



REPUBLIC OF KENYA

**REMARKS BY HIS EXCELLENCY DR. WILLIAM
SAMOEI RUTO, C.G.H., PRESIDENT OF THE
REPUBLIC OF KENYA AND COMMANDER -IN-
CHIEF OF THE DEFENCE FORCES DURING THE
OFFICIAL LAUNCH OF THE 3RD SOCIAL
PROTECTION CONFERENCE WEEK**

4TH APRIL 2023

**KENYA SCHOOL OF GOVERNMENT,
NAIROBI**

Distinguished Guests,

1. Today, we begin a series of important events to mark a week whose significance is critical for the people of Kenya and essential to the government.
2. Our bottom-up economic transformation agenda stands on the foundation of creating sustainable capacities and viable opportunities for the empowerment of people at the base of our socioeconomic pyramid.
3. A unique feature of the bottom-up agenda, therefore, is that each pillar of economic transformation is deeply embedded in commitments arising from Article 43 of the constitution, which sets our economic and social rights as fundamental human rights.
4. Through our universal health coverage pillar, we are discharging our constitutional mandate to actualize every Kenyan's right to the highest attainable standard of health and to healthcare services.
5. Similarly, the right to accessible and adequate housing as well as reasonable standards of sanitation, are being realized through the Affordable Housing pillar of the Plan for the bottom-up economic transformation.
6. Additionally, our Agro-industrial and food security pillar attends to the right of every Kenyan to be free from hunger and to have adequate food of acceptable quality.
7. The right to clean, safe water is catered for, through irrigation and the water harvesting component of Agro-industry and food security, as well as the cross-cutting enablers of the Plan.
8. The right to social security, as already observed, forms the bedrock of the strategy and the foundation of our governing agenda. As such, it permeates every pillar, and therefore affects interventions across sectors.

9. The right to education must be observed robustly as a basic indicator of commitment to enhancing inclusion, effective participation, productivity of citizens and transforming national competitiveness.
10. This event, therefore, is important to us all. I am delighted with the progress we are making in focusing transformational attention to the social sector, which is the backbone of development.
11. The paramount questions to be answered in the course of deliberations during this conference arises from its theme:
 - I. First, what are we doing to accelerate the development of an inclusive and integrated social protection system in Kenya?
 - II. Secondly, what are our strategic options for the expansion of coverage and improvement of shock responsiveness, in order to leave no one behind?
12. These are the foremost considerations in promoting and advocating for an integrated social protection system, that can achieve increased coverage through the effective coordination of diverse actors, in order to focus our full capacity on the people. Our philosophy of development is people-centred: we must empower the people to effectively actualize themselves, by taking full advantage of economic opportunities and to have capacity to optimally benefit from development.
13. We are confident as a nation and government, that we can simultaneously pursue rapid economic transformation and social protection and that ultimately, we shall achieve them both. Social protection cannot wait until 2030, when we will have achieved our economic vision. If it does, the development achieved at the expense of, or in exclusion of social protection, will be hollow and fragile.

14. We must undertake both commitments simultaneously because the standard of social protection is a good measure of sustainability and the promise of shared prosperity. The other urgent reason is that at the moment, too many people cannot afford a decent living, are vulnerable, marginalized and at the risk of being left behind.
15. 16.1% per cent of Kenyans live below the poverty line at the moment. The number of people living in extreme poverty peaked during the covid pandemic, reaching 8.9 million people.
16. 26% of Kenyan children under 5 are stunted. Under-nutrition is depriving them of normal growth, development and is robbing them of their full potential.
17. Older citizens, orphans and vulnerable children, as well as people living with extreme disability, have a right to receive support now, and it is grossly unjust to wait even one moment, for any reason.
18. That is why the government is implementing various strategies to extend the safety net as far as possible. The reviewed national social protection policy therefore provides a framework to coordinate interventions across the country that are being undertaken by a broad coalition of actors from various sectors.
19. County governments, the private sector, multilateral organisations including UNICEF and the World Bank, are among the government's cherished partners and collaborators in the social protection agenda. Consequently, the government established a dedicated state department for Social Protection and Senior Citizen Affairs.
20. The participation of multiple partners is highly welcome and appreciated, due to the limited coverage of social protection interventions under such programmes as Social Assistance, Social Security and Social Health Insurance, which face significant resource constraints.
21. The Government has allocated Ksh 28 billion to support cash transfer programmes implemented by the State Department for

social Protection. These programmes include Older Persons, Orphans and Vulnerable Children, Persons With Severe Disabilities, the Hunger Safety Net for poor and vulnerable households in the ASAL regions and Inua Jamii. We are committed to effectively ringfencing budgetary allocations for social protection programmes and further securing them by ensuring they are fiscally sustainable.

22. Our journey towards universal health coverage is underway. Already, maternity services and primary healthcare are provided free of charge in our public hospitals. At the same time, people who earn low incomes, poor and vulnerable households are receiving much-needed financial relief after the introduction of subsidised health insurance cover through the National Health Insurance Fund. 223, 968 vulnerable households with bona fide NHIF membership, have access to services, including cancer care.
23. Malnutrition and under-nutrition are severely punitive burdens for children. They also increase susceptibility to other diseases, and the financial cost of treatment. In 2014, the Cost of Hunger Survey estimated that costs associated with underweight children were KShs13.1 billion, while those associated with acute respiratory infections, acute diarrhoea syndrome, fever and malaria was Ksh 808.5 million.
24. To provide comprehensive protection for young children, the state departments of Health, Social Protection, Education and Agriculture will strengthen their collaboration and coordination mechanisms to serve more vulnerable children and secure their present and future.
25. I appreciate the partnership of UNICEF and the World Bank with the government, in the Nutrition Improvement for Children through Cash and Health Education programme, (NICHE), Economic Inclusion, as well as the Universal Child Benefit programme, which is being piloted in Kisumu, Embu and Kajiado counties. Beyond tackling malnutrition, these interventions also address exclusion by increasing the social protection cover of the vulnerable and supporting their economic empowerment to enhance resilience.

26. Traditionally, the youth, women and persons with disabilities face such tremendous obstacles in accessing opportunities to participate in development that they have been virtually excluded from meaningful economic activity.
27. The financial vehicle to deliver this inclusion and ignite vigorous economic activity among vulnerable and marginalized Kenyans, is the Hustler Fund. Other programmes include the redesigned National Youth Service, the Youth, Uwezo and Women enterprise Funds, as well as the National fund for Persons with Disability. The Youth Access to Government Procurement Opportunities, as well as the Youth Training and Internship Programme, are also frameworks to facilitate the inclusion and empowerment of formerly neglected yet immensely critical demographics.
28. Another exemplary and promising collaboration with our partners is the Kenya Social Economic Inclusion Project, involving the government and the World Bank, aimed at diversifying social protection programmes and transitioning them from dependency on government funding, into income generation. Through tested graduation models, these interventions are presently underway in Taita Taveta, Muranga, Makueni, Marsabit and Kisumu counties.
29. We have made steady progress in inclusive education over the past 20 years, when free and compulsory primary education was inaugurated. Over the years, free day secondary education has been introduced to complement it. We have now implemented 100% transition and established a pathway framework to anchor tertiary education, with emphasis on technical and vocational education and training, TVET.
30. TVET is going to provide much needed skills and innovation to power Kenya's industrialization, enabling it to grow into a technological and industrial powerhouse.
31. Necessary engagements are also underway to ensure that government provides Kenyan learners with high quality education that will equip them to become leaders of the knowledge economy

who will turn the country into a globally competitive innovation hotspot.

32. Although Kenya's social security industry is worth KShs 1 trillion, it has low penetration at only 17%. Out of this, many are not saving enough for adequate income replacement. It is necessary to avoid foreseeable cyclical problems arising from a population that is deprived of the financial cushion of savings. I therefore urge the National Social Security Fund, the Retirement Benefits Authority and other stakeholders in both public and private sector to collaborate in formulating an effective contribution mechanism, to mobilise adequate savings by every working person.
33. I have demonstrated to a high degree of specificity that Kenya's social protection sector is robust and anchored in sound policy. To be sustainable, social protection programmes have to be implemented collaboratively by diverse actors, understood to be fundamental human rights and enablers of inclusive, bottom-up economic transformation.
34. I believe that the time has now come for us to actualize the Social Assistance fund for vulnerable groups, as mandated in vision 2030. The state Department and the state Law Office should liaise with parliamentary leadership to expeditiously generate the necessary legislative framework.
35. It is now time to recognize our partners in this fundamentally critical undertaking. Our county governments have emerged as focal points of collective action in social protection. The World Bank, UNICEF and World Food Programme, have been indefatigable and effective traditional partners of the government, as well as International Labour Organisation, Food and Agriculture Organisation, the Foreign and Commonwealth Development Office and Save the Children. Many private sector entities have also contributed, especially under the corporate social responsibility framework. Thank you.

36. I encourage more partners to join in this noble undertaking and hasten our progress to full social protection cover in Kenya.
37. As a means and end of sustainable development, we are investing in the people through social protection to enable them participate in and benefit from the economic transformation of our country.

I declare the Kenya social Protection Conference officially opened.

Thank you
God bless you

God bless Kenya