



STATEMENT BY

HIS EXCELLENCY DR. JULIUS MAADA BIO,

PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF SIERRA LEONE

AT

THE GENERAL DEBATE OF THE 79TH SESSION OF

THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY HIGH

LEVEL WEEK

ON

TUESDAY 24TH SEPTEMBER 2024

UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY HALL

MR. PRESIDENT,

1. I congratulate **Your Excellency Philemon Yang** on your election as President of the 79th Session of the **United Nations General Assembly** and express Sierra Leone's support to you during your tenure.
2. I extend my deep gratitude to **His Excellency Dennis Francis** for his principled stewardship as President of the 78th Session of the **UN General Assembly**.
3. I appreciate and thank **His Excellency António Guterres**, Secretary-General of the United Nations, **for his tireless efforts and global leadership.**

MR. PRESIDENT,

4. More than 30 years ago, Sierra Leone was plunged into a decade-long brutal civil war.

5. More than fifty thousand people were killed, and millions fled their homes as refugees and internally displaced persons.

6. The situation in Sierra Leone at that time was not unique. Conflicts existed in other parts of West Africa, in Africa, and around the World.

- 7.** In Sierra Leone, however, we overcame our challenges with a common vision for peace through genuine dialogue, committed leadership and action.
- 8.** Notably, the hard-won peace we enjoy is not without its fragility, and we remain vigilant in safeguarding it.
- 9.** Sierra Leone's peace journey exemplifies the values of ownership, engagement through dialogue, and our partnership with ECOWAS, the United Nations and the broader International Community, which yielded the peace dividend.

10. This story has shaped our engagement at the UN Security Council since the commencement of our second tenure in January this year.

11. For almost nine months, Sierra Leone, as an elected Member of the UN Security Council, has endeavoured to be a voice of reason, and a bridge-builder with balance and objectivity.

12. We will continue to promote respect for and adherence to International Law and the UN Charter, ensure the protection of civilians, end impunity through accountability, and foster dialogue for the peaceful settlement of disputes.

13. Our commitment to these principles is even more imperative now than ever before, as we are confronted with conflicts of great magnitude in the Middle East, Africa, Asia and Eastern Europe.

- 14. The need for a ceasefire in Gaza and the wider Middle East, as well as in Sudan, Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, and Ukraine, is not just pressing but urgent.**

- 15. Immediate action is required to prevent further loss of precious lives and human suffering.**

- 16. We need collective action to stop all conflicts and engage in meaningful dialogue so that the countries can move forward with their development agenda in peace, security, and stability.**

17. As a country that has experienced the devastating consequences of armed conflict, we acknowledge that peace cannot be achieved in isolation; it requires inclusive political processes, economic development, and respect for human rights.

18. For the millions of civilians trapped in the ongoing armed conflicts, words of condemnation and empathy alone are not enough.

19. It is imperative that we act together as the United Nations with a sustained commitment to end the cycle of violence and give innocent civilians the opportunity to enjoy lasting peace and prosperity.

20. In the **Sahel and West Africa**, the regional leadership has been hard at work to find urgent solutions to the numerous peace and security challenges, particularly to curb the spread of terrorism and violent extremism.

21. I call upon the International Community to strengthen support for African-led peace initiatives and for the United Nations to play a more active role in addressing the root causes of conflicts.

22. The safety and security of the people in the Sahel and parts of West Africa require a strong commitment from all relevant actors to engage in political dialogue and diplomacy actively and to ensure we provide countries in the frontline, **Burkina Faso, Mali** and **Niger**, the necessary support they need.

23. Commitment to political transitions is necessary, but not at the expense of the safety of vulnerable citizens. There can be commitment and action on both.

24. I have called for meaningful dialogue and led by example by visiting the Head of State of Burkina Faso before Sierra Leone assumed the Presidency of the UN Security Council in August 2024.

25. We need to build bridges, and this requires the International Community's commitment to working with the regions to implement dialogue-based, region-led, and region-owned solutions.

MR. PRESIDENT,

26. Our current tenure at the UN Security Council has reinforced the view that there is an urgent need for reform. Nearly 80 years after its creation, the Security Council has been stuck in time.

27. Its imbalanced composition is unjust and at odds with current realities, undermining its legitimacy and effectiveness. Unfortunately, Africa remains the unquestionable victim. **Without structural change, the Security Council's effective performance and legitimacy remain questionable.**

28. In a historic and successful debate, which I presided over during Sierra Leone's August Presidency of the Security Council on **addressing the historical injustice and enhancing Africa's effective representation in the Security Council**, I spoke as a representative of a Continent that has long been under-represented in the decision-making processes that shape our world on matters of peace and security.

29. That debate had an undisputable resonance — **(1) that the historical injustice being perpetrated against Africa must be rectified, (2) that Africa must be treated as a special case, and (3) that it must be prioritised in the reform process.**

30. In expressing appreciation for the active and supportive engagement by the many **Interests and Regional Groups**, as well as invited Member States to the debate, the facts and issues are now clear to all.

31.

32. Africa has long been marginalised in global decision-making processes, and its voices are often drowned out.

33. The legacy of colonialism, economic exploitation, and political marginalisation has left deep scars on the African Continent, affecting its development, stability, and influence in international affairs.

34. This results in a lack of meaningful representation on issues that directly affect the Continent, such as conflict prevention, conflict resolution, peacekeeping operations, and sustainable development.

35. Addressing contemporary global security challenges requires the collective wisdom and cooperation of all nations, not just the privileged few or the most militarily or economically powerful.

36. We argue that equitable representation of Africa will better equip the United Nations to tackle global challenges and foster a more just, fair, and peaceful world.

37. As the **Coordinator of the African Union Committee of Ten (C-10) on the Reform of the Security Council**, Sierra Leone remains fully committed to promoting, defending and soliciting support for **the Common African Position** as espoused in the **Ezulwini Consensus** and **Sirte Declaration**.

38. Africa, therefore, demands no less than TWO PERMANENT SEATS WITH ALL THE RIGHTS AND PRIVILEGES OF THE PERMANENT MEMBERS, including THE RIGHT TO VETO and TWO ADDITIONAL SEATS IN THE NON-PERMANENT CATEGORY of the Security Council.

39. Sierra Leone welcomes the consensus that has emerged from the **UN General Assembly Intergovernmental Negotiations** as reflected in the **Pact for the Future**, to ***“Address the historical injustice against Africa as a priority, and, while treating Africa as a special case, improve the representation of the underrepresented and unrepresented regions and groups [...]”***.

40. Let us work together to redress this historical injustice and re-create a Security Council that truly reflects the diversity of the world.

41. As I stated in the Security Council debate,
**the time for half-measures and
incremental progress is over. AFRICA'S
VOICE MUST BE HEARD, AND ITS DEMANDS
FOR JUSTICE AND EQUITY MUST BE MET
NOW.**

MR. PRESIDENT,

42. The **Summit of the Future** for Sierra Leone is
about delivering peace, human rights and
the dividends of democracy for everyone,
everywhere, now.

43. Accordingly, my government has laid out a strategic vision for Sierra Leone as captured in the **Sierra Leone's Medium-Term National Development Plan 2024-2030** - a framework for delivering socio-economic development and prosperity for our people.

44. Aligned to the **Sustainable Development Goals** and **African Union's Agenda 2063**, our **Development Plan** serves as a comprehensive blueprint for transformative acceleration in critical areas such as agriculture and food security, human capital development,

job creation for our youths, infrastructure development, and technology.

45. With the adoption of the **Pact for the Future**, including the **Declaration on Future Generations** and the **Global Digital Compact** at the **Summit of The Future**, my Government is reinforcing its commitment to championing and investing in **Human Capital Development**.

46. **Human Capital Development** is a profound commitment to our people's well-being and future.

47. By investing significantly in education, healthcare and agriculture, my government is laying the foundation for a prosperous and equitable Sierra Leone.

48. Over the past six years, our achievements through our **Free Quality Education Programme**, legislative reviews and governance reforms in the education sector and radical inclusion strategy have been highly impactful, well-acclaimed and seen as a good model for the world.

49. We welcome the **Global Digital Compact's Principle** of ensuring safe, secure, and trustworthy emerging technologies, including Artificial Intelligence, to offer new opportunities to accelerate development and leaving no one behind.

50. In the area of **Gender Equality and Women's Economic Empowerment**, significant strides have been made, and they are some of the legacies my Government will bequeath to our current and future generations.

51. I recently signed into law this year a **Bill Prohibiting Child Marriage**, following the historic signing into law the **Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Act 2023**, to ensure the realisation of the national aspiration for our women and girls to build an inclusive and equitable society.

52. I remain steadfast in my commitment to ensuring that every girl and woman lives in a safe environment, with ample opportunities to realise their full potential and thrive equally in the World.

53. From prioritising the **Women's Peace and Security Agenda** at the Security Council to the adoption by the General Assembly of a **Resolution Condemning All Forms of Sexual and Gender-Based Violence** and urging all countries to provide victims and survivors with access to justice, reparations and assistance.

54. We will continue to advocate for women and girls across the globe.

55. Therefore, I am pleased to announce that Sierra Leone will commence preparatory work that will lead to the convening of a diplomatic conference to conclude an internationally legally binding instrument on '**Access to Justice for Sexual Violence Survivors**' – the proposed **Freetown Treaty** - in furtherance of the success of the **United Nation's resolution on "Access to Justice, Remedies and Assistance for Survivors of Sexual Violence."**

MR. PRESIDENT,

56. Leaving no one behind and acting together to achieve sustainable development similarly means we have to end global economic inequities and ensure that Governments in least-developed countries can deliver the dividends of democracy.

57. The unmanageable debt crisis, lack of capital flows, the devastating impacts of climate change and lack of climate finance, conflicts, and political instability around the world are increasing the odds of developing countries not achieving the **SDGs**.

58. The role of Development Finance Institutions in supporting the objectives of national development plans of low-income countries, particularly those emphasising the SDGs, is of great significance to their socio-economic development.

59. At the **International Development Association (IDA) for Africa Heads of State Summit** in Nairobi in April this year, Sierra Leone unreservedly expressed its endorsement of the “**Nairobi IDA Communiqué**”.

60. The Communiqué exemplifies the collective aspiration of the African Heads of State present to raise the level of development support in Africa through the **IDA21 Replenishment. I wish to re-echo that endorsement at this August gathering.**

61. IDA's affordable, concessional finance allows Africa's leaders to develop our economies, enhance education and healthcare, deal with the increasing effects of climate change, and expand electricity and digital access — without becoming buried in unsustainable debt.

62. To **conclude, Mr. President**, the end of the Second World War in 1945 did not only unite leaders but also urged them to cooperate. This was the birth of multilateralism.

63. As the African proverb says, “**Our two hands do not wash themselves; they wash each other.**”

64. As leaders, we must cooperate to achieve the purposes of this United Nations and deliver peace, security, stability, and prosperity for our people. Divisions and unhealthy competition will only lead to humanity's destruction.

65. We must ensure unity in diversity, where the rights of the weak and the minority are protected.

66. So, let us safeguard our multilateral system.

67. Let us cooperate, ***'acting together for the advancement of peace, sustainable development and human dignity for present and future generations, Leaving no one behind.'***

THANK YOU!