

Your Excellency, the President of the Republic of Sierra Leone
Members of Parliament
Your Excellencies, Members of the Diplomatic and Consular Corps
Honourable Minister of Basic and Senior Secondary Education
Your Worship, the Mayor of Freetown
Vice Chairman of Council
Leaders of Delegation and Chief Government Nominees on Council
Members of Council
The Registrar to Council
Former Chairmen of Council
Former Registrars to Council
Former Heads of National Office
Distinguished Friends of Council
Staff of the Council
Students
Representatives of the Mass Media
Ladies and Gentlemen

It is my singular honour and privilege to welcome you all to the formal opening of the 67th Annual Meeting of the West African Examinations Council (WAEC). I heartily and most respectfully welcome our Special Guest of Honour, His Excellency, the President and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Sierra Leone, who has graciously accepted our humble invitation to personally open the meeting. By this noble gesture, Mr. President, you have aptly demonstrated the high premium which your administration places on education and your personal commitment to the development of education in the West African sub-region. We have followed with keen interest and profound appreciation the unfolding of your various reformatory initiatives, particularly in the education sector. I wish to reaffirm to you, Mr. President, WAEC's willingness and readiness at all times to collaborate and actively participate in the successful implementation of the people-oriented educational programmes of your administration.

Your Excellency, it is an indelible fact of history that a large number of the citizens of our sub-region who acquired tertiary education around the colonial period and even after did so in Sierra Leone. The famous Fourah Bay College incubated the educationists, civil servants, technocrats and politicians who formed the nucleus of the post-independence administrations in many West African countries. The history of our flagship organisation also contains scintillating accounts of the contributions of distinguished Sierra Leoneans who were part of its evolution, survival and success for 67 years. In this regard, I must appreciate the Council's former Chairmen, Dr. Davidson Nicol (1964 - 1969), Dr. S. T. Matturi (1972 - 1976), Prof. J. A. Kamara (1994 - 1997), Prof. J. A. S. Redwood-Sawyer (2009 - 2012), former Registrar, Dr. Modupe Taylor-Pearce (1980 - 1986) and former Acting Registrar, Mr. A. S. Deen (1995), all from Sierra Leone. They contributed in no small measure to making WAEC the bridge that links the education sector of the member countries, offering the unique opportunity to plan together, work together, and forge ahead together as a people with the same educational destiny. I wish to specially appreciate Prof. Redwood-Sawyer for his foresight, support and encouragement towards the realisation of the WAEC International Office Complex project in Ikeja, Lagos, which was financed by the Federal Government of Nigeria. The Computer-based Testing facility established within the complex is currently providing support for the Council's migration into digital administration of examinations. His vision for WAEC to be truly reflective of a Sub-region character has also received an appreciable level of fulfilment, as schools in some francophone West African countries such as Togo, Republic of Benin, Equatorial Guinea, etc., have been presenting candidates for the Council's examinations and many more in other countries are undergoing the necessary scrutiny for approval by the Council.

Your Excellency, permit me to remind our guests of a few facts about the Council. WAEC is an organisation established in 1952 with a mandate to determine the examinations required in the public interest in the English-speaking West African countries, to conduct such examinations and to award certificates of international standard to deserving

candidates in the examinations. Without any attempt at being immodest, I can confidently say that WAEC has executed this mandate creditably for 67 years in all the member countries. The Council is the only surviving sub-regional organisation among the several similar organisations that were established in the pre-independence West African sub-region. It has remained the most credible and one of the strongest chords that bind the five Anglophone member countries together. It is in recognition of the vital role of WAEC as a key player in the education sector and a shining example of success in sub-regional cooperation that the governments of the five member countries have continued to extend their support, cooperation and goodwill to the Council while at the same time discharging their financial and diplomatic obligations to ensure the continued existence of the organisation.

In the process of executing its mandate, WAEC collaborates with relevant ministries, departments and agencies of member governments to ensure the successful implementation of various government policies, programmes and initiatives. On its own volition the Council has even gone far beyond its mandate by providing reliable statistical data and research reports that have been found very useful for policy formulation and implementation by governments and relevant agencies in the member countries. The Council provides, on request, consultancy services in various aspects of educational assessment. The Council also monitors developments in the education sector of the sub-region with a view to assuring quality in education service delivery. For almost seven decades in the business of testing, the Council has remained an icon in educational assessment globally. The Council could not have recorded and sustained these achievements if the governments and peoples of the West African sub-region had not created the enabling environment for its operations, activities and development. I therefore, wish to use this opportunity to express the Council's profound appreciation to you, Mr. President and your fellow Presidents of the other four member nations, for the assistance, encouragement, cooperation and financial support which WAEC has continued to enjoy in your respective countries. I wish to assure our member governments that WAEC is always ready and willing to lubricate the wheel of national development through its collaborative efforts with governments and modernised service delivery systems.

Your Excellency, we are deeply worried over the waning revenue inflow of the Council. WAEC, as a non-profit-making organization, depends on government subvention and examination fees for the funding of its operations and activities. The Council's revenue inflow from these two sources has trickled and dwindled precariously in recent years. In all the member countries the Council is not allowed to charge economic rates for its examinations, despite inflationary trends. Moreover, the governments of some countries have volunteered to take over the payment of examination fees on behalf of candidates, in addition to the payment of subvention to the respective National Offices. Unfortunately, remittances of funds to WAEC by these governments have been fraught with delays and shortfalls. In fact, some member governments are currently heavily indebted to the Council due to the outstanding arrears of unpaid subvention and contribution. I wish to appeal to the governments of our member nations to brace up to respond more positively and promptly to the funding of the Council in the years ahead. Regular fulfillment of government financial obligations to WAEC will strengthen the Council to cope adequately with its increasing candidature and the rising costs of materials and services.

Your Excellency, the Annual Council Meeting is attended by delegates from the five member countries of WAEC. Among the delegates are government nominees and the representatives of ministries of education, tertiary institutions, teachers' associations and other interest groups. The Council is the governing board and highest decision-making organ of the West African

Examinations Council. ♦At its annual meeting, Council reviews the activities and operations of its five National Offices in the previous year and considers reports from its committees in respect of examinations, administration, finance, human resource management and developments in the education sector of each member nation. ♦It also ratifies the decisions taken on its behalf by the various committees during the past year, and deliberates on the action plans drawn up by the committees and National Offices to ensure successful operations in the succeeding year.

Your Excellency, distinguished guests, WASSCE for School Candidates, 2019 will be conducted for a large number of candidates in Sierra Leone because of the two cohorts of students in terminal classes of the school system. The Council, in collaboration with the Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education, is intensifying efforts to ensure that the examination is conducted hitch-free and the results released on schedule. I wish to commend the Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education, the Police and the Anti-Corruption Commission for demonstrating genuine commitment to the successful conduct of WAEC examinations in the country. We are grateful for the various actions taken by them in recent times which were in tandem with the Council's stance of zero tolerance for examination malpractice. I urge them to endeavour to work in closer collaboration with the National Office of WAEC on all matters concerning the Council's examinations to avoid conflicts with the rules and regulations guiding the conduct of the examinations and to prevent miscreants and impostors from infiltrating examination centres under any guise.

Distinguished ladies and gentlemen, at this ceremony the WAEC Excellence Awards will be presented to three outstanding candidates in WASSCE for School Candidates, 2018 conducted in the Sub-region. Also, the prestigious Award of Distinguished Friends of Council will be conferred on a distinguished citizen of Sierra Leone in appreciation of his contribution to the development of education. On behalf of Council, I congratulate the award recipients and members of their families.

I wish to appreciate the erudite Speaker of the 24th WAEC Endowment Fund Lecture, Professor Joe A. D. Alie, for the honour done our organisation by his masterly presentation of the highly insightful academic piece.

Ladies and gentlemen, on behalf of Council I wish to express profound gratitude to Mr. President and the Government of Sierra Leone for making funds available for the hosting of the 67th Annual Council Meeting. I sincerely thank all institutions, organisations and individuals that have contributed in diverse ways to the success of the meeting. Council is grateful to the Mayor and dwellers of the city of Freetown for their warmness and hospitality to the delegates.

I thank you all.