



REPUBLIC OF KENYA

**STATEMENT BY HIS EXCELLENCY WILLIAM
SAMOEI RUTO, CGH; PHD; PRESIDENT AND
COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF OF THE KENYA DEFENCE
FORCES, DURING THE 60TH JAMHURI DAY
CELEBRATIONS**

DECEMBER 12TH, 2023

UHURU GARDENS, NAIROBI



Excellencies;

President Of the Federal Republic of Ethiopia, H.E Sahle -Work Zewde,

President of Zanzibar, H.E Hussein Mwinyi,

Vice President of the Republic of Burundi, H.E Prosper Bazombanza,

Secretary General of the Africa Continental Free Trade Area, Wamkele Mene,

Members Of The Diplomatic Corps,

Distinguished Guests,

Wakenya Wenzangu,

1. I am delighted to have the privilege of leading the people of our nation in celebrating the important milestone in our journey to national independence. Sixty years ago, on a day like this, Kenya took its final step of the freedom struggle to become a sovereign Republic.
2. According to the vision of our forefathers who fought for this country's freedom, independence was intended to bestow on us the gifts of political as well as economic self-determination. This anniversary gives us the opportunity to gather as a family and reflect together on how we have fared over the course of six decades.
3. It is clear that we have made undeniable progress on many fronts and, as a result, our nation may be said to have come a long way in the right direction. Before that first Jamhuri Day, Kenya's sovereignty was exercised by an unelected, foreign and colonial power for the benefit of an occupying minority.

4. We have since matured from a single-party State to a competitive, multiparty democracy and devolved system of governance with robust checks and balances under the Constitution. ratified by the people of Kenya in 2010.
5. Along with the maturity of our democracy, Kenya's institutions of governance have evolved significantly. Parliament is now more than ever an independent, assertive organ of government with its own calendar and budget. As a result of this autonomy, party positions on important national issues are much more clearly defined and, whenever circumstances and the national interest demand, bipartisan engagement across the political divide is pursued in a structured way.
6. Proposals currently before Parliament on the enhancement of the autonomy of county assemblies prove that our assemblies are also making encouraging progress in their maturation into independent watchdogs, policymakers and representatives of the people in our counties.
7. Devolution is growing its roots deeper to connect with the soul and spirit of our nation. We have consistently allocated more resources and made them available on time, while supporting measures to further empower the county assemblies to become good stewards.
8. Our political culture has also evolved considerably. We are now committed to making sure that at every election, our democratic competition is less about personalities and tribes, and more about issues and the national interest. As a result, the last General Election, which serves as a very solid beacon of this new direction, reflected the true will and confidence of the people of Kenya in democracy.

9. Without the rule of law, our democracy falls short of serving us as a people. The Judiciary, which is our nation's foremost anchor of the rule of law, continues to grow in its capacity to authoritatively discharge its constitutional mandate and make justice a right of every citizen. To provide effective and efficient services to the people, we have enhanced resources available to the Judiciary, promoted respect for its independence and submitted to its authority in order to deepen our credentials as a nation guided by the rule of law.
10. To complete this framework of institutions designed to safeguard and promote constitutionalism and the rule of law, our constitutional commissions and independent offices have evolved to discharge their mandate in accordance with the Constitution in a most constructive manner in support of good governance. The IEBC, CRA and SRC, among others, have lived up to their constitutional expectations.
11. Today, there is much to celebrate about the strides we have made for six decades. The democratic credentials of our political culture are solid, and our institutional maturity is beyond doubt.
12. 60 years ago, we certainly were far from where we are today. The progress we have made is undeniable. Our peers at that time, nations like South Korea, Singapore and Malaysia, have similarly made immense progress in democratic and institutional maturity. They have, however, made much more economic progress than us and, as a consequence, they are much more advanced today than we are.

13. The point at which we stand today is the culmination of the collective endeavour of our nation's founding generation and those that came after them. The vision which inspired their struggle and sacrifice was one of a united, free, democratic and economically prosperous nation. They fought for true sovereignty, which envisioned political democracy and economic prosperity. Our forefathers made huge sacrifices to win for Kenya the freedom we celebrate today, and the generations that followed them have made their contributions progressively to bring our State, society and economy to its present. We gather today to express our gratitude, celebrate their legacy and contemplate our contribution to accelerating future progress.
14. In our democratic and political journey, we have made tremendous sacrifices and progress, from single party to multi-party, personality and ethnic parochialism to issue-based and national politics, from violent and intolerant discourse to orderly and peaceful elections. However, we have not made as much progress with our economy. Our savings as a percentage of GDP is dismal, the gap between the rich and poor has not reduced, many, especially young people, don't have jobs and our revenues as a percentage of GDP remains low. Our generation must therefore take up the unfinished of actualising economic prosperity as our contribution to perfecting Kenya's national sovereignty. We owe this to those who made huge sacrifices to bestow on us a nation of promise, and we owe it to one another: To the youth, women, children of Kenya and each one of us.
15. The responsibility of our generation, beginning with this administration, is to make smart choices and necessary sacrifices, just as our forefathers and those who came after them did, so as to match our economic progress with our democratic and political achievements. This is the assignment we took up on Day 1, the 13th of September, 2022, and which we have been painstakingly undertaking for the past year.

16. Our focus has been firmly about the ways and means of transforming our economy, and making the right decisions, necessary sacrifices and smart choices to set Kenya on the path of economic renaissance. This transformation began with all of us, as the people of Kenya, making immense sacrifices and huge contributions together to pull back our country from the brink of debt distress.
17. The greatness and patriotic devotion of the people of Kenya have been on display during the past year. Together, we have made the right choices, sometimes taken very difficult and painful decisions, to steer Kenya back from the edge of the catastrophic cliff of debt distress, and move our nation in a new direction.
18. There is every reason to believe that without serious sacrifices and hard work over the past year, the crises, threats and challenges in the global economic and geopolitical environment confronting us would have overwhelmed us, as indeed, it has many countries. We have had to make our contribution to the struggle for the nation's economic sovereignty. We have had to cut back significantly on expenditure and to defer the implementation of critical development programmes to stabilise our economy. The policy measures required to mobilise necessary revenues have been difficult, but they were our only way and means of escape.
19. Though painful, the sacrifices we have made, which would not only make our freedom fighters proud but were also absolutely necessary at such a time as we found ourselves in to guarantee our nation's economic stability. Proudly, these sacrifices have paid off: I can now confirm that Kenya is safely out of the danger of debt distress and that our economy is on a stable footing.

20. The economic indicators point to good news. Inflation is now at 6.8%, down from a high of 9.2% last year. In the last 6 months, our GDP has grown at 5.4%, making Kenya the 29th fastest-growing economy in the world, according to the World Bank.
21. There is no question about it: What we have done together, the price we have paid together and the sacrifices we have made together have rescued our country from an economic catastrophe.
22. After navigating our way out of a difficult and complicated debt situation, our second action is to accelerate economic progress, which is the cardinal assignment of our generation.
23. Our human capital, our innovative, smart-working, professional labour force is probably the single most potent arsenal we have to drive our economic progress. Globally, Kenyans have excelled in semi-skilled, skilled and professional occupations. Our expenditure on training, learning and education in general is a most appropriate investment in the development of the human capital necessary in our economic progress.
24. Recognising this, we have increased the total allocation to our education sector by an additional KSh127 billion. Out of this, KSh46 billion will support the new university funding model, an additional KSh9 billion to cover our TVET funding model and the hiring of an extra 2,000 tutors, an additional KSh47 billion to enable TSC hire 56,000 teachers, and other interventions, and KSh24 billion for basic education to cover the Junior Secondary School, and to support the construction of additional classroom infrastructure. To cover the chronic classroom deficit in Nairobi County, we have undertaken to build 3,500 additional classrooms with the first KSh1 billion allocated in this year's budget.

25. Agriculture plays a central and pivotal role in our economy, contributing to food security, supplying raw materials for agro-processing and value addition, manufacturing for domestic and export markets, creating jobs and creating wealth. Only specific, targeted and deliberate interventions will enhance our agricultural productivity and overall production. This begins with the registration of farmers, provision of crop-specific fertiliser, reforms in the tea, coffee, sugarcane and edible oils sectors, provision of mobile driers and other interventions underway across the nation so as to reduce the cost of food, which consumes 54% of household incomes, to reduce by half our food import bill, which stands at KSh500 billion, and also increase our exports.
26. Further, 400 fresh produce markets, 47 county aggregation and industrial parks, as well as 6 special economic zones, are at various stages of implementation to enhance value addition, agro-processing and manufacturing to stimulate economic growth.
27. Economic productivity and general well-being are significantly hampered by a population that is prone to ill-health. Individual and family medical expenditures drain household incomes, and erode family savings, in many cases, leading to financial ruin and destitution.
28. Our universal health coverage plan seeks a paradigm shift in the provision of healthcare, from curative to a largely preventive and promotive approach. Our radical transformative plan has seen the enactment of four Acts of Parliament, for which I thank our legislature, as well as the roll-out of 100,000 community health promoters, for which I thank county governments. I commend counties who have already paid community health promoters and commit that the national government's portion will be paid at the end of this month.

29. The laws we have enacted now provide a framework in the Emergency, Chronic and Critical Illness Fund that will liberate the people of Kenya from the burden of catastrophic hospital bills on the treatment of conditions like cancer, diabetes, hypertension and other critical and chronic conditions.
30. Additionally, the new funding framework that is fair, equitable and progressive will see the government of Kenya for the first time pay for all vulnerable Kenyans who have no ability to pay. Those currently paying KSh500 will have their contributions reduced with the least paying KSh300.
31. To enhance efficiency and eliminate pilferage in the healthcare system, the new digital law will underpin the digitisation of the entire service delivery framework.
32. While empirical evidence shows that economic growth has the potential to create jobs and the interventions enumerated above will create opportunities for employment, these interventions, on their own, will not create the kind and level of employment needed to deal with unemployment on Kenya today.
33. For employment and job creation to be at the scale necessary to make a significant dent on our unemployment status and deal effectively with prevailing challenges, our interventions must be ambitious and systematic, consistent and intentional, as well as deliberate and progressive.
34. Our housing programme is fundamentally a massive, deliberate and systematic job creation mechanism. Apart from the thousands of direct employment opportunities in construction and associated services, the housing scheme indirectly supports the formal and informal manufacturing of materials, fixtures, fittings and accessories required in the construction. From architects and engineers to pumpers, quantity surveyors and

engineers to site workers, artisans, fabricators, electricians and plumbers, and the construction workers.

35. The housing program is a bottom-up job creator. There are 33 active housing development sites already employing 120,000 people in various parts of the country. Another 31 sites are undergoing evaluation to begin construction next month. Other sites are in various stages of design and by mid-next year the entire country will be bustling construction sites with housing projects proceeding in every country.
36. Our strategic focus is to construct thousands of housing units while creating millions of jobs. South Korea, Singapore and Malaysia undertook these major housing works some 40 years ago, and that's why their economies are ahead of ours.
37. Yesterday, I signed into law amendments to the National Government Constituency Development Fund Act, which set out a framework to anchor the development of ICT hubs in each of the 1,450 wards in the country. I salute Members of Parliament for the partnership to leverage our digital superhighway infrastructure to provide training opportunities and create thousands of digital job opportunities for young people across Kenya.
38. We are also rolling out training and digital job opportunities in all our TVETS countrywide and already 23,000 computers have been distributed with many students now monetising their skills online. We are in discussion with county governments to jointly expand vocational training centres to accommodate ICT hub infrastructure so as to enhance the digital jobs' footprints. The digital jobs ecosystem we are building is an intentional, dynamic and innovative mechanism to create jobs in the technology and digital space.

39. We have dedicated specific attention to infrastructure development to promote connectivity through a dense nationwide network of transport and communication infrastructure, actualise the constitutional right to clean and safe water in adequate quantities as enshrined in Article 43 of the Constitution and connect all Kenyans to electric energy.
40. On Jamhuri Day 2022, I announced a grand plan to transform Kenyan sports and creatives into a significant industry to expand livelihood opportunities for our youth, through the Government flagship Talanta Hela Initiative, which we officially unveiled in June this year. Our sportsmen and women continue to make our country proud with their conquests far and wide. Our women's volleyball and the men's rugby have qualified for the Paris Olympics in 2024. Our athletes continue to excel at various global events as well exemplified by the shining performances in the long and middle-distance races.
41. This administration has also taken deliberate steps to build and invest in the creative economy. First, the famous Grammy Awards have a partnership with us and starting January, the innovation studios of Hollywood have agreed to begin shooting multiple movies right here in Kenya. Google, in collaboration with the ministries of Education and ICT and Digital Economy, has begun implementing a Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development- approved coding programme in primary and secondary schools. To reach 4 million learners, the partnership will train 42,000 teachers.
42. I have good news for our creatives and those who imagine and produce content through Facebook and Instagram. Just yesterday, Meta committed to helping creators in Kenya earn money for crafting original content. Following a pilot programme with eligible creators in the country, Meta will be expanding

monetisation opportunities and allowing more creators to earn a living doing what they love.

43. Kenya possesses impressive credentials as a source of highly professional human capital with highly educated, trained, skilled and dynamic young people.
44. We have systematically and intentionally negotiated different bilateral agreements with countries in the Middle East, Europe and Americas to connect our skilled workforce with opportunities globally. This will provide exposure to thousands of Kenyans to work in international organisations, engage in global assignments and monetise their skills and talents as they enhance their incomes and personal development. Millions of Kenyans already working abroad have been great ambassadors for our country and have made huge contributions through their remittances to the development of Kenya.
45. Today, I have conferred upon our world-beating athlete Faith Kipyegon the rank and status of the Elder of the Order of the Golden Heart of Kenya (EGH), the highest honour our country awards its citizens who illuminate the path of excellence. She has earned her place at the very top, from running barefoot to breaking two world records within a year is the ultimate heroism. Faith's journey is an inspiration to all our young and aspiring athletes.
46. Kenya remains committed to driving climate action and I am proud that we can play a significant role in shaping the climate agenda on the continent. We have demonstrated leadership, which has been recognised both on the continent and beyond, and we must continue to play our part both domestically and on a global stage. Recently, I launched the Africa Green Industrialisation Initiative in partnership with the UAE and several other African Heads of State at COP-28 in Dubai. The goal of the Initiative is to enable businesses to be built rapidly in

Kenya using our renewable energy resources and all across Africa.

47. In keeping with our commitment to correct the market failure in provision of affordable credit, especially to those who have no access to any collateral, and to free five million Kenyans trapped in the credit rating mess, the Hustler Fund has grown to become the largest financial inclusion programme in Kenya, disbursing KSh42 billion to more than 21 million borrowers.
48. A week ago, we celebrated the Hustler Fund's first anniversary. Borrowers on the fund have saved KSh2 billion with a repayment rate of 75% nationally. As promised, we have already enhanced credit limits for over 1.2 million borrowers and spent KSh500 million to match long-term savings on a ratio of KSh1 for every KSh2 saved. At the end of this month, every saver will be paid an attractive interest rate of 12% on their savings. Over 7.7 million are regular borrowers on the Hustler Fund platform. The fund will be enhanced from next month with specific financial products to provide additional enterprise and business facilities for existing mama mboga and boda boda saccoes.
49. We undertook to build a culture of savings in Kenya as an effort to create long-term investment resources to fund our growth and development and provide better retirement for Kenyans. The new NSSF contribution model has enhanced monthly contributions by four and a half times. The fund will therefore raise an additional KSh400 billion in the next five years, tripling the value from KSh320 billion to over KSh1 trillion by 2027.
50. Furthermore, our countrymen and women no longer have to wait for over three months to receive their retirement benefits. Owing to digitisation and automation, NSSF benefit processing turnaround time has improved significantly, from an average of 82 days to 10 days with further reduction in the processing period to within a day in the next one year.

51. We are undertaking the expansion of retirement benefits coverage to the 15 million Kenyans currently active in the informal sector through product innovation and bottom-up enrolment strategies at the grassroots level.
52. We made a commitment to our dear citizens, who are elderly, orphaned and those who live with severe disability, that they shall receive their social protection stipends before public servants, including the President, receive their salaries. We have kept our word and delivered on this commitment. Consequently, all 1,233,149 eligible beneficiaries now receive their stipend on time. We have allocated an additional KSh2 billion for newly enrolled beneficiaries who are undergoing verification and will begin to receive their stipends beginning March next year.
53. This programme has had challenges with the beneficiaries travelling long distances and spending considerable portions of their stipend on logistics. Working with Safaricom, we have structured a new delivery mechanism for beneficiaries to receive their stipends from MPESA agents in their localities. Orphans and persons with severe disability will begin using this new mechanism beginning this month. The elderly will start in January. We commend Safaricom for providing this service free of charge.
54. Kenyans are doing their part to support the effort to stabilise and grow the economy. Their sacrifices and contributions are essential and must be honoured. We are therefore taking strong measures to ensure that all revenue is administered transparently, efficiently and in a secure manner. One of our best interventions is the use of digital technology and the migration of government revenue collection to a single paybill. Since this measure was implemented, we have witnessed a significant rise

in total revenues collected. Besides enhancing revenue collection, digitisation has eliminated revenue leakages through corruption and theft. It is important that we sustain this progress in promoting integrity, transparency and efficiency in revenue management. And for this reason, I direct that all agencies observe the December 31 deadline to finalise the migration to the e-Citizen platform.

55. It is only right that I match this admirable commitment by the people of Kenya to do their part in getting the economy going, and give an assurance that all taxes collected by the government shall be put to their intended use and that no single shilling – not one shilling - shall be lost through embezzlement, theft or corruption.
56. I urge our justice, law and order institutions, led by the Judiciary and the anti-corruption agencies, to discharge their mandate without fear, favour, ill-will or prejudice. I also give my personal undertaking to support the prosecution of all those involved in corruption, without regard to their social, economic or political status or connections, ethnicity or any other consideration whatsoever. This is the minimum that is expected of us in fulfilment of our constitutional mandate, and Kenyans deserve no less.
57. The story of our nation's sovereignty cannot be fully told without mentioning the fundamental guarantor of our territorial integrity, economic prosperity, political democracy, the rule of law and the integrity of our social fabric.
58. Our national security apparatus has remained a strong shield against terrorism, crime and insecurity. As we continue to invest citizen's resources into the security sector, we continue to expect continuous improvement in its overall capacity to keep our nation's boundaries inviolable, our people's lives and property safe and secure.

59. I cannot forget the public service. Every member of our civil service has been entrusted with a rare opportunity to make their unique contribution to national transformation. As such, they are at a most advantageous position to demonstrate our national values and principles of governance for the benefit of Kenyans. Today, I appreciate you for being loyal servants, dependable professionals and true patriots, and urge you to do more as our people's partners in transformation.
60. Much has been given you by the people of Kenya and, therefore, much more is expected of you. On behalf of the people, I shall therefore hold you to the highest standards of efficiency, effectiveness, transparency and accountability in serving our nation.
61. Infrastructure development is a critical enabler for transformation of agriculture, delivery of health, job creation and overall economic growth. As a result, our investment in road and rail network, electricity generation and connection, and water harvesting, storage and reticulation continue to be a critical component of our development strategy. A comprehensive multi-year plan is progressively being implemented to support the overall socio-economic development of the country.
62. Our world, and the good in it, belongs to those who are not shy to embrace globalisation. Kenyans have shown, time and again, that we are not afraid of the world beyond our borders. We venture abroad fearlessly and warmly welcome our visitors from near and far. This is not by accident. The scientific historic account of early humanity is told by various archaeological sites in our country. In short, we are the first home of all humanity, and we joyfully embrace our ancestral task of welcoming humanity home.

63. Kenya is the home of humanity, a scientific fact that fills us with pride and underscores our rich heritage. It is with great pleasure, as President of this extraordinary country, to make a historic announcement of the decision of the Government of Kenya. Beginning January 2024, Kenya will be a visa-free country. It shall no longer be necessary for any person from any corner of the globe to carry the burden of applying for a visa to come to Kenya. To echo the call of the Turkana people to the world: "Tobong'u Lorre!" Kenya has a simple message to humanity: Welcome Home! This is why, the Government has abolished the requirement of visas for all our visitors. To implement this new policy, we have developed a digital platform to ensure that all travellers to Kenya are identified in advance on an electronic platform. All travellers will obtain electronic travel authorisation.
64. I have set out an account clearly showing that although much remains to be done to bring economic progress up to the level of political maturity, and to transform our economy to the rank of our historical peers globally, we nevertheless have real cause to celebrate the contributions made by each one of us to the collective national endeavour to perfect our sovereignty in keeping with the aspirations of the brave and indomitable patriots who set us on this path to national glory.
65. We must now go forth with greater resolve, inspired by the heroic achievements of those who came before us, affirmed by the confidence that our work matters for increasing our heritage and glory, encouraged by the progress we are making, and determined to accomplish our generations solemn obligation to make this nation a true jamhuri of the people: Free, prosperous, secure and democratic.

I take this early opportunity to wish every citizen of Kenya, and all our friends near and far, a merry Christmas and a prosperous 2024.

