



SIERRA LEONE GOVERNMENT

ADDRESS

BY

HIS EXCELLENCY THE PRESIDENT

Dr. Ernest Bai Koroma G.C.R.S.L.

*President of the Republic and Commander-in-Chief of the
Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces*

**On the Occasion of His
Official Inauguration**

As

PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF SIERRA LEONE

AT THE NATIONAL STADIUM
SYKE STREET, FREETOWN

ON

Friday, 22nd February, 2013
at 9:00 a.m.

COLLEAGUE HEADS OF STATE

MR. VICE-PRESIDENT,

HONOURABLE SPEAKER OF PARLIAMENT,

MY LADY THE CHIEF JUSTICE,

MINISTERS OF GOVERNMENT,

HONOURABLE MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT,

EXCELLENCIES, MEMBERS OF THE DIPLOMATIC CORPS,

HIS WORSHIP THE MAYOR OF FREETOWN,

DISTINGUISHED GUESTS,

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN:

The hand of destiny has led me to where I stand today as President of the Republic of Sierra Leone for the second term. I give abundant praise and thanks to Almighty God for elevating me to this exalted position and for sparing my life to see this day. I sincerely thank the people of this great nation for giving me the opportunity to serve them and sustain a legacy of peace, progress and development that will be preserved for posterity.

I welcome my colleagues, and the various distinguished representatives of friendly countries and organizations who are witnesses to this solemn occasion. May the interest they manifest in the affairs of our beloved country be rewarded with good health, happiness and personal well-being.

Ladies and Gentlemen, this country that gave West Africa its first modern University, first radio station, and first female mayor is rising again to meet its destiny of greatness. Out of the depredations of war, the rigours of rehabilitation and reconstruction, and the great anxiety of peace building, we have come a long way, and today we celebrate democracy. Confident in hope, and fully cognizant of the magnitude and complexity of the work at hand, we face the future with optimism and zest for taking this country to another level. Today I call on all of us to put our shoulders to the wheel and work diligently to achieve our national objectives. I call on all of us to use our sense of religious tolerance as a guide to overcoming narrow political bigotry. I ask that our ties of kinship and friendship spur us to greater engagements of the constituent elements of this country. I request that our history of freedom inspire us to assert the imperatives of justice.

We are on the threshold of a new era. We all can, individually and collectively ensure that whatever corners of endeavours we find ourselves, we shine forth with the glory of our dedication, discipline and resilience. We must march forward with tenacity of purpose and strength of character until we reach the desired destination of prosperity.

This country has always been a haven for those fleeing turmoil and deprivations. The inhabitants of this land have always welcomed others, and even though we are a nation of diverse ethnic groups and faiths, our people have learned to live together as brothers and sisters. From the Kissi Chiefdoms of Eastern Sierra Leone to the Mountains of the Yalunkas, from the worrehs of the Fullahs to the fishing grounds of the Sherbros, our people have created great unshakeable bonds, kinship and friendship that are making this country more united and tolerant than most other countries in the world. It is not by accident that so many ethnic groups in the country share so many common surnames; it is not by chance that these family names exist across all regions of the country. They are purposive designs of our ancestors for greater unity in the land, and we must maintain that worthy tradition.

We have citizens claiming ancestry to migrants from as far north as the Maghreb; we have brethren whose ancestors came from all over the Upper Guinea Coast and the Sahel, as well as Nigeria and Ghana. From the founders of Congo Town to those of Angola Town; from the Hausa roast beef sellers to the Marakas, people from all over Africa and even beyond our continent have made this country a home and a haven. There are other citizens born in this land whose forbearers came as far off as the Indian sub-continent and the Mounts and Valleys of Lebanon and Syria, and many of whom have been part and parcel of the low and high points of our history.

This is a nation of varied traditions, dress and cuisines; but we have showed cultural unity and cohesion that are not in existence in many parts of the continent. From our common respect of the solemnity of Ramadan and the joyfulness of the Christmas Season of Goodwill, we have always demonstrated the possibilities of greater cohesion and cooperation. We are a nation of diverse ethnic groups and faiths, but we are also a nation of distinctive and unique individuals who led people on missions of rebirth; from Thomas Peters whose love for Freedom led to the founding of Freetown, to Manga Sewa, Bai Bureh, Alimamy Suluku, Gumbu Smart, Isaac Wallace-Johnson and Madam Yoko, our ancestors blazed the trail to bequeath to us a legacy of service to community and nation.

During times when we erred as a nation; when we failed to live up to the promise embedded in our inheritance, when our human frailties became all too manifest, we have had individuals, journalists, bishops, imams and teachers who summoned us to our better natures. They called upon us to practice a morality higher than the prevailing one, to work harder and smarter, and to continue on the greater paths of charity, love, and social transformation.

In my first term, we restored our people's faith in the ability of government to build roads, attract hundreds of millions of dollars in investments, provide free healthcare for children, pregnant women and mothers, and increase employment opportunities. The appetite of the people has been whetted for more development, more roads, more healthcare, more employment, and transparency. I will work harder to meet these expectations for more; this is my solemn pledge.

But let it be known that for development to happen, it requires the collective effort of the government and the people; all of us must therefore do more. The farmers must do more, the doctors and nurses must do more, the youths must do more, the teachers must do more, the traders must do more, and everybody must do more. We must do more in respecting the laws, we must do more in increasing our productivity, we must do more to help our communities and grow the economy. This is what the Agenda for Prosperity is all about; all of us doing more to bring home the fruits of the achievements made during the Agenda for Change. Now is the time to do more; now is the time to move on to the Agenda for Prosperity.

We are a country once acclaimed for our contribution to education all over Africa. We must reclaim this heritage not only because it is our inheritance, but also because it is relevant to our quest for prosperity. My government will do more for education. We are building and equipping vocational and technical centres; we are paying for almost all public examinations in the country; and we have increased subventions to universities more than ever before. The government needs to do more, and I dedicate my second term to doing more. But the schools, the vocational centres, universities, teachers, lecturers and students need to do more. All need to make their corners of the country niches of excellence, dedication and discipline; only then can all of us seize the destiny of prosperity that beckons in the land.

We are a country with great natural resources, but transforming these resources into wealth for our people requires more than just announcing it. We need to acquire the skills and habits of a productive workforce. We need to become engineers, geologists, mines specialists, and get other expertise germane to creating wealth for our country and communities. Crane operators, miners and drivers must improve on their work ethic and dedication to duty; lecturers must be more innovative in their teaching methods, our institutions of learning must form alliances with the private sector to improve upon the relevance of their curriculum for the emerging opportunities in the land. Government has through its policies attracted hundreds of millions of dollars of investments; we will do more, but citizens need to do more to get the skills and habits to seize the opportunities made available by these investments. The old habits of lobbying for jobs without the appropriate productive skills must end, the time for gaining and maintaining employment through your skills, your work ethic and productivity is here. That is the way to go now, and that is the way it should be if we are to bring home the fruits of prosperity.

Our country is a youthful nation. Our youths are the mainstay of our hopes and the pillars of the present. That is why I have dedicated my second term to the youths of the nation. With the youths I will do more; with the youths, we will all do more; with the youths, we will set forth on a worthy journey of renewal, productivity, creativity and success. But this success requires discipline. I call on the youths to continue to dedicate themselves to the sustenance of our democracy and the betterment of the land. We have a mission to accomplish, a country to rebuild and a future to secure. We can only do this through a disciplined approach, through respect for the laws and fidelity to our heritage of learning and freedom. We have to turn the ores and gold into wealth for us all. And this can only be done when Sierra Leoneans move on to acquire the skills and expertise necessary for the transformation. My government is dedicated to the provision of

the facilities and the enabling environment for this transformation. This is the time for positive engagements for action, for law and order, for productivity, and the advancement of this land that we love.

And I call on all frontline workers of the state, the police, teachers, nurses and traditional chiefs to rededicate themselves to the sacred ethics of service. You are the faces of the state; you provide the first contacts between citizens and the state. We must make these contacts civil, ethical and reflective of the founding motto of our nation: Unity, Freedom and Justice.

Our ancestors held high the banner of learning and scholarship, and many others brightened this land with their scholarship, inspiring and spreading knowledge far and wide. Ordinary people too, have reminded us about the political and economic contributions that could be made by even those often dismissed as having little or no education. We can all be achievers; we can all do great things for this country. Coming from a political tradition that supports the aspirations of the common man and woman, I am dedicated to the advancement of all, from market women, okada riders, petty-traders, teachers, musicians, farmers and nurses to doctors, professors, engineers, accountants, writers, and others. Together we are making this country great again, there shall be no retreat. This is my pledge: there shall be no retreat in our quest for law, order and discipline; there shall be no retreat in our creation of a country that is attracting worthy investments from all over the globe; there will be no retreat in ensuring that our people become prime participants and beneficiaries in the transformation of the country.

We are a country with the most beautiful landscapes in the world, our beaches are unsurpassed by any other in the world; the physical appearance of our hills is breathtaking, and our land is home to rare species of animals and birds. The history of this land, from Bunce

Island to Fourah Bay College, from our connections to the Gullahs in America to John Newton's Amazing Grace, is replete with humanity's struggle for Freedom, Grace and Learning. But this is not enough to transform our country into a tourist haven or a destination for those seeking the marvels of humanity's quest for Freedom. We are a tolerant and hospitable people, but we must transform these natural qualities into skills and effective habits appropriate to the modern tourist industry. We must integrate discipline into our hospitality, finesse into our tolerance and make our services so unique and distinctive that tourists would want to come into our land again and again and again.

My dear people, my message to you today is to exhort you to be passionately patriotic, put country before self, work hard and honestly, and be boldly persistent in pushing forward our democratic and developmental aspirations. Let us strive to live in harmony, always seeking to resolve our differences by peaceful means. Let us endeavour to be more robust in articulating the good things about our country and building on our national heritage. It behoves us all to build partnerships for the effective implementation of programmes that would benefit the people.

The transformation of our country should be our unique contribution to the strengthening of democracy, peace, security and development in the Mano River Basin, the wider West African Region, and the African homeland. We are a country acting for peace, democracy and development in Africa, we are a country that has taken a firm stance against intolerance, terrorism and violence. We will continue to maintain this stance; we will continue to work for the promotion of democracy, justice and fair trade in global interactions. We will continue to work with global institutions and regional bodies from all continents to promote these ideals. And we will particularly continue to partner with our sister-nations in the MRU, ECOWAS and the AU to ensure the success of our endeavours.

Fellow citizens, for too long, we have allowed indiscipline and lawlessness to gain ascendancy in all facets of our society. It is imperative for us to restore the ideals that made this nation a centre of excellence from whence our ancestors spread knowledge, propriety and hope to other parts of the world. We must therefore not allow the corrupt and the unjust to hold the nation to ransom. Let truth and honesty inform the choices we make so that our actions will promote traditional standards of decency and uprightness that can only spread positive ripples throughout society.

For too long, some of us have been insensitive to the issues affecting our country, laying them squarely at the doorstep of government. But what affects Sierra Leone should be of concern to all of us. For a better tomorrow, we must be united; we must display a spirit of enterprise; and we must work together in a concerted manner to satisfy our just expectations.

This is a blessed land and we are reclaiming our blessings. Splendid as these blessings may be, it is in our vital interest to stay united with dignity and pride until the prize is won. Therefore, arise my people, you have nothing to lose; you have everything to gain.

God Bless you all!

God Bless Sierra Leone!