



**TALKING POINTS BY HIS EXCELLENCY,
DR. JULIUS MAADA BIO, PRESIDENT OF
THE REPUBLIC OF SIERRA LEONE AT
THE SECOND PRESS CONFERENCE ON
COVID-19. FREETOWN, STATE HOUSE,
31 MARCH 2020**

Good morning:

1. From the outset, my Government has prioritised actions to prevent, protect, and curtail the spread of the highly infectious and deadly Corona virus (COVID-19)
2. We have strongly urged citizens to practise enhanced hygiene practices, social distancing, and cough etiquette.
3. We continue to actively disseminate information through various modes about symptoms of COVID-19 and urge all citizens to report themselves, loved ones, or community members who may exhibit flu-like symptoms including a fever, dry cough, and difficulty breathing. .
4. We have bolstered our surveillance and response structures and facilities. I have appointed a lean Government of Sierra Leone COVI-19 Response team led by the Interim National Coordinator, Rtd Brigadier Kellie Hassan Conteh, the Minister of Defence.
5. We have activated Emergency Operations Centre to Level 2 with all attendant pillars, and pre-positioned testing, isolation, and treatment facilities to care for the sick. In the last few days, we have received additional equipment and supplies.
6. Let me reassure every citizen that our healthcare facilities are safe and our healthcare workers are trained and ready

to respond to cases. The safest place to get comprehensive medical care is the hospital.

7. We have engaged development partners and discussed how they can leverage their interventions in order to soften the impact of COVID-19 on our social and economic life and to support and protect the most vulnerable in our society.
8. We have declared a State of Public Emergency, suspended all commercial flights, and closed all land and riverine borders to the movement of people.
9. All educational institutions - from early child education centres to tertiary institutions – will close today Tuesday 31st arch 2020 until further notice.
10. We applaud private and state entities that have complemented our efforts at communicating the threat of Corona virus to our citizens.
11. We are also most grateful to the interreligious council, that in the deepest of turmoil, has guided our supplication to God/Allah to grant us wisdom, courage, and understanding to fend off this threat to our nation.
12. May I extend my deep gratitude to the Parliament of the Republic of Sierra Leone for the gracious show of national solidarity in approving the State of Public

Emergency and strengthening our collective hand to fight this deadly menace to our nation.

13. As a Government, we promised that our response would not only be flexible and multi-pronged, but also agile, robust, and comprehensive. We will continue to adjust our response levels based on ongoing risk assessments and as circumstances warrant.
14. I also promised that we would be open, transparent, and responsive to the views of citizens because we believe that openness cultivates public trust and confidence in what we are doing and why we are doing what we are doing.
15. In my first address to the nation, I had indicated that it was not a matter of whether but when. That when is here.
16. I have called this Press Conference today to announce that Sierra Leone has registered its index case. Case #1 is an imported case. I repeat: Case # 1 is an imported case. He is Male, Age 37 years, and he came to Sierra Leone from France on an Air Brussels flight on 16th March 2020. He was immediately placed into Quarantine. He was tested at the end of his Quarantine period and his results came back positive. **NOW EVERY MINUTE MATTERS.**

17. In order to prevent possible community infection, we have quickly isolated Case # 1. We have immediately and aggressively operationalised tracking and surveillance for all PRIMARY AND SECONDARY contacts (that is every person Case#1 one may have come into contact with). Those persons will be placed into mandatory quarantine and tested immediately starting today. From now on, I direct that health teams proactively seek out and compulsorily test all suspected cases.

18. I also direct the following measures that must be implemented immediately:

a. The Government of Sierra Leone COVID-19 Response Team is now fully activated. As I have indicated, that team is led by Brig. (Rtd) Kellie Hassan Conteh, Minister of Defence. He will work oversee and work with all sectors for a coherent national response to COVID-19.

b. We strongly urge citizens to observe all hygiene and social distancing protocols

c. Hospital is the best and only place where qualified healthcare personnel can offer you comprehensive medical care. If you keep a person with the symptoms at home, the entire family and community is likely to get infected and die. Keep yourself safe

and keep your loved ones safe by presenting them for immediate testing and healthcare.

d. Again, immediately report all persons with symptoms – dry cough, fever, and difficulty breathing.

e. A number of additional measures are in effect starting today and I strongly urge strong compliance from every citizen. These will affect the transportation sector; traditional practices, religious practices, trading, and entertainment. The National COVID-19 Response secretariat led by Brig (Rtd) Kellie Hassan Conteh will announce the full raft of measures immediately.

19. Let me reiterate, THIS IS NOT A LOCK DOWN. THIS IS NOT A LOCKDOWN. But the Government will respond rapidly to changes in the situation by announcing additional, enhanced measures.

20. Fellow citizens, over the last four days, we have offered supplications to God, Allah Subhuana wa t'Allah to protect his people. These are not normal times but these are the times to be deliberately thoughtful. In the coming days, let us keep reminding one another that we have a responsibility to keep one another safe.

21. May I now invite the Head of Strategic Communications to moderate a number of questions from

PRESS CONFERENCE 7

the press for the Minister of Health and the Minister of Defence and National Coordinator of the GOSL COVID-19 response team who will provide you with more detail.