

PRESIDENT UHURU KENYATTA'S FULL MADARAKA DAY SPEECH 2018

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is a special pleasure to join the people of Kenyans for today's celebration and commemoration.

We owe a great debt to the sons and daughters of this country and all the other heroes who fought for Kenya to be free.

The tree of our liberty was, as our founding President said, watered by their blood. It is a debt we can neither repay, nor ever forget.

The heroes and heroines, the founders, and fathers of this nation, were wise. They knew that if we did not regularly remind ourselves what our freedom had cost, we would be lax in defending it.

And so, *wazalendo wenzangu*, we gather here today to remember the heroes of the past, to celebrate the liberty they left us, to preserve, protect and propagate that precious inheritance.

Long before the struggle of our independence from colonial rule, we were independent peoples with a long and distinguished history.

The migrations that carried the many languages and nations to today's Kenya arose from lands that had grown sophisticated civilizations.

A key part of the Pan Africanist philosophy that Kenya's founding fathers adhered to was that, Africa had been the land of great civilizations that lost their way as they came under the external assault of slavery and later colonization.

Madaraka, therefore, was an opportunity for a reclamation of our histories as free peoples.

And to take that freedom and forge it into a political and economic order, that would allow us to build a united and successful nation as a part of a united and federated Africa.

Our founding fathers knew they would need the vehicle of a modern state to negotiate the sophisticated international sphere if we were to protect our freedom and independence and use it to build a vibrant country.

That was why, on the morning of the first Madaraka Day, our people were elated to see African Brothers and Sisters in authority. They witnessed the birth of “serikali ya mwafrika”, that would be devoted to their service.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Some here can still recall that first Madaraka Day, the joy and hope that was felt by millions.

The horizons that appeared limitless, there was nothing that any people or country in the world could achieve that we could not.

Indeed, thanks to the efforts of our administrations since independence, and of the Kenyan people most importantly, a lot of progress has been registered.

Kenyans today live almost twice as long as the independence generation.

This is thanks, in part, to recent programmes that make medical equipment available to parts of the country once under-served.

Thanks, in part, to this Administration’s free maternal care programme, far fewer of our children die at birth, or in their first five years of life: we have cut child mortality to a quarter of what it was in 1963.

Thanks, in part, to recent programmes that make education free for virtually every child in the Republic, nine million children have the benefit of a free primary education, an opportunity open to fewer than a million at independence.

Once it took Africans twelve hours on a third-class carriage to get to Mombasa from Nairobi; now, we can do it in four hours.

Indeed, once the Standard Gauge Railway reaches Kisumu, we will travel across Kenya in a day.

We owe all this to the hard work of Kenyans; work which shows in the simple fact that our income per capita is thirteen times what it was at independence.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Thanks to the efforts that brought Madaraka and, later, independence, and that we protected as a people, every Kenyan today has the right to be represented in government.

You have the right to be treated in a manner befitting your dignity, with the utmost done to provide access to effective education, good medical care, and for your person and property to be protected.

Through devolution, your voice is heard more clearly in the governance decisions that affect you and your neighbours.

Fellow Kenyans,

As we celebrate the good that has been achieved over the decades since independence, we know there are areas which we have not done well.

We must be truthful to ourselves and admit in that, in the past few decades, a few of us have failed their motherland.

Some of those trusted to run and manage institutions, resources and safeguard the public interest have turned predators.

Through their selfishness, greed and misuse of authorities, Kenyans have been denied critical public services and development.

Today, I want to address myself to these enemies, who must be boldly confronted by all Kenyans of goodwill in the same manner our forefathers resolved to join hands in the fight against colonialism.

Our forefathers resolve to destroy the yoke of colonialism is what gave birth to our beloved nation.

I have resolved to lead this nation in getting rid of corruption and division, the main challenges we face today, just like colonialism was then.

I appeal to all Kenyans to join me in the war that we have started, to vanquish corruption.

While the challenge may look huge because of the way corruption has become entrenched in some of our people, today, we have to declare in unison that corruption in all its forms will be diminished from our country.

As colonialism was defeated, so will we defeat corruption.

We must, with a sense of great urgency, destroy and eliminate corruption in our country before it fully destroys us and the future of our children.

The war against corruption must be fought and won by all of us, particularly that which compromises public service.

Almost the entire senior team in charge of investigations and prosecutions is new; they have been properly resourced; they know their mandate and mission; they know what Kenyans expect of them.

The Director of Public Prosecutions, the Police, and other institutions in the multi-agency team against corruption are on the move.

They are making decisive steps to build strong cases for the prosecution of corrupt officials.

Their work will bear fruit when the Judiciary responds by ensuring that the frivolous and obstructive use of the court system to avoid responsibility will not be allowed.

I welcome the assurance of the Judiciary's leadership that they are with the rest of government, and all Kenyans, in this war for our integrity as a country.

I am glad that arrests of senior officials have been made. There are more on the way.

I want officials, particularly senior ones, who are directly implicated in corruption to have no place in my administration and for them to go to jail.

I will do my part as President to turn government into an instrument that truly serves you, and that respects the sacred responsibility to build Kenya into a truly prosperous, fair and honest country. You, as citizens, should take up this fight as a key responsibility of your citizenship.

We all know from reading the headlines daily that corruption has also seeped into many other sectors of our society.

We must all seize the moment and play our individual role for our country to overcome this evil.

We know of teachers who impregnate students. Preachers who swindle their flocks. Lawyers who defraud clients. Architects building houses using shortcuts leading to collapse of such buildings.

Doctors giving false diagnoses to increase their fees. Pharmacies selling fake medicine.

Unfortunately, these crooks have become heroes. Too often, some of the worst rogues are welcomed back home like conquering celebrities.

The truth is that we are facing a grave threat to our moral basis as a people, from government down to the family. From leaders to parents, from corporates to individual citizens, we have a role to fight for our honour so that our country can prosper.

Your providing information will be key to us nailing the perpetrators of corruption; your resolve to withdraw respect and deny and honour to those guilty will be the most powerful blow to preventing this vice.

Fellow Kenyans,

We must have a more honest country to protect our liberty and be able to use it to build a glittering African nation.

For the sake of honesty, let's agree that our unity is far from where it should be. Unity does not mean we agree on all things.

But it is a requirement for our country to be able to have the stability that will enable us to invest in it without fear.

Our founding fathers knew when they won Madaraka that there was no going back to the political structures that preceded colonialism.

The world had changed too much, there were too many dangers to our freedom if we did not come together to forge a new nation.

We had fought for freedom together, we needed to stand together to protect it and turn it into lasting liberty and prosperity.

The overwhelming majority of us live in peace and good neighbourliness with our fellow citizens.

We reach out to one another in good and bad times, and our children play together and marry each other across communities.

Yet every five years, during our elections, destructive divisions emerge that threaten our stability. Some political leaders have made their careers dividing our people, not bringing them together.

This is the truth, and we need to deal with it as leaders and as citizens. Unity is like an engine for a nation that hopes to escape the destructive pull of poverty and civil conflict, and even civil war.

There are many different moving parts, but they are all joined in driving forward the vehicle so that it can achieve escape velocity.

Many countries in our region provide terrifying evidence of what happens to peoples who are disunited.

A house divided against itself cannot stand, let alone prosper. We cannot allow political competition to divide us even more because we created Kenya to rise to the heights, not to be in fear every electoral cycle.

Our habit of destructive political competition has certainly divided us, but there are other, subtle forces. It may be a longer wait to get a public service; it may be disrespect for our language and culture; or it may be that in the past, our region had less than its fair share of Kenya's resources — all these have played their part in dividing us, and in delaying the dreams of our founders.

These problems are even older than the Republic; they're certainly not all our fault. But if the disunity itself is not all our doing, it is certainly our problem to solve.

Fellow Kenyans,

We have a clear choice. We should be bold enough and reject politics of division. We admit that we have made mistakes in the past but we have a great

opportunity of transforming our society to forge forward guided by the past experiences and mistakes. We must focus on the future.

Our founding fathers and mothers understood the dangers of sticking to the past. After the suffering they had undergone in the struggle for independence, which was preceded by decades of dispossession and oppression, they sought to look to the future rather than stay stuck in the past. They said they would forgive but not forget. This is the spirit that I am committed to.

As President and as a citizen, I seek understanding and reconciliation between all Kenyans.

I know that our children, to whom we will bequeath this matter, require us to take every step to ensure our nation has the unity that will save them from lives of poverty, hatred and failure.

This Madaraka Day, and everyday henceforth, that is the profound choice before every one of us.

If, like me, you choose reconciliation and unity, prepare yourself: it is no easy task.

It means listening respectfully to each other's fears and grievances. It also means being cautious in case our genuine feeling of grievance is turned into fuel for conflict and even violence.

I am listening to all Kenyans; it is my most important duty as President and as a citizen.

It is a duty that I am deeply committed to, and that inspired in me a desire to "Build Bridges". Every Kenyan can be part of this moment to build bridges.

We can use our church and family groups, professional associations, savings and business groups, schools and NGOs to build bridges.

You do not need to be told what to do. You know where the problems close to you are; reach out to others and unite with them to provide as many interventions as you can.

Your efforts do not have to be grand or be part of national platforms, they just need to be genuine and implemented with others of a like mind. This is the way we will have a million handshakes to make a strong and united Kenya.

Fellow Kenyans,

We must also be honest enough to admit that changes to laws or processes are only a part of the solution.

The work we are called to do is to build trust and then change hearts and minds. We have many laws in Kenya, and a fine Constitution. It is not the letter that will get us to our destination, it is the spirit that we have when obeying the law.

As we build trust in one another, we must ensure that our Government helps us solve some of the most pressing problems we have.

That is why I am fighting hard to implement the “Big Four” agenda. Its pillars seek to directly benefit the lives of citizens, particularly those who are having the toughest time.

One pillar is growing manufacturing to 15% of our economic output as a country. Another, which dovetails with the first, is to enable the private sector to build half a million affordable quality homes that have good sanitation and adhere to high building standards. From these two pillars will come a strong expansion of the economy and many jobs for our young people.

In pursuit of universal healthcare, we are extending health insurance to every household.

That way, medical emergencies will stop being the threat to family prosperity and livelihood that they are today.

The work has already begun. Four counties — Kisumu, Isiolo, Machakos, and Nyeri — have been selected for a pilot project, before we roll out to every part of the country. Let me pause to ask everyone in these counties to enroll in the scheme. To hasten the process, I promised the Governors that they would have the National Government’s help in enrolment.

That offer still stands.

Let me stress, again, that we already have successes on which to build: we have grown enrolment in the NHIF from under 4 million in 2013 to more than 7 million at last count.

What we also need to do is to strengthen the simple interventions that have saved so many lives, such as our extension of free treated mosquito nets and the free maternal healthcare programme.

The fourth pillar is ensuring that every Kenyan has access to affordable and nutritious food. No country can call itself great, or even close to greatness, if any number of its citizens is threatened with malnutrition or even starvation.

Added to these pillars must be the most important pillar of them all: your productivity and investment as Kenyans.

Kenya is in the race with the world to be productive enough, and innovative enough, to produce better and cheaper goods than the rest.

I urge every Kenyan in business today to take your growth and success as a key contribution to our country. Building value, and paying salaries and taxes is building the nation. I urge you to redouble your efforts, and to invest in ambitious expansion. I urge workers and their trade unions to invest in growing the cake so that we can all have more to divide.

As Government, we have offered new incentives to manufacturers, from cheaper power to reforms making it easier to do business.

We will keep doing everything we can to be supportive. Remember, however, that our incentives are to help you grow a strong business that offers our people opportunities, not merely to increase your take-home profit. That said, I want every Kenyan to know that political stability based on unity, and honest government and people, are the crucial factors in building real and lasting prosperity that changes all our families.

That platform requires each and every one of us to resolve to play our part. To build bridges to those who we have had differences and conflicts with, in the past. To insist that our honour as families and communities be carried high by every one of us. That done, we can look forward to bequeathing our children a nation that glitters with its achievements in every field of human endeavour,

its fairness, and its prosperity. We are African people forging their way back to the heights that we have known in our past.

We can inspire mankind by extending our harmonious brotherhood, and our determination to promote a deep sense of honour as individual citizens and as a people. I want to be part of that Kenya, and will work every single day, with you, to achieve it.

May God bless you; may He bless the work of your hands; and may He protect this beautiful land and all its people.

Thank you and God bless you all.