

KEYNOTE ADDRESS BY DEPUTY MINISTER OF MBSSE ON EDUCATION WEEK

It is a great honor and pleasure to be given this opportunity to be here this afternoon and to make a statement on this auspicious occasion, on the Theme: “Learning is Treasure”. The President during his campaign tours promised the people of this country Free Quality School Education, and since his victory, he has been working assiduously in ensuring that he fulfills his promise to the people of Sierra Leone.

In demonstration of the commitment of the President to providing this service, he had on the State Opening of the First Session of Parliament of the Second Republic of Sierra Leone, pronounced to ensure that budgetary allocation to education is increased and sustained to a minimum of 20% of the national budget and later increased it to 21%. Ladies and Gentlemen, this is a clear indication that our President is determined to change the education land scape in Sierra Leone.

The Free Quality School Education Programme was launched by the President, His Excellency Rtd. Brig. Julius Maada Bio on the 20th August 2018. The introduction of this initiative is as a result of the Government’s desire to invest in human capital by improving access and equity and ensuring quality of provision and retention in the education system. All of these are done with a view to ensuring sustainable development and invariably the achievement of the sustainable Development Goals. The

Programme will be implemented over a phased five year period, commencing 2018 to 2023.

Ladies and Gentlemen, as widely publicized and manifested through active government policies, Education remains a critical agenda item and flagship of the administration of His Excellency the President Rtd. Brig. Julius Maada Bio. The President has a deep belief in building the human capital and to ensure sustainable development. A government that fails to invest in education is a government that plans to fail, and it is therefore, our priority as a government to invest and build up the human capital.

As Deputy Minister of Education and a parent myself, I believe each child deserves a fair opportunity to build his/her skills and to pursue his/her dreams and aspirations in life. It is believed the world over, that education is the key that will unlock every potential and as a responsible government, we want to ensure people realize their potentials.

Ladies and Gentlemen, as expressed during the launch of the Free Quality School Education Programme, His Excellency informed the nation that he inherited a failed educational system that was in rapid decline. It was glaring that our educational system was in shambles and this government is prepared to reverse the story and put our name back on the map in the area of education as we were once referred to as the “**Athens of Africa**”.

Ladies and Gentlemen, our Government is working towards addressing several problems in the education system. In the area of Access and Equity, our Government is prepared to make it

possible for every child to have access to Basic and Senior Secondary education, ensure equity and encourage completion of those who enter primary schools. Our government will work towards increasing the number of Learners with special needs in our educational system and to create a conducive environment for people with special needs.

In the area of quality and integrity, our government is ready to establish and implement a system for strengthening the management of the teacher workforce, incentive packages to make teaching attractive, to provide adequate Teaching and Learning materials and to promote STEM in our schools. In the area of integrity, Government is going to be very vigilant, and stringent measures will be taken against people who are found involved in exams malpractices.

To the Principal, you have to abide by Government policies and make sure you do not put unnecessary burden on the parents. You should understand that majority of the pupils come from backgrounds that cannot afford meeting some of the demands made by some school authorities. When Government says no school fees, no admission fees for example, please make sure you obey.

To our teachers, this is the new direction and indeed our Government is not oblivious of your challenges; Government will work to improve the condition of service for teachers. You also have to do your own part. We are calling on all teachers to tighten up their belts and deliver the right lessons to our children, make sure they prepare their lesson plans and also to be in class to teach at all times. You have a pivotal role to play in the area of quality

and if Government is ready to improve your conditions of service you should also be ready to deliver to equip our children.

To the pupils, you have to know that education is very important and it is worth than anything your parents can give to you. Government is playing its part in paying tuition fees, admission fees, provision of teaching and learning materials, and the provision of school feeding in deprived chiefdoms across the country among other things. You need to play your own part, to study and make your book your intimate friend. You should study hard to be able to have a fair chance to compete in a fast changing world.

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, there is no way the government can succeed without the effort of the various stakeholders including the parents. I want to encourage you the parents to see the education of your children as mandatory and not an option. These children will be the future leaders, hence there is need to ensure that your children are sent to school to be able to access the full benefits of the Free Quality School Education Programme.

In conclusion, I would like to call on all Sierra Leoneans devoid of our political belongings to support this very great initiative.