



**INDEPENDENCE DAY BROADCAST
TO THE NATION BY HIS EXCELLENCY, DR.
JULIUS MAADA BIO, PRESIDENT OF THE
REPUBLIC OF SIERRA LEONE.
FREETOWN, 27TH APRIL 2021**

Fellow Citizens:

1. Today, we commemorate sixty years of our country's independence. We do so by reflecting on the vision, great sacrifice, and courage of those who led, those who helped them lead, and those who embraced their leadership to usher in our sovereignty as an independent nation in the Commonwealth.
2. Sixty years ago, Sir Milton Margai admonished citizens of the newly independent Sierra Leone to "face up squarely to the problems which will confront" Sierra Leoneans. He urged commitment to "wholehearted service and hard work" in order to "make our country a land worth living in, a land worth serving."
3. He further called on Sierra Leoneans to "deal fairly and honestly" with their fellow men, "strive actively for peace, friendship, and unity," and to discourage lawlessness.
4. Over these sixty years, we have learned to live together as a nation. We are a global model for religious tolerance. We intermarry and cohabit peacefully in our towns and villages.
5. We have had military coups and repressive single-party dictatorships, but we have consolidated one of the sturdiest multiparty democracies in Africa. We fought a bloody civil war for a decade, but we made it and we have had enduring peace for over two decades since.
6. For all the other challenges we have faced as a nation, from pestilence and natural disasters, near collapse of institutions and our economy, mismanagement of our natural resources and our environment, corruption and bad governance, the lack of justice and equal access

to opportunity especially for women and youth, to other perceived cleavages in our nation, we have emerged stronger, tougher, and more resilient every time.

7. We have felt the pain, learned the lessons, used the lessons as opportunities to learn, and drawn strength from those opportunities to become a better nation. As Frederick Douglass teaches us, “we have to do with the past only as we can make it useful to the present and the future.” This 60th commemoration of our country’s independence is therefore a watershed moment in our nation’s history. We must use it to reflect on the past only as it helps us avoid the worst of the past and work diligently for a shared future of peace and prosperity that our nation truly deserves.
8. To attain this, we must fashion a bold new vision that is hewn from our collective desire as a nation to be better, stronger, and more resilient.
9. My Government drew up a medium-term national development plan as a strategic document for allocating resources to priority areas that will support sustainable national development. A scientific and more accurate population and housing census will generate valuable data that supports our development.
10. Over the last three years, my Government has focused on getting the economic fundamentals right and streamlining revenue mobilisation and public financial management. Our development partners have re-engaged and we have lowered inflation and increased reserves in spite of the impact of COVID-19.

11. We have enacted pro-investment policies and independent assessments show we are making progress in the ease of doing business indicators. We are primed for such growth sectors as agriculture, mining, fishing, and tourism among others. Already, the influx of new players in the mining sector, the regeneration of artisanal and industrial fishing and fish processing, and millions of dollars of investment in new agricultural projects indicate renewed confidence in these sectors.
12. No doubt, Sierra Leone is still a diamond in the rough. Ours is a peaceful and alluring slice of God's earth where history and nature conjoin to offer some of the most stunning tourism products. In spite of COVID, the international profile of Sierra Leone as a tourism destination has improved over the last three years. More African American brothers and sisters are proudly reclaiming their heritage and with them comes the promise of new expertise and entrepreneurship.
13. For inclusive and sustainable development, we believe that we must nurture our nation's most valuable resource – its citizens. For that purpose, we are investing heavily in Human Capital Development through inclusive quality education, food security, value-added agriculture, and quality healthcare infrastructure and training.
14. At the same time, we are investing in infrastructure that enables and supports sustainable development and economic expansion. We are building more roads and bridges, expanding access to electricity even in off-grid locations, and constructing water distribution lines in

population centres. We have also significantly invested in science, technology, innovation, and ICT coverage.

15. My Government has ushered in public sector governance reform and leveraged technology to improve institutional effectiveness and accountability. We will continue to improve on the fight against corruption because it is good for governance, good for business, and good for sustainable development.
16. We must also engage in a national dialogue about devising an effective and inclusive political system that is democratic and less amenable to shocks, minimises the boot prints of bad politicians, and ensures political representation and a voice for minorities and minority populations throughout Sierra Leone. At the same time, we are instituting a permanent and independent commission for peace and national cohesion that will identify and resolve the triggers of conflict in our nation.
17. We have irreversibly discarded criminal libel laws and we are actively supporting the growth of a free press. Our objective is an open and democratic society where civil society thrives, free speech and civic participation are guaranteed, and the voices of citizens matter on all national issues.
18. We must respect the sanctity of life and ensure equal protection under the laws of our nation. We must build a humane and just Sierra Leone where justice and social protection for our most vulnerable and disadvantaged are assured. We must continue to build a more inclusive and equal society in which children, girls, and women not

only matter and must be protected by law from sexual and gender-based violence but also have guaranteed equal access to opportunity and resources.

19. Sixty years on, our natural resources have not had much impact on our national development. But we commissioned an airborne geophysical survey of our mineral resources two years ago. We have since reviewed laws and policies to ensure transparent governance of our mineral resources and a fair distribution of the benefits of those resources.
20. In the future, Sierra Leoneans must responsibly live in and protect our environment, our forests, our beaches, and our oceans. We have set up a permanent agency for disaster risk and impact management as well as a stand-alone Ministry of the Environment.
21. All these are promising starts that citizens must not dismiss for the sake of mere partisanship. This is a reset of our national priorities and our national focus. Our nation therefore stands to gain everything from it. It is the future we want; it is the future we will build together.
22. We are reminded in the words of our national anthem that we must “show forth the good that is ever in” Sierra Leone. To that end, we should remind one another often that our conduct, attitudes, and values affect other citizens and our nation directly and indirectly. It is our responsibility to respect all laws and support law and order at all times. We should not incite or participate in violent unrest. We all have an equal stake in a safe, peaceful, and progressive Sierra Leone.

23. So let me once again congratulate all of us as we commemorate this 60th anniversary of our independence. Let us each resolve to contribute to building our shared future. May God/ Allah Subhanahu Wa Ta'ala bless our endeavours and guide us in this Holy Month of Ramadan.

I thank you.