declaration on the OAU/AU Response to unconstitutional changes of government; the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance; the Peace and Security Protocol; and, the APRM, as an African-owned and African-led platform for self-assessment, peer-learning, and experience-sharing in democracy and good governance.

EXCELLENCIES,

1. You will recall that in its report to the 35th Ordinary Session of the Assembly, the African Peer Review Forum of Heads of State and Government, denounced and condemned the resurgence of military coups d'état on the continent. As Heads of States and Governments, we must stress that all kinds of unconstitutional changes of government undermine the gains the continent has realised so far in the areas of good governance, democracy, peace, security, and stability, and the collective quest to silence the Guns in Africa by 2030.
2. In this regard, as Chairperson of the African Peer Review Forum of Heads of State and Government, I would like to submit the following.

3. Firstly, we should not view the resurgence of unconstitutional changes of government as broadly indicative of democratic regression or the collapse of our AU Shared Values. Instead, we should see these incidents as new challenges in the development of political pluralism and the consolidation of our AU Shared Values.
4. These new situations are an opportunity to address the gaps in our normative framework and our response measures to unconstitutional changes of government. In this Summit, we should generate ideas and a roadmap to address these gaps.
5. Next, there is a need for deep and holistic introspection, at the country level, on factors that breed conditions supportive of changes of government in Africa. Unconstitutional changes of government may be occasioned by both internal and external factors. The internal factors could include socio-economic factors putting pressure on our people, and political contestations prevailing within our countries. We should not ignore the subjective factors that lead to citizens celebrating rather than condemning a coup. We should also reflect on whether those unconstitutional changes of Government are acts of popular uprising; what precipitous factors may have led to those changes; and, most importantly, what are our efforts at preventing and responding to unconstitutional changes of government as the AU and as regional economic communities.
6. It is imperative therefore for us to urgently address the underlying causes of unconstitutional changes of government, including governance deficits, mismanagement of diversity, marginalisation, violation of human and peoples' rights, refusal to accept electoral defeats, and the illegal review of constitutions, among others.
7. In our engagements on each country that has seen unconstitutional changes of Government, our objective interpretations must be unique to each country's situation while focused on ensuring strict adherence to our cardinal principles and normative frameworks.
8. For external, non-African factors that lead to unconstitutional changes of Government, it is imperative that we, as a Union, engage with governments and multilateral institutions within and outside the

continent ready to receive feedback that we must internalise and contextualise in order to inform solution-finding.

9. Further, Your Excellencies, the APRM can play a critical role in initiating and moderating dialogue between countries under suspension as a result of unconstitutional changes of government and regional blocs and the AU. Done in a timely and structured manner, these dialogues can help contain incidents of unconstitutional changes of Government or facilitate the restoration of constitutional order on the African continent.

EXCELLENCIES,

10. There is agreement within our Peace and Security Council on an urgent need to undertake an in-depth analysis of both the 2000 Lomé Declaration on unconstitutional changes of government, and the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance, with a view to ensuring that these frameworks and instruments respond appropriately to the challenges that we are currently facing as a Union and as a continent.
11. We should also enhance the capacity of our Africa Governance Architecture Platform Members (including the APRM and our African Peace and Security Architecture Pillars). Thus, they can continue supporting Member-States in the promotion of democracy, good governance, peace, security, and stability with a view to preventing constitution-related crises.
12. Your Excellencies may recall numerous decisions by the Assembly, that the APRM, in collaboration with the African Governance Architecture (AGA), should develop the Africa Governance Report. That report can provide us with in-depth, evidence and expert-based analysis of existing instruments and normative frameworks.
13. In that regard, on behalf of the APRM, I, therefore, propose that this Summit mandate the APRM, in collaboration with AGA, to develop the Africa Governance Report 2023.
14. Member-States affected by unconstitutional changes of government should be encouraged to collaborate and cooperate with the APRM and

AGA to conduct targeted reviews and develop the African Governance Report 2023. The targeted reviews are a collaborative and facilitative approach that has been used to address specific issues related to governance challenges. It ensures that outcomes, findings, and recommendations are African-driven and African-owned. This is critical in building resilience and strengthening the capacities of our states in addressing the catalysts and triggers of unconstitutional changes of government.

15. We should not allow any form of disunity to impede our resolve to address these issues around unconstitutional changes of Government on the African Continent. We must speak with one voice and act in concord.

I thank you all Excellencies, distinguished ladies and gentlemen, for your kind attention. Happy Africa Month.