



**RESPONSE OF HIS EXCELLENCY,
PRESIDENT JULIUS MAADA BIO, TO THE
STATEMENT OF THE APOSTOLIC
NUNCIO, ARCHBISHOP DAGOBERTIO
CAMPOS SALAS, DURING THE
PRESENTATION OF CREDENTIALS.
STATE HOUSE, FREETOWN, THURSDAY,
17TH JANUARY 2019**

Your Excellency,

It is with great pleasure that I warmly welcome you to Sierra Leone as I accept the Letters of Credence appointing you as the Apostolic Nuncio of His Holiness, Pope Francis, to the Government of the Republic of Sierra Leone.

I thank you for the cordial greetings, prayers, and blessings that you have expressed on behalf of His Holiness, Pope Francis. I accept his sentiments of goodwill for my country and me with humility. His Holiness' words of respectful and peaceful coexistence, dignity of the human person, and social justice continue to reinforce our faith and resonate with all persons and nations that are striving for peace and development in Sierra Leone and in the world.

My country's relationship with the Catholic Church and faith spans over 600 years ever since the arrival of Portuguese missionaries of the "Order of Christ" who were sponsored by Prince Henry the Navigator. This later led in 1532 to the creation of the Diocese of Santiago, Cape Verde and Upper Guinea, to which Sierra Leone and The Gambia belonged. The Catholic faith and its imprint on Sierra Leone and changing Sierra Leonean lives for the better has grown immensely and irreversibly.

We acknowledge and we remain grateful for the consistent and generous support of the Catholic Church through pestilence, humanitarian disasters, war,

and in restoring peace and reconciliation. The humanitarian mission of the Catholic Church in providing quality healthcare and education, and in supporting the displaced and the poor has been invaluable in Sierra Leone. We also acknowledge and support the Holy See's consistent advocacy for peace, defending the dignity of the human person, and working for the integral development of human society.

Your Excellency

My government's investment in human capital development, social justice by providing access and opportunity to all, fighting corruption, and fostering national cohesion (including nurturing cordial interreligious existence), align with the Holy See's broader mission in Sierra Leone and in the world. We look forward to a future of working cooperatively on deepening our democracy, fostering the dignity of the human person by escalating investments in human capital development, and promoting national as well as world peace and security.

In conclusion, Your Excellency, be assured that my government will always be ready to assist you in the discharge of your high duties. Let me therefore formally welcome you to Sierra Leone and reassure you of my personal commitment to ensuring that our strong historical bonds of cooperation will grow even stronger throughout your tenure.

Thank you and I wish you the best in your new mission.