



REPUBLIC OF KENYA

**SPEECH BY HIS EXCELLENCY WILLIAM
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COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF OF THE KENYA
DEFENCE FORCES DURING THE OPENING OF
HEADS OF STATE SESSION OF THE AFRICA
CLIMATE SUMMIT**

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This African Moment is a Global Moment, where Climate Action is Green Growth.

1. I am delighted to be here with you for a number of reasons. First, I am excited to participate in this Summit, as a scientist who has done some research on the ecological impacts of human activity on fragile and precious ecosystems, including rivers and other wetlands. I am also privileged to be leading the Kenyan national delegation to the Africa Climate Summit. Besides that, I have the honour, for the time being, of serving the young, green continent of the future, as the chair of the Committee of African Heads of State on Climate Change (CAHOSCC), and finally, I am co-hosting the Summit with the African Union.
2. I am therefore highly encouraged by your strong response to our invitation to attend and participate in this inaugural and transformative continental assembly, convened to focus on climate action from the standpoint of generating African solutions to global and African challenges.
3. The participation in the numerous events that make up this Summit has so far demonstrated impressive commitment, extraordinary enthusiasm, exemplary motivation and unparalleled determination to confront the problems, clarify issues, engage inclusively and define a unique strategic platform for the implementation of bold interventions to catalyse progress in the global climate action agenda.
4. I welcome you to Nairobi, our burgeoning and sleepless Green city in the Sun, that is bounded by a national wildlife park and a closed-canopy indigenous forest. In between, our capital pulsates with the restless energy of community, enterprise, industry, innovation, learning, fun and



adventure. Please feel at home and find time to enjoy the sights and sounds of our city and country.

5. Africa is a very young continent. Our median age is 19 years. Africa's youthfulness is precisely the attribute that has inspired African leadership to imagine a future where Africa finally steps into the stage as an economic and industrial power, an effective and positive actor on a global arena.
6. I am very proud because this realization has motivated Africa's leaders to create meaningful opportunities for young people to participate in, contribute to and take charge of consequential endeavours in many sectors. This bold policy is already transforming the strategic landscape of climate action and is swiftly propelling our continent to a focal point of the global sustainability agenda.
7. On Sunday, at the Youth Summit, we saw for ourselves the immensity of the potential that we can unleash simply by facilitating positive youth action at all levels in every sector. Potential and opportunity are both futuristic propositions. The Africa Climate Summit has been designed to enable us locate our most intense engagements and the most energized discourse, in order to facilitate imaginative problem-solving and innovative interventions that are bold enough to meet the critical challenges of the present and future times. This is why potential, opportunity, the future and youth are recurrent themes that underlie our interactions.
8. We have convened here to consult, deliberate and collaborate in imagining and designing the future of climate action globally, and its implications for Africa's aspirations to achieve shared prosperity within a generation. This



Summit is dedicated exclusively to the transformation of potential into opportunity, the conversion of ideas into actions, and the turning of plans to results. It is about creating a firm consensus, designing effective strategies, securing commitments and forging transformative partnerships that will drive climate action in the direction and at a rate required to pull our continent and planet back from the brink of a climate disaster.

9. The urgency of this moment is informed by the knowledge that climate change is the greatest challenge, not only to the well-being of humanity, but to the very existence of all life on earth, and that only urgent and coordinated action on a global scale, can stop the impending catastrophe by lowering greenhouse gas emissions and reducing their concentration in the atmosphere. This is an immense and formidable challenge, even at the best of times.
10. However, the time we are in, and in which we must implement this urgent and daunting undertaking, is a complicated and difficult time for nations throughout the world. Regional conflict with geopolitical ramifications have compounded the disruptive impacts of the covid-19 pandemic to throw global supply chains into disarray, slowing down economies, raising the cost of living, suppressing economic growth and straining food systems to breaking point.
11. The complex interplay of these circumstances also combine with other localized vulnerabilities to drive adversity in many communities, placing intense pressure on governments to reconfigure resource allocations and other strategic interventions. In short, it would be understandable if African leaders prioritized other commitments and relegated climate action to an afterthought.



12. This is why I proudly celebrate the courage and imagination with which the people of Africa and their leaders have converged with extraordinary focus and commitment on the climate agenda, not as an additional or peripheral concern for public policy, but as the foremost priority and the defining intervention in our collective journey to shared prosperity.
13. As a result of patient consultation, thorough debate, determined collaboration and bold confrontation of facts in issue, it has become clear to us at the African Union, under the aegis of the Committee of African Heads of State on Climate Change (CAHOSCC), that tackling climate change also produces the solutions to the complex interconnected crises that we face today. This is what this Summit is designed to underscore.
14. Collectively, we hold the power to transform the current continental and global trajectory. More critically, we all have an urgent responsibility to do so with a sense of collective purpose that matches the sense of urgency demonstrated by Africa's young people at the Youth Summit.
15. Although we are gathered here to explore the means by which we can unite in action for the greater good, we have taken full account of the fact that we are not all at the same place in terms of our experiences with climate change.
16. All countries struggle to achieve socioeconomic progress under various constraints. Due to a range of complex and interconnected historical, political and economic factors, African countries struggle with unique, inordinate and incredibly complex structural drawbacks in the quest to



provide opportunities for their peoples to achieve prosperity.

17. Nevertheless, we have all, in our different ways, succeeded in making some progress over the years amid these extraordinary difficulties. The tragedy of climate change is that it is relentlessly eating away at this progress and, going by evidence based on scientific projections, its appetite to consume our GDP will grow in years to come. We are already losing between 5-15% of our GDP growth every year to the adverse impacts of climate change.
18. At the same time, the cost of adaptation continues to rise along with the cost living, while the cost of development capital for African economies remains prohibitive, as millions of our youth remain unemployed.
19. Only rapid and inclusive economic transformation, powered by robust industrialization, can place us firmly on a path towards the sustainable resolution of these challenges. A sound understanding of the nature and causes of climate change, coupled with our experience of its devastating effects, has provided us with a robust early warning system, that the classical economic development progression precedent is not available for us as a pathway to this transformation.
20. As Africans, we are strongly persuaded that not only is it urgent for us to execute an audacious leapfrogging of the traditional developmental pathway to industrialisation, but urgent ecological imperatives also dictate that we must go green first, before industrializing and not vice *versa*, like the advanced industrial economies. I emphasise this point to underscore the principle underlying Africa's position on the climate action agenda, and the foundation of our strategic, institutional and policy direction.



21. We have an unprecedented opportunity to abandon the well-trodden, yet unsustainable path of the past and forge a new route that aligns economic inclusion and shared prosperity with the climate commitments imperatives. Africa's low rates of greenhouse gas emissions must not relegate us to the margins and footnotes of the global climate agenda; Africa must step forward as the cornerstone around which effective climate solutions are built.
22. Yesterday, I encouraged participants in this Summit to discard the grievance standpoint and instead consider the climate action imperative through an opportunity lens. As soon as we do that, a nexus of feasible sequences begins to emerge in an unbroken continuum from potential to opportunity, and through investments and technological innovation, into green manufacturing and industrialisation, and shared prosperity.
23. Our untapped **renewable energy potential**, together with the world's **youngest population** of skilled, motivated and industrial men and women, along with Africa's abundant endowment of **natural assets**, from carbon sinks to arable land and mineral wealth, confer on us the indispensable fundamentals to swiftly become a cost-competitive industrial hub with ample capacity to decarbonize global manufacturing and green the economies of our continent and neighbourhoods.
24. It is good for us to be open about the need to confront a couple of basic truths. First, it is demonstrably clear that none of the world's industrialised nations will be able to achieve their net-zero goals within the time indicated by scientists to avert further warming. Secondly, unlocking Africa's potential to undertake economic transformation



- along a green trajectory is the most feasible, just and efficient way to attain a net-zero world by 2050.
25. Africa's capacity to limit its own emissions is the clearest pathway to enable the world to achieve its climate action targets. Africa's opportunity is a global opportunity, and a chance for humanity to redeem its inter-generational legacy. Scientific experts have consistently demonstrated, from analyzing available evidence and making projections, that this can be achieved while generating jobs in their millions, creating enormous investment opportunities and catalyzing unprecedented economic growth.
 26. Under a proper green growth paradigm, climate action also serves as a robust engine for poverty reduction, employment and wealth creation and economic transformation. By definition, effective climate action must entail technological leapfrogging to disrupt and invert the industrial development pathway and go green first. It must also involve effective decarbonisation of global production and supply chains, and deliberate efforts to remove carbon from the atmosphere at scale.
 27. Understood this way, green growth aligns perfectly with the opportunity-oriented perspective of climate action, which presents Africa with its most important means of achieving stability, prosperity and development, beyond middle-income industrial status.
 28. To achieve green growth, we in Africa have committed to move with speed and, under various effective frameworks, to develop the necessary instruments, institutions, policies and strategies through which we shall design and implement incentives that will accelerate the delivery of priority actions. We shall also support our youth, especially those in enterprise, to embrace innovation and deliver localized solutions for the benefit of our communities, and



at the same time attract other African and international investors to finance climate action.

29. Every step of this journey will require partnership that facilitate collaboration and multilateral collective action to achieve 'just development financing mechanisms,' deliver equitable access to markets for Africa's green products and services, and a 'just regime' that provides liquidity, debt-relief and affordable investment capital everywhere on our continent.
30. We are all connected by our common humanity and a shared stake in the vitality and liveability of our planet. We are also bound firmly by the fact that Earth is all we have, that we have no other home, and no alternative planet to resort to, when things burn here.
31. The most salient implication of this knowledge is that we cannot approach climate action and human development from a disconnected or in an adversarial manner. We cannot pursue climate action through insular, solitary policies. Global warming cannot be mitigated by air-conditioning our little pockets and corners of the world. Prosperity cannot and must not be pursued in a zero-sum, exclusive fashion, because the resulting injustice and inequity are the drivers of inequality, poverty, conflict and activities that threaten biodiversity and encourage pollution. We are all interconnected, and this existential moment provides us with a unique opportunity to reconnect with our shared humanity.
32. In this Summit, you will have heard, and will continue to learn more about the bold, transformative and innovative fruits of partnership, cooperation and collaboration that are already underway in various parts of Africa. I invite you to



pay close attention to as many of these cases as possible, and assure you that you will be surprised, challenged and inspired by the many wonderful demonstrations of bold initiatives in the face of opportunity. That is the essence of the Summit: it is an orientation run designed to familiarize us with our journey into a future driven by African solutions, powered by Africa's resources and anchored on African opportunities.

33. The collaborations I have in mind must be bold in ambition, broad in the scope of their vision, deep in terms of the diversity of their stakeholders, and long in terms of their geographical reach. An impressive example that I have had opportunity to interact with, is the Global Centre for Adaptation (GCA), an organisation based in Rotterdam in the Netherlands, whose constitution is an appealing emblem of our aspirations, from the aspirational design of its global headquarters and futuristic regional headquarters in Nairobi, comprising green walls and roof as well as rain gardens, to the collaborative culture of its staff. Unsurprisingly, the Centre is intended to inspire the world to thrive with nature instead of pursuing the dangerous course of seeking to thrive at nature's expense. The Centre spearheads the Africa Adaptation Acceleration Program, a focal point collaboration with the University of Nairobi, African Development Bank and the African Union Commission, as part of the continent's response to the climate crisis. I am delighted to announce that as an outcome of this summit today, Kenya will host the GCA Africa Headquarters here in Nairobi.
34. It has taken tremendous courage, effort, and determination to leave behind us the old continent, that was historically profiled with intense negativity. The Africa whose people were neither to be seen nor heard has summoned the confidence and readiness to confront hard facts, engage



truthfully, and forge a common position on critical issues that projects a new, bold, and radically transformative voice into global discourse.

35. That is why this event is both Africa's Climate Summit and a global pre-COP28 convention. Africa is meeting, and Africans are talking: the world is listening. We must use this opportunity to lead the world in a new direction towards a future that holds immense promise for both Africa and the entire world.
36. The many initiatives showcased at this Summit testify to the courage of African entrepreneurs and innovators to pursue breakthroughs, exploit opportunities, develop models and take risks to make our tomorrow better than our today.
37. When the Global Stock Take is released, there will be another opportunity to test our courage and resolve by asking each other hard questions in the spirit of fashioning the best way to achieve rapid improvements.
38. We have therefore committed to conclude this Summit with a Declaration which firmly encourages everyone to keep their promises, even in hard times, as a matter of justice, to hold each other to account. To collaborate and to innovate.
39. This African Moment is A Global Moment. We are, in word and deed, full stakeholders in this global journey, and its primary navigators at this stage. I urge everyone at this summit to exercise bold leadership and contribute to our efforts to reconfigure global markets and international institutions around African aspirations and strategic goals. I call on each one of you to do their part so that the



potential that lies on our continent can deliver opportunities for Africa's youth, communities, enterprises and nations to actualize a future for us all.

40. It is a matter of long-standing African wisdom that **if you want to go fast, go alone; but if you want to go far, go with others**. We have a long way to go and no time to lose. In this moment of existential urgency of all humanity, I daresay that we have our ancestors' permission to innovate a way to not only **go fast, but also together**, provided we consult thoroughly, engage in good faith, collaborate effectively and proceed inclusively. This is an emergency, and we must undertake climate action and green growth with this understanding.

**I thank you,
God bless you,
God bless Africa.**

