

**STATEMENT BY THE HONOURABLE DEPUTY
MINISTER OF DEFENCE DURING THE SIGNING
CEREMONY OF THE STATE PARTNERSHIP
PROGRAMME BETWEEN THE REPUBLIC OF SIERRA
LEONE ARMED FORCES AND THE UNITED STATES
MICHINGAN NATIONAL GUARD AT THE
HEADQUARTERS JOINT FORCE COMMAND ON 12
SEPTEMBER 2024**



His Excellency the United States Ambassador to Sierra Leone
The Director General Ministry of Defence
The Chief of Defence Staff, RSLAF
The Chief of Staff, Ministry of Defence
The Commander Joint Force
The Adjutant General- Michigan National Guard (MING)
All One Stars present
Senior Officers of RSLAF here present
Other distinguished representatives from MoD/RSLAF and the US Embassy/MING,
Esteem Ladies and gentlemen

I have the honour to present the compliments of His Excellency the President and Commander-In-Chief (C-In-C), Brigadier General (Rtd) Dr. Julius Maada Bio. I would like to express my deepest gratitude and appreciation to God Almighty and all diverse contributors for making this day a reality. Precisely in 2019, the MoD through a Letter of Intent, requested for this partnership. Therefore, I would want to use this occasion to appreciate the Government of the United States of America for approving the extension of the existing State Partnership Programme (SPP) scheme to the Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces (RSLAF). Today, we are about to witness the signing-in ceremony of the SPP between RSLAF and the US Michigan National Guard (MING). Symbolically, today's event would place Sierra Leone among 106 partnering countries with 50 US States.

It is with deep respect and great enthusiasm that I stand before you today on this historic moment for both institutions and by extension the countries. We are gathered here not to only sign the SPP but to embark on a journey of mutual respect and shared commitment to the principles of security and stability, among many others. These principles put together, no doubt, speak to the human capital development vision of HE the President and C-In-C, Brigadier General (Rtd) Dr. Julius Maada Bio.

Speaking to the significance of this event, today's in-person signing marks a pivotal moment in our relationship; reaffirmation our common ideals and commitment to enhancing the safety and security of our citizens. The prevailing threats, whether the fight against terrorism, the challenges of cyber security, sustainable peace-building efforts, to name but a few, is not just confined to borders; they are global. Thus, we can achieve more when we stand together.

The commitment of the Government of Sierra Leone in strengthening its democratic institutions is highly commendable. We recognize that a stable and secured Sierra Leone is not only beneficial to us but would also contribute to global stability. This security partnership therefore further underscores the commitment to support the efforts in building a safe and prosperous society.

As we sign this historic document, we must keep in mind the vision of the future we intend to create together. A future that fosters an environment where peace and development can flourish and dreams are realised without fear.

In closing, I would like to express my gratitude to everyone involved in the expansion of this partnership. Your efforts could pave the way for a brighter future. As we embark on this new chapter together, let us uphold the values we have nurtured that could be dedicated to the well-being of our nations.

Once more, thank you all for your commitment to this process. We remain in anticipation of the opportunities to working closely with the US MING. We look forward to seeing this document as a testament to our shared values, resolve, mutual respect and aspirations.

Thank you.