

A People Beyond Our Borders, A Place in the World

Foreign policy & diaspora engagement

A Sierra Leonean nurse in London sends money home every month to support family she hasn't seen in years — money that helps her relatives get by, but that has never had a real path to becoming the investment she'd actually like to make in her home country.

WHY THIS MATTERS

Sierra Leone is not only the land within its borders; it's a people scattered across the world who send home hundreds of millions of dollars a year — close to a billion dollars over four years to 2023 alone, roughly three times the amount just four years before that. Yet our foreign policy has been long on representation and short on results, and the diaspora, our single greatest asset abroad, has been thanked at conferences and left to help the country through informal, uncertain channels because no one ever built the institutions to receive what they're willing to give.

WHAT WE'RE PROMISING

A foreign policy that earns its keep by bringing home investment, trade and opportunity, and a diaspora finally treated as partners and citizens, not just a source of remittances.

FLAGSHIP — Every Embassy an Investment Office

For a poor country, a foreign service can't exist for ceremony — it has to serve the national interest, concretely understood as the investment, trade and partnerships that create jobs at home. Every mission will be understood first as a trade and investment office, with diplomats set concrete targets for the investment, trade and opportunity they generate, and measured by what they actually bring home. An embassy that brings home a factory, a buyer for our produce, or a hospital partnership has earned its keep; one that brings home only photographs has not.

HOW WE'LL MAKE IT REAL

- We'll make this operational, not just a slogan: each mission will be given its own concrete targets for investment attracted, export deals opened and visitors drawn, our diplomats will be selected for their ability to deliver on exactly those targets, and postings and promotions will start to reflect what a mission actually brought home rather than the elegance of the events it hosted.
- We'll build the channels diaspora capital currently lacks — safe, credible investment vehicles so that Sierra Leoneans abroad who want to invest in their homeland, and there are many, finally have somewhere real to put that money instead of leaving it abroad or risking it through informal arrangements.
- We'll drive down the cost of sending money home. It currently costs more to send remittances to Sierra Leone than almost anywhere on earth, with fees that can swallow a tenth or more of a hard-earned transfer — money that effectively never reaches the family it was sent to help.
- We'll deepen the pathway already opened for people of proven African descent to claim Sierra Leonean citizenship into a genuine, credibly run homecoming offer — heritage tourism, retirement and second homes, university exchanges, and diaspora entrepreneurship, handled with dignity rather than as a sale of passports.
- And we'll make the practical promises real: a passport that commands respect at the world's borders, a consulate that actually helps a citizen in trouble, and a genuine path for Sierra Leoneans abroad to exercise the right to vote that exists on paper but is defeated in practice today.

“We will stop treating our people abroad as a cash machine to be thanked, and start treating them as partners to be engaged.”

Full policy chapter available at sorielsulaiman.sl/publications/foreign-policy