

Speech by His Excellency Hon. Uhuru Kenyatta, C.G.H. President of The Republic of Kenya And Commander-In-Chief of The Defence Forces During The 56th Jamhuri Day Celebrations on 12th December 2019

Distinguished Guests,

My Fellow Kenyans,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Happy Jamhuri Day!

We gather here today to celebrate Fifty-Six Years, since that glorious day when the flag of our Republic was hoisted for the very first time.

Today, we are honoured to have with us the Prime Minister of Barbados, the Rt. Hon. Mia Mottley, please join me in welcoming her to Nairobi. Rt Hon. Prime Minister, your acceptance to join us to celebrate our Jamhuri is a clear indication of your commitment to the promotion of Pan-Africanism and the Bridges that unite the Caribbean and the continent of Africa in friendship, solidarity and fraternity.

Fellow Kenyans,

On the 12th Day of December, 1963; the People of Kenya witnessed the birth of an Independent State; a culmination of decades of the Struggle for Independence. That, indeed, was an astounding feat, achieved through a shared quest to liberate our homeland; we fought hard for it; we wrestled it out of the unwilling hands of a mighty world power; we stood against what seemed insurmountable odds but nevertheless prevailed.

And so today, as we celebrate our sovereignty, we honour those who gave their lives so that we could be free; those who fought in the forests, valleys, mountain-tops and plains; those who stood their ground in the LEGCO and refused to be compromised with the promises of a half-baked and empty Independence; those who guarded the young Kenya against adversaries; and those in modern times, who stand at borders, in our streets, in public offices, at home and abroad; defending and advancing our sovereignty and national interests.

As a Nation, we shall remain grateful to our independence-era heroes for delivering a free Kenya and restoring our ability to govern ourselves and determine our own destiny. Today, we are called upon to honour their commitment and sacrifice by being true to the ideals that they lived and died for, most especially the ideal of “One Kenya, United, Strong and Prosperous; with Freedom and Justice for All”.

Fellow Kenyans,

At independence, Kenya was a Nation of hope and potential. Today, we are the gatekeepers of our liberty, our Nation is a Beacon of Freedom, a Lighthouse that

continues to shine the way for other African nations. The ideals of Freedom, Democracy and Prosperity that we have built over these Fifty-Six Years, are helping in shaping our region and beyond. My Fellow Kenyans, At the dawn of the Republic, we stood at about 8.9 million Kenyans; today we are a Nation of 47 million strong. We, the People, remain Kenya's greatest strength and resource. Our Unity amid Diversity, our National and Social Values, our status as a Regional Hub, Cultural Melting Pot, our Heritage and Splendor, our unmatched reputation for being a Country that provides shelter and safe-harbour for those fleeing turmoil in their Home Countries; these ideals of our Founding Fathers, are alive and well in today's Kenya. The Kenya of today is the River that flows from the Source of Greatness. This Greatness is embodied in the spirit of those who went before us. That Kenya would become a country devoid of poverty, ignorance and disease. Inspired by the ideals of the independence generation and empowered by the resolve to always be better, just and progressive, we are making every endeavour to return the River to its course. We are returning the River to its course by turning every hurdle into a stepping stone, every challenge into an opportunity and every obstacle into a bridge for a better future for all. In the Fifty-Six years since we attained Independence, Kenya continues to grow by leaps and bounds, growing from strength to strength, buoyed by a devolved structure of governance that has accelerated development across the Republic. From Shimoni to Moyale, Embu to Bungoma, Siaya to Kiambu, Eldoret to Voi, Mandera to Kisii, Wajir to Narok; we have found shared destiny in our diversity. Brick-by-brick, generation-by-generation and administration-by-administration, we are building on years of steady progress, to achieve national renewal and rebuild the bonds of brotherhood among our peoples, by weaving a new and stronger fabric of patriotism and nationhood. With this national endeavour, the wealth, security, democracy and vitality of our Republic, will set us head-and-shoulders above our peers. We are returning the river to its course by fostering national unity and inclusiveness, through building bridges of unity towards a better Kenya for all. Make no mistake, in 2019, Kenya has chosen to consign to the dustbin of history partisan divides and politics that is centred on individual interest at the expense of common good. In 2019, we have anchored our dreams and aspirations on a unity that resonates with that, which existed in the independence-era generation. Kenyans today must now unite to drive the remnants of poverty, disease, illiteracy, inequality, division and conflict from our Nation. This monumental task towards sustainable development, can only be achieved if we remain united, focused and driven by the desire to always put our country-first. Kenya Kwanza.

My Fellow Kenyans,

At independence, Kenyans inherited a country stripped bare by a colonizing-power whose only intention was to extract. We inherited a country beset by poverty, illiteracy, poor health and chronic under-investment in infrastructure and social amenities. We were divided along ethnic and religious differences.

We were a colonial relic, whose identifying marks were inequality, injustice, poverty, exploitation and oppression. Fifty-Six years later, we can look back with pride at the important milestones we have achieved and the tremendous steps we have taken and are taking to right the course of the River.

By way of returning the River to its course, my Administration is vigorously implementing the Kenya Economic Blue Print - Vision 2030, whose current phase – the Third Medium Term Plan, is prioritized as the Big-Four Agenda. This Agenda focuses on: “a decent roof over many more heads at affordable cost; affordable healthcare for all; food and nutrition security for all Kenyans, job creation and economic growth through manufacturing.

The Big Four Agenda is crafted to accelerate the realization of the overriding objective of the Vision 2030, which is: to transform Kenya into a newly industrializing, middle-income country providing a higher quality of life to all its citizens by 2030 – in a clean and secure environment.”

Fellow Kenyans,

Our most valuable asset is our human resource. But for this resource to contribute effectively to our development agenda, its health is paramount. It goes without saying, a sickly society cannot expect to realize its development potential to the full. This is what informed my Administration in identifying “Universal Healthcare” as one of the pillars of the “Big Four” Agenda.

I am pleased to report that we have successfully rolled out the pilot phase of this programme in the counties of Nyeri, Kisumu, Isiolo and Machakos. To-date, the programme has witnessed enhanced access to essential health services, with an average of 39% reported in the pilot counties.

Lessons from the pilot affirm that robust primary healthcare system is the right vehicle to secure sustainable Universal Health Coverage.

In this regard, we have invested quality time to prepare for the full rollout of this programme by the beginning of 2020, to cover the remaining 43 counties. To this end, I urge county governments and the Ministry of Health to conclude and sign the Intergovernmental Partnership Agreement by the end of January 2020.

Fellow Kenyans,

We have begun the journey to fulfill our pledge to you on the Affordable Housing Programme. Just last week, I commissioned the first phase of the project by the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) that will deliver 100,000 units across the country.

The Affordable Housing Programme will continue to deepen and accelerate access to housing far beyond our immediate target date of 2022, of building 500,000 housing units, and set Kenya on an extraordinary path as Africa’s first country, to substantively address housing and social amenities challenges.

Fellow Kenyans,

The Housing Fund is one of the entities through which the delivery of the “Affordable Housing Programme”, shall be supported.

The creation of the Housing Fund was informed by the need to bridge the gap between the have and the have nots, by creating a framework through which, the traditionally unbanked can access financing towards home-ownership.

Fellow Kenyans,

You all know, the implementation of the Housing Fund Levy as a mandatory contribution, for both employees and employers, has at every turn, been fraught with an avalanche of legal hurdles and obstacles. But we need to soldier the nobility of this programme.

In this regard, and to ensure that the implementation of the programme is not derailed any further, I hereby direct and order that The National Treasury, the Ministry responsible for Housing moves to Parliament, a revision to the legal requirement in respect to the Housing Fund Levy, to make the contribution voluntary, with immediate effect.

Fellow Kenyans,

A nation that feeds itself, – just like a family that feeds itself, – stays healthy, secure, united and indeed, stable. We are on course to weed out the fragments of hunger in society and guarantee food and nutrition security for all. This is supported by increased agricultural production of our major staple foods.

To enhance earnings of our farmers, we are promoting agriculture through structured trading by negotiating market access for our produce in international markets, and restructuring the Kenya National Trading Corporation to better receive and manage farm produce. We continue to promote our produce abroad to deepen markets and further explore marine and aquaculture resources, in consideration of the new global blue economy model.

With respect to our cash crops, we are making every effort to revitalize and restore their contribution to our national life; and assure the future of coffee and tea in Kenya. My Administration will continue to support tea farmers to enhance diversification of tea varieties; whilst also restructuring the coffee value chain to stimulate productivity and value addition. We recognize tea and coffee have been prime export products for Kenya since independence.

The increase in cotton production is another key development within the agricultural sector. The revival of Rivatex and other textile factories, is providing a ready local market for our cotton produce.

The Manufacturing pillar of the Big Four continues to gain momentum as we undertake bold steps, in answer to my pledge to you.

We have begun the journey to lay an additional brick to the realization of our commitment to create more opportunities for our people. Foreign direct investments in industry are soaring and the number of Kenyans gainfully engaged in the sector continues to grow. In this context, I am happy to report we will be, in the coming

week launching the ground-breaking in the Naivasha Industrial Park, a major investment by a foreign investor in partnership with a local investor.

Fellow Kenyans,

I note with satisfaction that the safeguards we have put in place to protect local industry and guard against dumping, are bearing fruits. In that regard and to further cement these gains, I urge Kenyans to buy locally made products in support of the “Buy Kenya, Build Kenya Initiative”, as it creates employment and incomes to fellow Kenyans.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We are returning the River to its course by making Kenya secure and an attractive destination for investments. I am pleased to acknowledge that Kenya's ranking in the World Bank's Ease-of-Doing-Business Index, improved once again this year, to position 56 among 190 economies.

Since I assumed office, we have improved by 80 positions globally and remain on course towards becoming the top 50 countries next year, as we build upon that momentum to achieve top 25-Status by the middle of the next decade.

Fellow Kenyans,

We should be proud of our achievements. Evidently, no other country has seen such a sustained and large improvement in ease of doing business over the same period.

This positive change has been most felt by our Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises; who have benefited from our culture of being an open and listening Government that is attuned to the needs of enterprises.

The remarkable progress in the ease of doing business has been due to our reforms in the processes of establishing businesses, issuing construction permits, acquiring electricity, as well as the ease in accessing credit, paying taxes and trading across borders.

We have also increased investment in the energy sector, embraced ICT, and the sustained war against corruption. The institutionalization of these reforms will continue to cement and secure Nairobi's place as a diplomatic hub and Kenya as a steadfast economic powerhouse in Eastern and Central Africa.

Fellow Kenyans,

There is no doubt the pace at which the economy is growing is not fast enough, to keep pace and to absorb all the graduates released to the job market every year.

To accelerate economic transformation, my Administration is focused on other salient factors that are holding back the potential of our enterprises; particularly with regard to taxes and tax administration, reduction or where possible elimination of fees or charges levied by Government Agencies as well as the Private Sector, reduction of bureaucracy and the simplification of processes in trade, access to credit and streamlining consumer protection assurance.

In order to address some of these challenges, I order and direct as follows:

That The National Treasury and the Kenya Revenue Authority, review our tax structures, especially in relation to small businesses, so as to reduce the tax burden while fostering tax-compliance; and

As a way of reducing the compliance burden on employers, all employer contributions/deductions of NSSF, NHIF, PAYE and NITA be made through a unified payroll return submitted to the Kenya Revenue Authority.

In recognition of the fact that up to 40% of the value of commercial disputes for claims under Kenya Shillings one million are taken up by court fees and advocates charges, thereby making the cost of recovery prohibitively high;

I therefore direct The National Treasury and the Office of the Attorney-General to engage with the Judiciary and formulate a framework that will anchor the waiver of court fees for commercial disputes of less than one million shillings, effective 1st March, 2020, and cause amendments to the Advocates Remuneration Order to make advocates charges in such court cases, more accessible to Kenyans.

Fellow Kenyans,

The repeal of the law capping bank lending interest rates, introduction of ground-breaking financial products such as STAWI Programme, which is geared towards providing affordable credit to SMEs, has already positively impacted hundreds of business by availing low-cost financing, despite only having been launched recently.

In the coming months, my Administration will introduce other products such as Stawisha SME Mashinani and other administrative measures geared towards SMEs to enable them to play their rightful role in our economic transformation agenda.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Millions of Kenyans woke up this morning in a Nation that has one of the highest rates of electricity connection in the developing world.

The Last-Mile Connectivity Initiative has turned electricity connection from a luxurious dream unattainable in most Kenyan homes to an ordinary facet of life, now enjoyed by over 75% of all Kenyan homesteads.

Our children no longer strain their eyes reading under the light of candles nor do they choke with fumes from paraffin lamps.

The Vision of Fathers and Mothers in villages across Kenya, is now powered as those in our towns and cities; affording them equal opportunity to actively participate in national development. Indeed, the River is well on its course.

We are returning the River to its course through sustained investments in education. Where once education was the preserve of the elite, we now pride ourselves as a nation with one of the highest levels of literacy among our peer-nations. In Africa, Kenya boasts the highest rate of Primary-to-Secondary School Transition, now at 100%. When our learners sit down to acquire knowledge and discover their full potential, they do so guided by a new world-class Competence-Based-Curriculum that extensively utilizes digital learning platforms fit for the learning practices and demands of the 21st Century.

Our education system has also witnessed a rapid expansion of tertiary education; both in terms of access and scope. Our universities, polytechnics and vocational training institutions ensure that every Kenyan has an opportunity to further their knowledge and expertise; fuelling livelihoods and enabling passions and dreams. In the medical field, a Kenyan doctor, Peter Mwethera, who, after extensive research, has come up with a gel, that once applied will prevent contact of HIV/AIDS virus and other venereal diseases.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The bounty of Kenya's superlative human capital not only drives our own society and economy, but also those of other nations. Our highly educated citizens are much sought after all over the globe. To signify the changing fortunes of our homeland, diaspora remittances grew by 10.9% from KSh. 266.19 billion to KSh. 295.32 billion between June 2018 and June 2019, overtaking earnings from export of tea and coffee as the country's largest source of foreign exchange.

My Fellow Kenyans,

When we leave our homes every morning to travel to our schools, workplaces or social centres; we now do so on a network of high-standard roads, expressways, highways and dual carriages. From Kibwezi – Kitui Road, Lokichar–Lodwar–Loichangamantak–Nakodok, Mombasa – Kwa Jomvu, Isebania–Kisii–Ahero; our network of roads drive our economy.

Where once bitumen standard roads were few and far between, now almost every corner of Kenya features extensive kilometers of top-grade roads, with others actively under construction. Plans are already underway for even greater expansion, key among them East Africa's first overpass from J.K.I.A. to Westlands, recently inaugurated and presently under construction.

This unprecedented enhancement in infrastructure has not been limited to our road network.

We have expanded our airports, sea and lake ports and laid the Standard Gauge Railway (SGR); ensuring a diversity in transportation that is unrivalled on the continent.

Coupled with an extensive telecommunication network infrastructure that features some of the highest internet speeds anywhere in the world, a Kenyan in even the most remote parts of our country can travel quickly and conveniently and can receive goods and services wherever they are, whenever they wish.

This enabling infrastructure has made Kenya a global leader in the arena of mobile technology. We have revolutionized mobile banking, FinTech and the integration of cutting-edge technologies with the traditional economy. Thanks to technology, transactions are now majorly conducted remotely from the palm of our hands and Government Services (Huduma) are requested and received on mobile devices across every last centimetre of our country.

As a result, the world has come calling and Kenya has hosted numerous global conferences and international exhibitions, which have enhanced Kenya's visibility globally. In this week alone, we have had over 10 Heads of State and Government attend the Summit of the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) Group of Countries.

All across the country, transformation is taking place and the country is intensely under construction.

From the largest wind power in Africa that places Kenya as the world leader in green energy; petroleum exploration in Turkana, that in August propelled Kenya to the list of oil exporting countries of the world, to a new port in Lamu, that is, in addition to the expansion of the Port of Kilindini in Mombasa, to the Isiolo International Airport and the numerous upgraded airstrips in numerous counties, to the rehabilitation of the Port of Kisumu on the shores of Lake Victoria.

As an affirmation of the progress we have made; in honour of our solemn and sacred duty, to conserve our environment for current and future generations, in recognition of our credentials in green energy, Kenya was ranked fifth globally and top in Africa in the annual Bloomberg Climate Scope Index for the year 2019.

Our initiatives across the country are complimented by the transformation being undertaken by county governments across the country. I am pleased to note that every county in Kenya has at least one major infrastructure project designed to directly benefit mwananchi. These infrastructure projects are creating jobs and driving primary, secondary and ancillary business.

They are fuelling our economy and giving our growth and development greater impetus, thus creating the Kenya that our forefathers had envisioned. In their honour, we are returning the River to its course.

My Fellow Kenyans,

Our bold and transformative agenda for a better Kenya, initiated in April 2013, has bridged the gap between standards of living in rural Kenya and that in urban Kenya.

The vast inequality and disparity that typified the Kenya of just a decade ago, has been eliminated almost entirely. A farmer in rural Kenya has agricultural support services within easy reach and their produce reaches the market faster through an improved transport network.

Once-sleeping village and town centres, they have roared back to life due to decentralization of Government services as factories spring-up and once mothballed industries, bounce back to life.

We are a Government that cares for all its people. Our senior citizens who have attained the age of 70, orphans and vulnerable children and persons living with severe disability, now receive a monthly stipend from the Government, so that they can continue to live in dignity.

This transformation also means that life in urban Kenya no longer features the rampant crime and insecurity that was prevalent just a decade ago.

My Administration has reformed, modernized and revitalized our police service; equipping it with the resources necessary to prevent, detect and deal with crime effectively and efficiently. We have coupled this with an extensive programme of street lighting, CCTV cameras and enhanced foot and vehicular patrols, in addition to the very successful Nyumba Kumi Initiative. Our towns and cities are safer and businesses can now operate 24 hours a day.

We are returning the River to its course by improving planning and service provision while allowing your taxes to work better for you. Towards this, we conducted a successful National Census this year, soon after the roll out of Huduma Namba unique personal identifier, building up on this success story.

My Fellow Kenyans,

A nation is only as strong as its institutions. Personalities come and go, but institutions endure and outlast us all. It is therefore my intention to ensure that we fully institutionalize our governance and administrative principles and values as laid out in our Constitution and other laws. Our Civil Service is the engine that drives the realization and implementation of our Nation's aspirations and development agenda.

All our State Organs, both tiers of Government and all three arms of Government, are supported by the dedicated and diligent public officers.

Most of our civil servants are hardworking and selfless. They are akin to the freedom fighters who braved the awful conditions of the forests to wage a righteous war for independence against the colonizing power.

At both National and County Level, they are birthing an even better Kenya through pens, paper, computers and a renewed commitment to duty and the fight against corruption.

The Rule of Law, Good Governance, Integrity, Transparency and Accountability are the pillars of our constitutional democracy. They are the golden thread that is woven across the entirety of our Supreme Law.

Their inclusion was a deliberate codification of the shared values of the People of Kenya and their common aspiration for a better, more responsive and participatory Government, at both levels and across all three arms of Government.

Therefore, this golden standard must be applied equally and consistently to all; without fear or favour.

That is not only our sacred moral duty, but also our solemn legal obligation demanded of us by the Constitution and the Statute Laws. On assumption of state office or public office, the officers become the trustees of the people; with a constitutional, statutory and moral duty to administer public affairs and resources in fidelity with the law, and strictly for the benefit of the people.

State and public officers are not above law. Our constitutional order is a jealous one; it demands that state and public officers serve no other master but it. A teacher in the Public Service cannot have one foot in the classroom and the other in Parliament. One cannot serve as a legislator at the National or County Level while at the same time practicing law, whether or not for gain.

In the same way, judges and magistrates cease completely any legal practice while in office, similarly doctors, engineers, accountants and other professionals who take up state or public office, should give up private practice and devote their full time, energies and focus on public duties; and without the perception that they are using state or public office as a mere platform to advance other interests.

Fellow Kenyans,

Is it fair and right for legislators who have control over funds and exercise oversight over the Judiciary to appear in courts as counsel? Is it fair on the judicial officer hearing the case or the other parties that, one party in the case is represented by persons who can literally change the law applicable to the dispute, control the career progression of the judge or magistrate or are able to speak with the voice of an entire arm of Government?

The position is simple; you either serve the public in the role you signed up for or you serve the Republic as a private practitioner; it is a profound conflict of interest to do both.

The war on corruption will continue until we weed out from our midst, those who abuse the privileges of their office for personal benefit. No magistrate or judge, or any other state or public officer, who has abused the public trust should be allowed to hide behind the veil of autonomy and independence.

I, therefore, direct the Attorney-General to fast-track the submission to Cabinet for approval and transmittal to Parliament, the Law on Conflict of Interest, which has been subject to stakeholders consultation.

My Fellow Kenyans,

As an affirmation of the steady progress that we are making and as a validation of our historical, tested and proven commitment to Africa's positions and fulfillment of our obligations at the international level, Kenya has been endorsed overwhelmingly as African Union's candidate for the non-permanent seat of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) for the period 2021-2022. Kenya is ready to serve and we commit to pursue our shared prosperity and advancement of humanity.

Fellow Kenyans,

Over these Fifty-Six Years, our democracy has evolved tremendously. Kenya has over the years taken bold and necessary decisions required to better our democracy, legal order and the ability of Government to serve and deliver the Kenyan dream.

As the first elected President under the Constitution of Kenya 2010, I am pleased with how we have implemented that new apex law.

Kenya is undoubtedly better today than we were in 2010; in large part because of the changes we ushered in through the new Constitution of Kenya.

In 2019, we once again find ourselves called upon to consider further bold and necessary actions, to better our democracy, and to enhance the effectiveness and inclusiveness of our governance system. Just as in 1963, we have the opportunity to create a better nation by fostering how we govern ourselves.

We must not succumb to inertia or be afraid to implement change where necessary. We must not elevate partisan positions or short-term interests over the greater good.

We are called upon to build bridges and heal divisions not because it is easy, but because it is who we are as Kenyans. The independence-era heroes refused to be compromised with leadership positions while others in their numbers languished in colonial detention.

They put aside narrow political glory to self, in favour of Kenya's wider and enduring interests. In 2019, we are each called upon once again to put country above self, to put Kenya's enduring interests above our fears and personal aspirations. Let us for once say, "Kenya Kwanza; Leo, Kesho na Milele".

My Fellow Kenyans,

Let us return the River to its course by emulating the independence generation who sought to build a united Kenya.

They had the dream of "One Kenya, One People". Over the years, this fundamental platform was diminished by political balkanization, pandering to narrow divides and succumbing to the false allure of transient political aspirations.

Whereas all Kenyans have a part to play in bringing the Kenyan dream to fruition, Kenya's political leadership must take the lead in this process. To do this, we must adopt a long term view of what we hope Kenya will become in the future.

In this regard, we must remember that ancient African mantra that "a society grows great when old men plant trees in whose shade they know they shall never sit".

Each of us, you and me; must make daily decisions purely driven by Kenya's wider and enduring interests. This is not an unreasonable ask or an impossible position.

We are gathered here today to celebrate men and women who did precisely that; whether in resisting the invading colonial forces, or confronting them once they established their rule, or building this blessed Nation after we expelled the colonizer. We are their descendants; their greatness flows in our blood and their sacrifice forged our bones. To return the River to its course, we must live and breathe the mantra of "Kenya Kwanza; Leo, Kesho na Milele".

My Fellow Kenyans,

What is this "Kenya Kwanza; Leo, Kesho na Milele" on a day to day basis? It is committing, like the independence-era generation, to doing all that is necessary for Kenya to thrive and achieve all our collective aspirations for a brighter and better tomorrow. In 2019, we are not asked to fight in the forests or to confront a colonial power on the streets.

We are called upon to obey the law, to discharge our civic duty, to conserve our environment, to care for our parents and children, to refuse to be corrupt, to be mindful of our neighbours, to bring blessings to the less fortunate and to resist negative ethnicity, tribalism, religious divides and everything that undermine our unity and cohesion.

We are a Nation called upon to be great, to be a beacon of hope for others, to be on this earth the reflection of divine providence, favour and protection. Fifty Six Years on, our democracy is stronger.

Fellow Kenyans,

Now is the time to recommit ourselves and put “Kenya Kwanza; Leo, Kesho na Milele”. In so doing, we shall have honoured the enduring legacy of the independence-generation to whom we are greatly indebted.

MAY GOD BLESS YOU AND MAY GOD BLESS KENYA. ASANTENI