



GOVERNMENT OF SIERRA LEONE

PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS

DELIVERED BY

HIS EXCELLENCY

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

On the Occasion of the State Opening of the

Third Session of the Sixth Parliament of the Second

Republic of Sierra Leone

In the Chamber of Parliament Building

TOWER HILL, FREETOWN



On Thursday, 7th August 2025

at

10:00 a.m.

HONOURABLE VICE PRESIDENT,
THE RIGHT HONOURABLE SPEAKER OF PARLIAMENT,
THE HONOURABLE CHIEF JUSTICE,
MADAM FIRST LADY,
FORMER VICE PRESIDENTS,
FORMER HONOURABLE SPEAKER OF THE ECOWAS PARLIAMENT,
MEMBERS OF THE JUDICIARY,
MINISTERS OF GOVERNMENT,
HONOURABLE MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT,
OUR REVERED TRADITIONAL AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT LEADERS,
OUR RELIGIOUS LEADERS,
THE MAYOR OF THE MUNICIPALITIES OF FREETOWN,
MEMBERS OF THE DIPLOMATIC AND CONSULAR CORPS,
MEMBERS OF THE SECURITY, PUBLIC SAFETY, AND INTELLIGENCE SERVICES,
CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS,
MEMBERS OF THE FOURTH ESTATE,
DISTINGUISHED LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,
FELLOW SIERRA LEONEANS,

I. INTRODUCTION

1. With profound gratitude and a deep sense of duty, I address this **Third Session of the Sixth Parliament of the Second Republic of Sierra Leone**. I do so in humility, fully aware of the solemn trust our people have placed in us. As President, and as a fellow citizen and father of this nation, I feel the weight of that trust and the responsibility it demands.

2. This chamber is the beating heart of our democracy. Here, through debate and decision, we shape the laws and policies that reach every Sierra Leonean life. Here, we choose whether the future we give our children will be defined by hope and opportunity, or by delay and division. You have shown, especially in critical moments, that you understand that responsibility, and I commend you for your service.

3. Over the past year, you have shown courage in adversity and resilience in the work of nation-building. You have chosen unity when division beckoned, and you have put the national interest above partisan gain. Whether advancing economic stabilisation, reforming our petroleum sector, enhancing national security, or strengthening frameworks for youth development and women's empowerment in vocational training, higher education, labour, and social protection, you have focused on what matters most to our people.

4. I want every Sierra Leonean to know **this Parliament matters. Your work matters. Your decisions touch every household, every farmer, trader, teacher, and student striving for a better life**. Because of this, our people rightly expect us to act with integrity, purpose, and compassion at all times.

5. I extend my heartfelt commendation to the leadership of this House, to all Political Parties represented here, to every Honourable Member, and to our Paramount Chiefs. You have carried out your mandate with distinction. You have shown that when we rise above partisanship and put Sierra Leone first,

we can deliver real, lasting progress. For this, you have earned not only my admiration but the gratitude of a proud and hopeful nation.

6. As we open this new session, let us renew our shared commitment - to service above self, to country above party, and to building a future worthy of our people's trust.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members,

7. This new session opens at a moment of renewed hope and shared purpose. Across every district, our people look to this Government and this Parliament to deliver development, expand opportunity, and protect stability. It is a sacred duty, and I do not take it lightly.

8. I appear before you to reaffirm our unwavering commitment to national transformation and to account for the progress we have made, as well as the challenges we must still confront.

9. We are steadily translating the bold vision of **Sierra Leone's Medium-Term National Development Plan (MTNDP) for 2024-2030** into real and measurable gains - bringing development closer to our people, restoring public trust in our institutions, and laying the firm foundations for a more inclusive, resilient, and prosperous Sierra Leone.

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members,

10. To strengthen transparency and accountability, I will lay before this Honourable House a comprehensive report detailing our governance record and sectoral achievements for the past year. I trust Parliament will give it the careful review it deserves, consistent with your oversight mandate and our shared responsibility for national transformation.

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members,

11. Allow me now to share with this esteemed House - and with the people of Sierra Leone - key highlights of the tangible progress we have achieved under our **Big Five Game Changers**. These priorities remain central to our nation's sustainable economic growth and social progress. What I present is proof of what can be accomplished when we lead with vision, govern with purpose, and act in unity.

II. THE BIG FIVE GAME CHANGERS

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members,

12. In 2023, we launched the **Big Five Game Changers** - bold and strategic priorities at the heart of our national transformation agenda. Together, they provide a clear blueprint to accelerate growth, foster inclusion, and secure lasting stability.

13. I am pleased to report **steady, measurable progress across all five pillars:**

- * **Feed Salone** is strengthening food security and reducing dependence on imports.
- * **Human Capital Development** is expanding access to quality education, healthcare, and opportunities for women.

- * **The Youth Employment Scheme** is transforming joblessness into opportunity, channelling the energy of our young people into enterprise and innovation.
- * **Technology and Infrastructure Development** is expanding digital access and enhancing national competitiveness.
- * **Public Service Reform** is delivering more transparent, efficient, and accountable institutions that build public trust and improve service delivery.

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members,

14. As we recommit to these priorities, I will now highlight key achievements under each of these transformative pillars.

GAME CHANGER 1 – FEED SALONE

AGRICULTURE AND FOOD SECURITY

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members,

15. We are **making strong and steady progress toward food self-sufficiency**. In 2024 alone, rice production rose by **8%**, resulting in a **13%** reduction in rice imports and saving the nation over **US\$15 million** in foreign exchange. These gains have resulted in a **20% decline** in rice prices over the past year. Three new rice mills are now operational, boosting domestic processing capacity and reducing post-harvest losses.

16. The impact is clear: the **World Food Programme (WFP)** has cut its reliance on imported rice from **90% to 60%**, sourcing the remaining **30%** directly from Sierra Leone's resilient smallholder farmers.

17. Beyond rice, we are diversifying our food economy. Over the past two years, **egg imports have fallen by 21%**, and locally produced eggs are now **10% cheaper**. Strategic market interventions and increased domestic supply have also made local onions **20% more affordable** than imported varieties. For the first time, Sierra Leone has begun exporting vegetable oil and other agricultural products - a sign of a more competitive and resilient agri-economy.

18. **Flagship programmes**, such as the **Agricultural Value Chain Development Project**, are expanding value chains, raising farmer incomes, and enabling the cultivation of **9,000 additional hectares of cocoa** - boosting export potential and rural prosperity. Also, **the Livestock and Livelihoods Development Project** is modernising animal health systems, upgrading livestock infrastructure, and increasing farmers' income.

19. Last year, my Government secured over **US\$800 million in international pledges** to support agricultural productivity and food sovereignty. Already, **US\$205 million** has been committed, including **US\$105 million for livestock development, US\$45 million for cassava production, and US\$55 million for critical agricultural road infrastructure**.

20. To support mechanisation, we launched a **US\$10 million credit facility** to increase access to equipment, build **industrial-grade poultry feed mills**, and roll out **Sierra Leone's first-ever Weather-Index Crop Insurance scheme**, beginning with rice and maize farmers.

21. We are proud to have completed the **first nationwide digital soil mapping exercise**, guiding targeted fertiliser and seed delivery. In addition, our **biometric National Farmers Registry now includes over 300,000 farmers**, with expansion underway. These innovations form the foundation of a modern agricultural ecosystem.

22. Infrastructure remains a key enabler. We have commenced the construction of **420 kilometres of feeder roads** and essential rural bridges. Under the **Smallholder Commercialisation and Agribusiness Development Project (SCADEP)**, four major bridges are under construction. The **Matru-Senehun Bridge** has already been commissioned, while the **Gendema Bridge in Kenema, the Manowa Bridge in Kailahun, and the Tomparie Bridge in Karene** will soon be inaugurated.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members,

23. We also recognise that sustainable food systems require urgent and integrated climate action. I have directed the **Ministries of Agriculture and Food Security, Environment, and the Environment Protection Agency (EPA)** to embed food systems resilience into Sierra Leone's **third Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs)** under the **Paris Agreement**. Relevant policies and legislation will soon be laid before this Honourable House.

24. Strengthening our food systems also means investing in climate-resilient communities. We are advancing sustainable land use, forestry management, reforestation, and community-led biodiversity conservation, empowering local communities to take greater ownership of natural resource management and enforce environmental protection.

THE FISHERIES SECTOR

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members,

25. The fisheries sector remains a **vital pillar of our economy - contributing 12 percent to national GDP** and supporting the livelihoods of over one million Sierra Leoneans, particularly women and youth.

26. In 2024, the sector generated over **US\$5 million in foreign exchange**, surpassing 2023 revenue targets. With the introduction of a new **Quota Management System (QMS), based on catch volumes, we expect to more than double this revenue** in the coming years, while ensuring sustainability and equitable access to marine resources.

27. Key reforms include the **digitisation of fisheries data collection** and the launch of a dedicated **Aquaculture and Inland Fisheries Policy** to promote commercial investment in aquaculture and accelerate the development of inland fisheries. This will lay the foundation for long-term sector growth and higher domestic revenue.

28. In line with regional best practices, we have introduced a **closed fishing season** for artisanal and industrial fleets to allow depleted fish stocks to regenerate, ensuring the long-term health of our marine ecosystems.

29. **International partnerships** have expanded significantly. A **landmark investment agreement with the Republic of Egypt** now supports joint ventures in **commercial fisheries and shrimp aquaculture**, strengthening regional cooperation and private sector engagement.

30. Marine governance has been enhanced through additional **Vessel Monitoring System (VMS)** units, integrated with **Automatic Identification System (AIS)** technology. These systems now enable continuous, real-time tracking of all licensed vessels operating in our **Exclusive Economic Zone**.

31. Our fight against **Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated (IUU) fishing** has intensified. The Monitoring and Compliance Division has operationalised the **Port State Measures Agreement (PSMA)**, ensuring rigorous inspections of all industrial vessels at our ports in line with international governance standards.

32. Domestic revenue collection has improved through intensified **registration and licensing of artisanal fishing canoes**. We are also working to increase annual industrial fish production **from 120,000 to 150,000 metric tonnes**, boosting output, processing, and exports.

33. Construction of the **Black Johnson Industrial Fish Harbour Complex** is progressing. An **implementation agreement** has been signed, financing arrangements with the Government of the People's Republic of China are nearing completion, and site clearance is underway following the conclusion of international bidding for engineering firms. This modern facility will host **large industrial vessels, including tuna ships**, and drive **value addition across the fisheries value chain**.

34. **Certification of Sierra Leone's aquatic products for export to China** is at an advanced stage. Once finalised this year, it will unlock **direct market access** and significant trade opportunities, positioning Sierra Leone as a growing force in regional and global seafood markets

35. Finally, we continue to modernise **policies and regulatory frameworks** to attract investment, conserve marine biodiversity, strengthen food security, and support inclusive job creation - particularly for youth. These reforms lay the foundation for a **resilient, sustainable, and competitive Blue Economy**.

GAME CHANGER 2 – HUMAN CAPITAL DEVELOPMENT

36. **No nation can rise above the quality of its people**. That is why my Government **continues to invest boldly in education, healthcare, and skills development** - the true engines of productivity, innovation, and opportunity. These foundations are essential for a just, resilient, and globally competitive Sierra Leone.

BASIC AND SENIOR SECONDARY EDUCATION

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members,

37. In 2024, student enrolment, retention, and completion rates rose significantly, supported by expanded e-learning, improved internet access, solar solutions for underserved schools, and support for learners with special needs - **ensuring that no child is left behind**.

38. We have **built over 1,500 classrooms** and improved WASH facilities in schools nationwide. Retention, especially among **girls and returning child mothers**, has increased through the provision of sanitary pads, first aid kits, and the **School Feeding Programme across 15 districts**.

39. To improve learning outcomes, more than **20,000 teachers** have been trained since 2018, including 14,500 in early-grade literacy and numeracy. We have also deployed **200 Quality Assurance Officers** nationwide to monitor and support teaching quality.

40. Our Government **fully covers NPSE, BECE, and WASSCE exam fees**. We provide tuition subsidies for all public and Government-assisted schools, including institutions for learners with special needs, ensuring no child is denied education due to financial hardship.

41. Today, more girls are **completing senior secondary school and passing national exams at record levels**. Independent assessments confirm that our students are now matching peers in Africa's top-performing education systems.

42. These gains reflect strong political will, effective partnerships, community engagement, and local innovation. We remain committed to inclusive, quality education as a key driver of empowerment, national transformation, and resilience.

TECHNICAL AND HIGHER EDUCATION

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members,

43. Over the past year, my Government, through the **Ministry of Technical and Higher Education (MTHE)**, has advanced our vision of an inclusive, skills-based, innovation-led education system to empower youth and drive national development.

I. Transformative Skills Development for Youth Empowerment

44. We are equipping young people - especially women and vulnerable groups - **with practical, future-ready skills**. With **US\$990,000 from the African Development Bank**, the **WokDonCam Project** is revitalising three Technical Institutes to train youth in agro-processing, waste management, digital technology, entrepreneurship, and soft skills.

45. Through the **BEAR III Programme**, supported by **SIDA** through **UNESCO**, we are strengthening agricultural value chain training and piloting a **Sector Skills Council** to align certification and lifelong learning with our **Feed Salone strategy**.

46. Through a **US\$3.5 million partnership with UNIDO**, the Government of Japan, **MTHE**, and the **Ministry of Youth Affairs**, we established a Centre of Excellence for Automotive Training at the Government Technical Institute, offering 960 hours of certified instruction in 39 modules, prioritising women and disadvantaged youth.

47. With UNDP support, we piloted a **Recognition of Prior Learning Programme** in Freetown and Kenema, certifying 100 informal workers in construction and HVAC. Its success led to the development of a national plumbing curriculum, soon to be rolled out nationwide.

II. Digitalisation and Technology-Driven Learning

48. To bridge the digital divide in higher education, in partnership with **ELCOM**, we launched a nationwide connectivity programme **linking nine universities across 23 campuses to affordable internet via Starlink, benefiting over 10,000 students in just 90 days**. This is reinforced by expanding the **Sierra Leone Research and Education Network (SLREN)**, integrating more institutions into national and global research networks.

49. This year, in collaboration with **UNDP's Timbuktoo Initiative**, we will launch **UniPods** - modern hubs for digital entrepreneurship, innovation, and student-led, market-driven solutions.

III. Strengthening Governance, Quality, and Research

50. This House passed **two landmark laws** - the **revised Tertiary Education Commission Act** and the **National Council for Technical and Vocational Education Act** - to modernise governance and ensure quality across both sectors.

51. To strengthen research and innovation, MTHE, with **UNESCO** support, is developing a **National Research and Innovation Policy** to position our universities as drivers of industrialisation within the **Science, Technology and Innovation framework**.

52. We completed the **West African Science Service Centre on Climate Change and Adapted Land Use (WASCAL)** assessment, unlocking new PhD scholarships and boosting climate science research capacity.

53. With **€2.1 million support from AISPO**, we are launching postgraduate training in haematology and blood transfusion through the **College of Medicine and Allied Health Sciences (COMAHS)**, the University of Sierra Leone Teaching Hospital Complex, and the School of Postgraduate Health Specialties.

IV. Strategic Infrastructure Investments.

54. We are upgrading learning environments through the **Education Sector Support Programme**, with 60% of works completed at **Milton Margai and Bunumbu campuses**, and a new ministerial complex underway.

55. The Government has provided **US\$2 million** to fast-track **Kono University of Science and Technology**, now 80% through its preparatory phase. Construction will soon begin under the **EXIM Bank-funded EBID facility**.

56. Through a **US\$2 million local content initiative** with **the People's Republic of China and UNDP**, we are producing 14,000 furniture units for educational institutions - boosting local industry and jobs.

57. With **GIZ support**, we have rehabilitated and upgraded **three Government Technical Institutes** into modern, career-focused training centres.

V. Expanding Access, Inclusion, and Student Support

58. To expand access to higher education, we have **digitised the Sierra Leone Student Loan Scheme** via the **WanGov platform** - improving transparency and ease of application. Over 1,000 postgraduates have benefited, and the scheme is now being extended to undergraduates.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members,

59. The heartbeat of Sierra Leone is its youth. My Government remains firmly committed to investing in their skills and innovation - our most sustainable path to inclusive prosperity and national renewal.

HEALTHCARE: BUILDING A RESILIENT AND INCLUSIVE SYSTEM

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members,

60. A **healthy population is essential to national prosperity**. My Government is therefore strengthening health governance, financing, service delivery, and emergency preparedness to build a resilient system that serves every Sierra Leonean.

61. To advance **Universal Health Coverage**, domestic health spending increased by 2%, and the **Sierra Leone Social Health Insurance Scheme (SLeSHI)** has been operationalised to reduce out-of-pocket costs by 20% by 2026, especially for low-income families.

62. We have enhanced health security by establishing the **National Public Health Agency (NPHA)** to coordinate emergency response and deploying the **electronic Integrated Disease Surveillance and Response (eIDSR) system** for real-time outbreak monitoring. A nationwide weekly surveillance system now covers hospitals, health centres, and communities.

63. Human resources for health remain a priority. Healthcare worker recruitment has increased by 15%, bringing the total workforce to over 14,000. Medical school enrolment has doubled, raising annual graduates from 40 to 80.

64. To reduce dependence on foreign professionals, we established the **Postgraduate College of Health Specialties**, where over 40 doctors are now trained locally, and construction of its permanent campus is underway.

65. We are investing heavily in **hospital infrastructure**. Key projects include the **166-bed Julius Maada Bio Paediatric Centre of Excellence in Lumley** and the modernisation of regional and district hospitals to expand specialist services.

66. To strengthen emergency and critical care, we are building oxygen generation and distribution systems at regional facilities - crucial for maternal and newborn survival.

67. **Emergency Obstetric and Newborn Care centres in Mongor (North), Yengema (East), and Gbondapi and Pujehun (South)** are being upgraded to provide lifesaving care in underserved areas.

68. Our efforts are paying off: **maternal and newborn deaths have fallen by 70%**, supported by expanded immunisation, improved nutrition programmes, better access to essential medicines, and stronger WASH services at last-mile facilities.

69. To further reduce maternal mortality, we are establishing a **100-bed Maternal School of Excellence in Kono** and new **training hubs in Bo, Kenema, and Freetown**.

70. We continue to deploy **off-grid solar systems** to rural health centres, enabling safe nighttime deliveries, vaccine refrigeration, and reliable emergency services.

71. The **National Emergency Medical Service now operates 104 ambulances in all 16 districts**, ensuring timely emergency response.

72. Meanwhile, the **Pharmacy Board** continues to regulate medicines to ensure safety, affordability, and accessibility.

73. **Tertiary hospitals** are being equipped with modern diagnostic tools, expanded telemedicine services, and a **Centralised Maintenance Management System (CMMS)**. We have also launched a life-course vaccination strategy, now including HPV, malaria, measles, rubella, polio, COVID-19, and Mpox vaccines.

74. Our strengthened **digital health information systems, built on the District Health Information Software 2 (DHIS2)**, are improving data management and guiding evidence-based decision-making nationwide.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members,

75. In January, Sierra Leone recorded its first confirmed case of Mpox. The **Ministry of Health** responded swiftly with emergency activation, decentralised testing, health worker training, public updates, and anti-stigma campaigns. While no active outbreak exists, enhanced surveillance, cross-border monitoring, and national preparedness remain in place to protect public health.

GENDER EQUALITY AND CHILDREN'S AFFAIRS

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members,

76. **Gender equality remains a national priority** - central to justice, inclusion, and sustainable development.

77. We are actively implementing the **Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Act, 2022**, through new regulations, institutional frameworks, and Gender Units across MDAs. Focal points are being trained in **gender mainstreaming, budgeting, and equity**.

78. We continue to combat **Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (GBV)** through nationwide awareness campaigns, stronger legal and psychosocial support systems, and robust accountability mechanisms, working closely with civil society and international partners.

79. Following the passage of the **Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2024**, we are finalising enforcement regulations. This Honourable House has also passed the **Child Rights Act, 2025**, which now awaits Presidential Assent. Once enacted, it will create Sierra Leone's first **National Children's Law**, consolidating and strengthening legal protections for every child.

SOCIAL WELFARE AND PROTECTION

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members,

80. My Government is committed to building a just and inclusive society, expanding social protection, promoting disability inclusion, improving mental health services, and supporting the elderly and retirees.

81. Domestically, **two landmark laws** have been enacted:

- * The **Social Work Regulatory Act, 2025**, establishing a professional council to standardise and regulate social work practice; and
- * The **Social Protection Act, 2024**, creating the **National Social Protection Authority** to coordinate and expand social protection programmes nationwide.

82. Sierra Leone has secured a **US\$1 million India-UN grant** to establish **skills centres and a disability village** for economic empowerment and reintegration. We are among the **first signatories of the Amman-Berlin Declaration**, committing to prioritise disability inclusion in **at least 15% of international development programmes**.

83. To combat drug abuse, **rehabilitation centres in Hastings and Bo** have reintegrated over **400 former users** into society.

84. We are also addressing substance abuse among persons with disabilities through programmes combining **rehabilitation with vocational training**; **200 individuals** are currently training in tailoring at the **Polio Persons Development Association in Makeni** and the **Freetown Orthopaedic Rehabilitation Centre** with UNDP support.

85. Through the **National Social Safety Net**, **84,000 elderly-headed households** have been digitally registered, and cash transfers provided to over **11,000 elderly citizens aged 75+**, improving access to healthcare, nutrition, and dignified ageing.

86. **NASSIT** continues to expand social security coverage to the informal sector, ensuring that all Sierra Leoneans - regardless of employment status - can access essential protections.

WATER, SANITATION, AND HYGIENE (WASH)

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members,

87. Access to clean water, sanitation, and hygiene is a basic right and essential for health, education, climate resilience, and development.

88. To drive progress, we created the **Ministry of Water Resources and Sanitation** in June 2023, aligning national strategies with **SDG 6** and embedding climate adaptation in WASH planning.

89. For long-term water security, we launched the **Western Area Peninsula Water Fund**, using nature-based solutions to protect catchments and ecosystems. The **National Water Resources Management Agency** has introduced regulations for pollution control, groundwater management, catchment protection, water use, and dam safety.

90. We prioritise pollution prevention and equitable access, supported by a new community-based management framework for local ownership and sustainability.

91. To expand supply, we are rehabilitating water infrastructure in Blama-Bandawor, Kailahun, and Kabala, and building 100 solar-powered boreholes with tank towers, distribution networks, and standposts in underserved communities.

92. In Freetown, a multi-donor **AfDB-led WASH project** includes the Angola Town Water Supply System, a **60,000 m³ reservoir** at Regent/Babadorie, and rehabilitation of Kongo Dam, Tacugama, Sugarloaf weirs, and transmission pipelines.

93. With **OPEC funding**, Guma Valley is expanding the Allen Town system with new water sources, 45 km of pipes, six reservoirs, and upgraded pumping stations. A mountain bulk water system is also under construction.

94. To increase private sector participation, Guma Valley - supported by the **African Legal Support Facility and FCDO** - is reviewing legal frameworks for **public-private partnerships**, and **new WASH investment regulations** will soon be tabled in this House.

SPORTS: UNITY, OPPORTUNITY, AND NATIONAL PRIDE

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members,

95. Sports is a powerful tool for nation-building. Through investments in schools, communities, and professional sports, we are fostering discipline, teamwork, healthier lifestyles, and social cohesion, while creating opportunities for young people.

96. Reviving the **male and female Premier Leagues** and rehabilitating key facilities has created thousands of jobs and boosted local economies. Sports also promote tourism and district development.

97. With the support of the Government of the People's Republic of China, we are investing over **US\$40 million to transform Sierra Leone's 50-year-old National Stadium** into a world-class facility by 2027, featuring all-seater stands, upgraded tracks and fields, a modern practice pitch, a 1,500-seat stand, a four-star athletes' hostel, and refurbished courts - a symbol of national renewal and pride.

98. Our **athletes continue to excel** - from the women's football and cricket teams to the U20 squad's 4-1 win over Egypt and the U16 basketball team reaching an international final for the first time in 20 years. These victories inspire confidence, unity, and national pride.

99. Internationally, Sierra Leone is aligning with global initiatives using sport as a tool for inclusion, peacebuilding, and transformation.

GAME CHANGER 3 – YOUTH EMPLOYMENT SCHEME

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members,

100. Two years ago, I launched the **Youth Employment Scheme** - a national mission to create 500,000 jobs in five years.

101. We are generating jobs across agriculture, mining, construction, energy, sports, the creative economy, and digital skills. By expanding access to finance, vocational training, and entrepreneurship support, we are empowering youth, reducing poverty and crime, and securing Sierra Leone's future.

102. In addition to **Free Quality School Education**, we are providing practical skills training in income-generating sectors to empower our youth.

103. Through the **National Youth Commission**, thousands of young people have received technical training in mechanics, construction, hospitality, and welding. Over 250 young women have joined digital literacy and entrepreneurship programmes. Youth-led farming and fisheries initiatives are expanding nationwide.

104. Under the **World Bank-funded Productive Social Safety Nets and Youth Employment (PSSNYE) project**, 8,000 young persons will each receive US\$300 to grow their businesses.

105. **Agriculture remains central to youth employment**, with investments in modern farming, agro-processing, and agribusiness to improve livelihoods and food security.

106. At the same time, **technology and digital literacy programmes** are preparing youth for the global knowledge economy, while vocational training is producing skilled professionals in critical trades to drive national development.

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members,

107. Despite our progress, we face a grave and growing threat - the rise of synthetic drug use, especially Kush. This is more than a social issue; it is a **public health emergency** that takes lives, destabilises communities, and endangers our national future.

108. My Government **unequivocally condemns** those who manufacture, traffic, and sell these deadly substances. Since declaring a **National Emergency on Drug and Substance Abuse in April 2024**, we have intensified enforcement, tightened border controls, and strengthened legislation to hold perpetrators accountable.

109. Our **national strategy** is clear: **prevention, public education, rehabilitation, and enforcement**. But success requires a united national response.

110. I call on **parents, teachers, faith leaders, civil society, and communities** to stand with us in creating safe, supportive spaces where our young people can flourish.

111. And to **our young people**, I say this: **stay focused, stay healthy, stay resilient**. You are not only the **leaders of tomorrow** - you are **leaders of today**. Your courage, discipline, and vision will shape the Sierra Leone we all dream of. Do not let drugs steal your future. **Your hands must build; your minds must create; your voices must lead.**

112. Together, let us build a nation where every young Sierra Leonean has opportunity, skills, and support to live with dignity, purpose, and hope.

GAME CHANGER 4 -- TECHNOLOGY AND INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT

TECHNOLOGY: DRIVING DIGITAL INCLUSION, INNOVATION, AND NATIONAL EFFICIENCY

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members,

113. My Government is committed to digital transformation as a catalyst for inclusive growth, efficient governance, and transparent service delivery.

114. At the **2025 Salone Innovates Digital Government Summit**, we showcased local innovation - especially by **youth and women** - and delivered **38 specialised courses** in AI, cybersecurity, coding, and digital entrepreneurship. A young entrepreneur received the **Presidential Innovation Prize** for a groundbreaking digital farming hub.

115. Government systems are now interoperable, reducing bureaucracy and eliminating the need for repeated document submissions across ministries. The **GoSL HR Hub** is digitising payroll and attendance, cutting ghost workers, while the new **Government Yellow Page** provides real-time access to services and contacts across agencies.

116. These gains are underpinned by over **US\$100 million in investments from China EXIM Bank and the World Bank**, funding fibre-optic expansion in **14 districts**, digital skills training, and upgraded service platforms.

TELECOMMUNICATIONS: EXPANDING CONNECTIVITY AND SECURING DIGITAL IDENTITY

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members,

117. Sierra Leone's telecom sector is now more inclusive and secure. The **National Communications Authority (NatCA)** has rolled out new frameworks for **Non-Geostationary Satellite Orbit (NGSO)** operators and advanced the **NIN-SIM integration** in partnership with the **National Civil Registration Authority**, ensuring verified digital identities for mobile users.

118. To expand connectivity, **NatCA** has approved **West Africa's first 5G standalone trial**. Within three years, we expect 80% of mobile services to operate on fast, low-latency networks.

119. We are implementing the **ECOWAS Roaming Regulations** through agreements with Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia, and The Gambia, enabling seamless cross-border SIM use, 30 days of free incoming calls, and harmonised tariffs across West Africa.

120. Our **telecoms landscape continues to grow:**

- * 4 Mobile Network Operators and 1 fixed operator licensed;
- * 32 ISPs, 20 TV stations, and 194 FM radio stations are operational;
- * Infrastructure providers like Zoodlabs and Leonecom are expanding national connectivity under an open-access model.

121. **Mobile coverage now exceeds 97%. Over the past year, voice subscriptions grew by 18% and data subscriptions by 65%**, reflecting stronger services and rising demand.

122. The new **NatCA headquarters** at Southridge, set to open this year, reflects the sector's shift from oversight to innovation.

123. My Government will soon introduce new reforms to strengthen regulation, protect consumers, and consolidate Sierra Leone's leadership in digital connectivity and innovation.

INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT

ENERGY: POWERING PROSPERITY AND NATIONAL RESILIENCE

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members,

124. Reliable, affordable energy is essential for industry, innovation, and inclusive growth. Ending energy poverty has been a core priority in our development agenda.

125. In **September 2024**, we signed a **US\$480 million MCC Compact** to expand transmission infrastructure, including the **225-kV Southern Corridor**, and support electricity distribution, governance, and sector reform.

126. In **January 2025**, President Donald Trump launched a global review of MCC compacts.

127. As your "**Tok N Do**" **President**, I am proud to report that as of **July**, **Sierra Leone's Compact** was among the few approved to continue - a **strong endorsement of our leadership, reforms, and U.S. partnership**.

128. We also joined the **Mission 300 Initiative in January 2025**, a global effort to halve energy poverty through innovative financing of renewable energy.

129. We have finalised the **Sierra Leone 300 Energy Compact**, targeting to **mobilise US\$2.4 billion** to:

- * Expand electricity access to 78% of the population,
- * Increase renewables to 52% by 2030, and
- * Strengthen governance, private investment, and regulatory independence.

130. We will sign the **Sierra Leone 300 Energy Compact** at the **2025 UN General Assembly in September**.

131. To meet growing demand, we are **expanding generation capacity** through key projects:

- * The **108.5 MW NANT gas-to-energy plant at Kissy Dockyard**, fully privately funded and set for commissioning in early 2027.
- * A MoU to develop the **Mano River Union's first Floating Storage Regasification Unit (FSRU) LNG hub** - reducing energy costs and enabling cross-border electricity trade.

132. We are also **upgrading existing generation assets**:

- * **Two 5 MW Niigata generators** at Kingtom have been rehabilitated,
- * Critical maintenance has been completed on the **16 MW Wartsila engines at Blackhall Road**, and