



**HONORARY DEGREE ACCEPTANCE
STATEMENT BY HIS EXCELLENCY,
DR. JULIUS MAADA BIO,
PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF
SIERRA LEONE, NJALA
UNIVERSITY
- FRIDAY, 17TH MARCH 2023**

Ministers of Government,
Honourable Members of Parliament,
Our Revered Traditional Rulers,
Chairman, Moyamba District Council,
Chairman and Members of the Tertiary Education Commission,
Members of Njala University Court,
The Chancellor of Njala University,
The Vice-Chancellor, Principals, and Senior Administrative Staff of Njala University,
Visiting Vice-Chancellors, Principals, and Deputy Vice-Chancellors,
Deans, Professors, Academic and Administrative Staff of Njala University,
Representatives of Staff Associations,
Representatives of Njala University Students Union,
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

1. I stand here humbled but feeling privileged to be accorded this very unique honour by a university that has contributed tremendously to the development of this nation.

2. This great nation has been very kind to me. It has given me opportunities to lead. It has inspired me to think critically about the many challenges it perpetually throws at all of us. With the right mindset, the right leadership, and right policies, I have been thrilled by the transformation of the education sector over the last five years.

3. As a young soldier in my twenties, I opted for the difficult choice of engaging sub-regional leaders to facilitate the ferreting-out of the Revolutionary United Front leader, Corporal Foday Sankoh. I initiated a peace process, conducted democratic elections, voluntarily retired from the military, handed over power to a civilian government, and left this country. Those who facetiously argue that I had nothing to do with birthing democracy in Sierra Leone should ask themselves whether, after five election cycles, Sierra Leone has ever looked back.

4. I refer to this moment in our history that to usher in productive change and change the fortunes of a nation, leaders must sacrifice their personal

gratification, and make bold choices by weighing costs and measuring abiding impact.

5. The citation references the many things that we have achieved collectively as a nation in the field of education. Let me dare say that what I am doing for education is simply the actualisation of the dreams of a bare-footed five-year-old orphan in Tihun – a boy, encouraged by his illiterate mother, Yei Amie, to explore and participate in the life-changing, nation-changing experience of education.

6. It is the outcome of several hours of critical thinking about how we can get education right and reap its unceasing, sustained, and endless benefit for our nation. So, the honour today is important; but the heritage I leave behind for generations of all learners and for this nation in particular is more important for me.

7. I, therefore, humbly accept the honorary doctorate degree you have so kindly bestowed on me knowing that it is both a recognition of what I have done and a challenge for me to do more.