



**OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER  
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**WELCOME ADDRESS TO THE INAUGURATION OF THE HON.  
DR. MAADA SALIA JUSU-SHERIFF PARLIAMENTARY LECTURE  
PARLIAMENT BUILDING, FREETOWN  
17<sup>TH</sup> DECEMBER 2019**

By

Rt. Hon. Dr. Abass Chernor Bundu  
Speaker of Parliament of Sierra Leone

Two days from now, 19 December 2009 to be precise, we shall mark the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the demise of the late Honourable Dr. Maada Salia Jusu-Sheriff. Maada Salia, as he was fondly known, was an illustrious son of this great country of ours and was an exceptionally gifted former Member of this Honourable House. And the date of Maada Salia's demise will certainly find an indelible place in the annals of the history of this country and of course of this Parliament as well.

The loss occasioned by the death of Maada Salia is irreplaceable not only to his wife, Gladys, his children and extended family members, his native Kenema District, but also to the entire nation of Sierra Leone. More especially, I dare to add that there can be no gainsaying the fact that the loss of Maada Salia was felt similarly by all who cherish, respect and practise parliamentary democracy everywhere. It's no exaggeration, Ladies and Gentlemen, to say also that the life of Maada Salia was as much a tantalising charismatic inspiration to many as it was a unique exemplar of parliamentary democracy in Sierra Leone.

And today it is my privilege and honour to welcome all of you to our House of Parliament on this auspicious occasion of the inauguration



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of the Honourable Dr. Maada Salia Jusu-Sheriff Parliamentary Lecture. By concord with his family and subject of course the approval of Parliament, it is our fervent wish that this lecture shall be held every two years.

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

Permit me also to be presumptuous enough to count myself as a member of the privileged group that can claim to know Maada Salia well, more especially after our political paths crossed in 1982. That was the year we both decided in our separate ways to cohabit with the Government of President Siaka Stevens, he as Minister of Finance and I as Minister of Agriculture and Natural Resources.

By no stretch of the imagination was the decision an easy one to make by any of us. In many ways, in the course of service as a Minister in President Stevens' Government, Maada Salia was able to prove himself as a superlatively consummate politician; in fact as one who was many light years ahead of his time. A paragon of virtue of his time, Maada Salia truly had no equal in the political arena. Perhaps a few illustrations of this will suffice.

First, when in 1982 President Siaka Stevens appointed him his Minister of Finance, Maada Salia did the unthinkable. He became the first Minister ever in the history of Sierra Leone politics to declare his personal assets. And remember he did this at a time when there was no law compelling anyone to do so. Since that time the declaration of personal assets by public officers has come into vogue. Today it is the law as enshrined in the Anti-Corruption Act of 2008, which requires all public officers to declare their assets at the time they assume and when they leave office.



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A second notable example. Maada Salia in his public life espoused the veritable principle of political inclusivity. Not only that, he elevated it to a higher height. Currently there is a strong advocacy in Sierra Leone for the principle of inclusivity in politics to be fully embraced and replicated at all levels of public service. While some might want to see its recrudescence today as a new phenomenon, Maada Salia, in fact, had singlehandedly embraced it as early as 1982 and continually gave it the shine necessary to preserve its vitality. The most conspicuous moment was when he agreed to serve as Minister of Finance under President Siaka Stevens in 1982.

The second time he again espoused and domesticated the principle of inclusivity in Sierra Leonean politics was when in 1988 he accepted appointment as Second Vice-President under President Joseph Saidu Momoh. Of course it might seem to many that he had no choice to do otherwise if he wanted to stay relevant as a politician under the One-Party Constitution of 1978, but no sooner the 1991 Constitution of Sierra Leone came into force on October 1, 1991, returning the country to democratic pluralism, Maada Salia promptly shed his one-party colour, if there ever was one, exchanging it for his true natural colour into which he had been birthed as a politician from Kenema District. He spared no effort and no time to disengage himself from the Government of President Joseph Saidu Momoh after the restoration of Sierra Leone to multiparty politics.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I will pause at this time and allow truth to be told. President Momoh must be acknowledged as the politician who deserves the highest and fullest national recognition for returning Sierra Leone to democratic pluralism. I submit that he deserves this accolade all the more, considering that he did what he did at a time when he was



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under constant and unrelenting pressure from the high priests and disciples of one-partyism not to give in to the popular demands for the restoration of the country back to democratic multipartyism. And for Maada Salia the 1991 Constitution recreated the long-awaited platform for him to re-energise the process for realising his cherished dream of resuscitating and re-registering the then moribund Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP). By this singular action, Maada Salia not only astonished and stunted his critics, leaving them standing completely motionless and dumbfounded, he also publicly demonstrated that he was a man not for turning.

But that is not all. I can cite another example of Maada Salia's extraordinary brilliance and capacity in managing complex, overlapping and intricate mechanisms. Ladies and Gentlemen, I know of no textbook on politics that adequately instructs on how to build and manage a polity that is deeply rooted in multi-ethnic and multiregional diversity. Even more importantly, how to grow prosperity in a nation especially like ours which is richly endowed with natural resources but whose people are perpetually risking life and limb to relocate to illusory and imaginary greener pastures. This precisely characterises the Sierra Leone economy that Maada Salia inherited in 1982 as Minister of Finance.

Salia was acutely aware that success in his new assignment as Minister of Finance depended hugely upon making the country more open, more attractive, more competitive, more disciplined, more efficient, in addition to lifting its infrastructure above the rudimentary. So he embarked on a somewhat slippery implausible journey, completely unmarked and with an uncertain destination. At the same time that Salia was pondering over what to do, President Siaka Stevens was brimming with confidence and contentment.



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Stevens had somehow believed that studding his new Cabinet with some of the country's brightest minds was enough to appease the nation and to assure everyone that the promises he had made in the General Election of 1982 that their lives would turn around for the better, would soon come to fruition. In all this Siaka Stevens, being the wily and rascally politician he was, carefully and skilfully concealed the awesomeness of the task his Government was facing.

Salia, in turn, being the man he was, imbued with extraordinary brilliance, didn't take long to show he was up to the task. A steady, competent, confident and consistent character, only few believed he was not equal to the task as a natural in the Ministry of Finance. His pragmatism, his grasp of figures and his special knack for getting to grips with fundamentals, whilst ignoring the morass of detail, made him to tower above his critics effortlessly, to say nothing about his unusual tenacity, purposefulness and shrewdness.

Finally, Ladies and Gentlemen, Salia ought also to be celebrated for many other reasons. His tenure in government, more than anything else, was especially notable for revealing that good governance, progress and prosperity are not mere gifts like manna from Heaven; on the contrary they are the products of visionary leadership, seamless stubbornness and dedication to honesty, efficiency, effectiveness and accountability. And, I would make bold to say to all and sundry, that for his unfortunate illness, Salia would have been the undisputed leader of the SLPP to take his Party to victory in the 1996 General Elections and thereby would have been to Sierra Leone what Lee Kwan Yew was to Singapore, leading **all** Sierra Leoneans from every nook and cranny of this country to transform their country from a Third World Country to First.



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Had this happened none who knew Salia well would have been surprised. Before politics Salia had accumulated many firsts: he was the first in his family to attend the Bo School; the first Bo School boy to earn a First Division in the School Certificate Examination; and the first Sierra Leonean to qualify as a Chartered Accountant. How more extraordinary can you get?

Alas, by Allah's Will, today Maada Salia is no more. He is no longer with us in flesh and blood but I am sure he is with us in spirit. We pray that Allah grant his gentle soul peaceful eternal rest in His Heavenly Kingdom.

May we all please rise and observe a minute's silence in his memory. We pray that Salia's gentle soul continue to rest in perfect peace.