



**STATEMENT BY HIS EXCELLENCY
JULIUS MAADA BIO, PRESIDENT
OF THE REPUBLIC OF SIERRA
LEONE, IN RESPONSE TO THE
WELCOME STATEMENT IN
ABU-DHABI - 21 MARCH 2019**

Your Excellences,

Dignitaries,

Distinguished Guests

Let me from the outset express our heartfelt gratitude and appreciation to His Highness Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice President, Prime Minister and Ruler of Dubai, and His Highness Sheikh Mohammed Bin Zayed Al Nahyan Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi for the warm reception accorded me and my delegation. This is indeed a beautiful and welcoming country of peace, tolerance, and happiness.

Let me also recognize the declaration of 2019 as the Year of Zayed and Tolerance in honour and revered memory of His Highness Sheikh Zayed Sultan Al Nahyan. This country continues to thrive and prosper because it promotes the foundational values of tolerance, co-existence among people, and respect for diversity.

On behalf of the government and people of Sierra Leone, let me also acknowledge and express gratitude

for the fact-finding mission of the Emirates Red Crescent led by its Secretary General in February this year which culminated in the donation of 69 hand pumps and solar powered wells and the construction of mosques in various parts of Sierra Leone. Your intervention has improved the quality of life for Sierra Leoneans and for that we are most grateful as a nation.

The United Arab Emirates has always stood by us in moments of crisis and when we were overwhelmed by disaster. On behalf of the government and people of Sierra Leone, I thank your excellences and the people of the UAE for the very generous humanitarian support during the outbreak of the Ebola virus disease and the mudslide in Sierra Leone.

Sierra Leone is determined to further strengthen and deepen our existing cordial relations and cooperation between our two governments for the mutual benefit of the people of the UAE and the people of Sierra Leone. In this regard the Government of Sierra Leone's will continue to collaborate with the UAE in further enriching political, economic, technical, and cultural cooperation.

At the multilateral level, Sierra Leone supports the aspirations of the UAE in contributing to sustaining world peace and development. In respect of that position, Sierra Leone will support the candidature of the UAE for a Non-Permanent Membership to the UN Security Council for the period 2022 -2023.

Our two governments are committed to further strengthen our bilateral ties of friendship, cooperation, and especially trade. We negotiated a visa waiver agreement in November 2018. Sierra Leone has been invited to participate in the Dubai Expo 2020 to which Her Excellency the First Lady of Sierra Leone is serving as Commissioner General. Both governments are also committed to signing the outstanding agreements on avoidance of double taxation and the transfer of convicted prisoners.

We further want to broaden our relationship especially in the areas of trade and investment. Sierra Leone is priming its economy for private sector investment and growth. It is in this respect that my government warmly accepted the invitation from the Minister of Economy,

His Excellency Sultan Bin Saeed Al Mansouri for Sierra Leone to participate in the Annual Investment Meeting (AIM) to be held in Dubai starting April 8 – 10, 2019. As a show of commitment of my government, the Director General of AIM visited Sierra Leone and held high level discussions with my Vice President, other senior members of government, and representatives of the private sector.

Our areas of cooperation have also extended to sports and I note with pleasure to Your Highnesses my gratitude about your facilitating Sierra Leone's participation in the ongoing Special Olympics Games in Abu Dhabi and Dubai. Sierra Leone was represented at the Opening Ceremony by my Minister of Sports and the Ambassador to the UAE. Undoubtedly, my Ambassador to the UAE is working very closely with members of your government in many areas of mutual interests and concerns.

Allow me your highnesses to point out several gains that have positioned Sierra Leone for national development. We have clamped down on corruption because it is a

threat to national development and national security. It also discourages credible investors. The international community has recognised our efforts and our multilateral and other development partners who had abandoned the country have now returned and are now working closely with my government to further and sustain the set of macroeconomic and structural reforms my government has undertaken since. But we must shockproof our economy against external shocks and the risk of fluctuations in commodity prices. We are undertaking a wide-ranging and determined drive to attract foreign investments in the several opportunities we offer in our country in the areas of energy, infrastructure, agriculture, mining, fisheries, education, science and technology. We want credible investors interested in a win-win relationship where they realise a healthy profit while supporting our economic diversification, growth, and development.

My government has set as a priority investment in human capital development. Human capital involves investments in free quality education, quality healthcare,

and boosting food security through various initiatives. We therefore would be most grateful for interventions such as infrastructure, equipment, and input that may help develop these key priority sectors.

Sierra Leone looks forward to having a closer relationship and closer contacts with the UAE through trade and the free movement of people between our sister nations. We have also concluded an air transport agreement. Sierra Leone therefore requests for Emirates Airlines to extend its services to Sierra Leone.

Let me conclude by extending invitations to Your Highnesses to pay State and friendly visits to the Republic of Sierra Leone.

I thank you.