



REPUBLIC OF KENYA

THIRTEENTH PARLIAMENT

**JOINT SITTING OF THE NATIONAL
ASSEMBLY AND THE SENATE**

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THE HANSARD

JOINT SITTING OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY AND THE SENATE

*(Convened vide Gazette Notices No.14829 of 13th November,
2024 and No.15327 of 18th November, 2024)*

Thursday, 21st November 2024

(Parliament met at 2.40 p.m. in the National Assembly Chamber)

ARRIVAL OF HIS EXCELLENCY THE PRESIDENT

*(His Excellency President William Ruto entered the Chamber escorted by the Speaker of the
National Assembly and the Speaker of the Senate)*

*(The Mace of the National Assembly and the Mace
of the Senate were placed on the Table)*

(The National Anthem and the EAC Anthem were played)

PRAYERS

COMMUNICATION FROM THE CHAIR

CONVENING OF JOINT SITTING FOR PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS TO PARLIAMENT

The Speaker of the Senate (Hon. Amason Kingi): Order, Hon. Members. Let us all be seated.

Your Excellency, Hon. (Dr.) William Samoei Ruto, CGH., President of the Republic of Kenya and Commander-in-Chief of the Defence Forces; the Rt. Hon. Dr. Moses Wetangula EGH, MP, Speaker of the National Assembly; Hon. Members of Parliament, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen, Article 132(1)(b), of our Constitution provides that the President shall address a Special Sitting of Parliament once every year, and may address Parliament at any other time.

Article 132(1)(c) of our Constitution further provides that the President shall, among others, once every year, report in an address to the nation all the measures taken and the progress made or achieved in the realisation of the national values referred to in Article 10 of the Constitution.

In addition, Article 240(7) of the Constitution requires the President, in his capacity as the Chairperson of the National Security Council to report to Parliament annually on the state of security in Kenya.

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In this regard, the Chief of Staff and Head of Public Service, vide a letter referenced No.EOP/CAB.26/4a Vol. 4(178), dated 9th September, 2024, informed the Speakers of the Houses of Parliament of the intention of His Excellency the President, to address Parliament.

Consequently, and upon consultation, the address to Parliament by His Excellency the President was scheduled for today, Thursday, 21st November, 2024.

Pursuant to Standing Order 25(2) of the Senate Standing Orders, I notified Hon. Senators of the place, date and time of today's Special Sitting vide Gazette Notice No.14829, which was published in the Kenya Gazette on Friday, 15th November, 2024.

Further, together with the Rt. Hon. Speaker of the National Assembly, I notified all Members of Parliament and the general public of today's special sitting vide notices placed in three local newspapers, yesterday, Wednesday, 20th November, 2024.

Accordingly, Hon. Members, this Special Sitting is properly convened.

I thank you.

The Speaker of the National Assembly (Hon. Moses Wetangula): Your Excellency, Hon. Dr. William Samoei Ruto, CGH., President of the Republic of Kenya and Commander-in-Chief of the Defence Forces; the Rt. Hon. Amason King EGH., MP, Hon. Speaker of the Senate; Hon. Members of Parliament; members of the Diplomatic Corps; Distinguished Guests; Ladies and Gentlemen, Article 132(1)(b) of the Constitution requires the President to address the nation once every year, and at any other time.

Further, Article 132(1)(c) of the Constitution requires the President to once every year report in an address to the nation on measures taken and progress achieved in the realisation of our national values.

Additionally, Article 132(1)(c)(iii) of the Constitution provides that the President shall submit a report for debate to the National Assembly on the progress made in fulfilling the international obligations of the Republic.

In this regard, Hon. Members, by way of a Message to the House, His Excellency the President conveyed his desire to address a Joint Sitting of the Houses of Parliament today, 21st November, 2024.

Therefore, pursuant to the provisions of Standing Order 22 of the National Assembly Standing Orders and by Gazette Notice No.15327, which was published in the Kenya Gazette on 18th November, 2024, and indeed has also notified all members of the general public, by way of newspaper notification published on 20th November, 2024, I gave a notice of this Special Sitting of Parliament to the Members of the National Assembly.

Accordingly, Hon. Members, this Special Sitting is properly convened.

Your Excellency, Hon. Members, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, this year's President's Address comes at a time when the country is set to host the 14th Edition of the East African Community Inter-Parliamentary Games. The Inter-Parliamentary Games shall bring together participants from the Member States of the East African Community and the East African Legislative Assembly and are part of the deepening, widening, and tightening of the integration process. The games are scheduled to commence next month on 7th December, 2024 in Mombasa County and all is set in readiness for these games.

Moving on, Your Excellency, it is in the custom of Parliament to recognize invited guests seated in our galleries. I, therefore, wish to recognize the following guests who are seated in the Speaker's Row.

1. Her Excellency Mama Rachel Ruto, First Lady of the Republic of Kenya, and other members of the First Family

2. His Excellency, Hon. Professor Kithure Kindiki, the Deputy President of the Republic of Kenya and the spouse of the Deputy President, Her Excellency Dr. Joyce Kithure.
3. Hon. Musalia Mudavadi, EGH., the Prime Cabinet Secretary and Cabinet Secretary, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Diaspora Affairs.

(Applause)

Your Excellency, Hon. Members, also present in the Speaker's Row this afternoon is the Hon. Lady Justice Philomena Mbete-Mwilu, MGH., Deputy Chief Justice and Vice-President of the Supreme Court. She is accompanied by Hon. Justice Mohamed K. Ibrahim and Justice William Ouko, Judges of the Supreme Court of Kenya.

Also accompanying the Deputy Chief Justice are; Hon. Justice Oscar Angote, Presiding Judge of the Environment and Land Court, Hon. Lady Justice Jemima Wanza Kelly, Judge of the Employment and Labour Relations Court.

(Applause)

We are also honoured to have in our midst the immediate former Speakers of the Houses of Parliament: The Hon. Justin Bedan Njoka Muturi, EGH, the Cabinet Secretary for Public Service and Human Capital Development; and Hon. Kenneth Marende, EGH., Hon. Kenneth Makelo Lusaka, EGH, the current Governor of Bungoma County and Hon. Ekwe Ethuro.

(Applause)

Additionally, we also are pleased to be hosting a delegation visiting our Parliament from the Republic of Gambia.

(Applause)

Your Excellency, allow me to also recognize the Chairperson of the Council of Governors (CoG) who is also the Governor of Wajir County; Hon. Ahmed Abdullahi, and Hon. Johnson Sakaja, the Governor of Nairobi City County.

(Applause)

May I also accord special recognition to all Cabinet Secretaries present and particularly acknowledge four of them, who are former ranking Members of the Houses of Parliament; namely, Hon. Aden Duale, EGH, the former leader of the Majority Party in the National Assembly; Hon. Onesmus Murkomen, EGH, the former Senate Majority Leader; Hon. John Mbadi, EGH and Hon. Opiyo Wandayi, EGH; both former leaders of the Minority in the National Assembly.

(Applause)

I need not mention that His Excellency the Deputy President is a former Leader of Majority in the Senate.

(Applause)

I also acknowledge the presence of Mr. Felix Kosgei, Chief of Staff and Head of the Public Service, Principal Secretaries, members of the Diplomatic Corps, and Heads of Constitutional Commissions and Independent Offices and State Corporations present. They are all welcome to the House of Parliament.

Your Excellency, I wish to make a special welcome to Parliament and mention the Chief of the Kenya Defence Forces, General Daniel Kahariri, who is present; and the respective Service Commanders, the Inspector General of Police and other leaders of our disciplined forces who are seated at the Speaker's Row. Parliament is grateful for your distinguished service to our great nation.

(Applause)

To all invited guests, we say *karibuni sana kwa Bunge letu*.

Your Excellency, Hon. Members, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, it is now my singular honour and privilege to invite His Excellency the President of the Republic of Kenya and Commander-in-Chief of the Defence Forces to address this Special Sitting of Parliament.

Welcome, Your Excellency.

(Applause)

PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS

ANNUAL PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS TO PARLIAMENT

His Excellency the President (Hon. (Dr.) William Ruto): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, Sir.

The Hon. Speakers of Parliament, the Hon. Members, distinguished ladies and gentlemen. I am honoured to address you today in the fulfilment of the mandate vested in me under Article 132(1)(c) of the Constitution; to report to you and to the people of Kenya on the measures we have taken, and the progress we have made in realising our national values and principles of governance; and to submit to you, Hon. Members, the progress made in fulfilling our international obligations.

Since my last Address, Kenya has undergone rapid change occasioned by the collective awakening of the people in the understanding that the state of nation depends on the work we do individually and collectively. This realisation extends not only to what we choose to undertake, but to also how we go about securing careers, livelihoods and contributing to the grand enterprise of nation-building.

There has never been doubt and now there is none whatsoever, that Kenya is a land of bold ambition with our citizens always desiring and insisting on the best possible standards, not only for themselves, but also for their families and for our nation.

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Consequently, our democracy has empowered citizens to ask questions and demand changes in the way their affairs are managed, driving the wheels of our nation's social, political and economic transformation faster in the direction of excellence and prosperity.

Rare are the times when the leadership is ahead of the people. We are always striving to steer the machinery of the state and Government to keep pace with the aspirations of our citizens. We have learnt through the hard way as well as the more customary ways, that listening is a full-time occupation of leadership and that all questions asked by the people must be answered thoroughly and in full. We have learnt never to take anything for granted and make every effort to call all our people and to carry all our people along with us in the pursuit of our transformation.

The context in which I make this National Address is not only significantly different from previous occasions, but it is also a singular moment with unique historical implications for us all. It is an opportunity to affirm the principles and values of which our nation stands, review the steps we have taken, the path we have chosen in our journey of national development and reinforce the commitments we have made to one another and to our beloved nation for the sake of the present and future generations.

I do not take this for granted and with utmost respect and humility before this august Assembly of the people's elected representatives; I desire to respond to the most pressing concerns that have been raised by Kenyans of all walks of life in recent months. To my understanding, the concerns and issues voiced by millions of Kenyans about the state of our nation deserve meaningful engagement, a thorough understanding and a thoughtful response.

There are discussions about whether leaders understand the pain, hardship and struggles endured by countless citizens every day as they strive to make ends meet and whether the Government is doing anything about it. Similarly, many struggling Kenyans impatiently wonder when will real money get to their pockets and when will the jobs promised, which they deserve become a reality.

Additionally, there have been conversations about our education system, particularly the transition to the Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC) and whether policies in this sector are working for or against Kenyans.

Important questions have also been raised concerning the direction of development in relation to democracy, human rights and fundamental freedoms as well as the rule of law, transparency and accountability.

Another more direct question that emerges every now and then is whether public policy in this administration is in furtherance of service delivery to citizens or just in aid of political strategy.

It is undeniable that for many Kenyans, times are hard and the struggle to meet their daily basic needs remains daunting. It is also true that these conditions have persisted for a number of years now leading to much frustration and anxiety.

Although we have gone a long way to mitigate some of these difficulties, much remains to be done. Though we have laid a firm foundation for decisive intervention, I believe that it is critical for us to bear in mind that this administration was inaugurated at an extremely difficult time characterized by domestic challenges, compounded by regional and global security, geopolitical, financial as well as climate dynamics.

As a result, in 2022, the country's total debt burden was not only immense, but was also stacked up in the most burdensome manner, leaving very little room for investments in public service or development of critical infrastructure. The prices of basic food commodities soared

due to a combination of prolonged drought, declining local productivity due to inadequate support and disruptions in the global supply chain caused by the war in Europe.

Kenya faced a crossroads of extremely difficult choices, where defaulting on our obligations would have significantly worsened an already perilous situation, and more borrowing was not an option. It was, therefore, essential for us to drastically reduce expenditure, mobilise as much as possible resources domestically and curtail waste. As I informed the nation then, matters would get more difficult before they could get better and we all had to tighten our belts and work hard under unforgiving conditions.

We had staked the fate of our ambitious Bottom-up Economic Transformation Agenda (BETA) on easing the stress that the economy was in and the strain citizens underwent while creating room for implementing our transformative interventions.

Hon. Members, I give this background to underscore two very important facts. First, we have not been watching helplessly and doing nothing as adversity took a toll on the economy and undermined the livelihoods and well-being of the people. On the contrary, we have been working tirelessly to steer the country away from the brink of unprecedented economic collapse and onto a more promising trajectory.

The second point is that while we may not be where we would like to be, we are certainly not where we were two and a quarter years ago. At the same time, the cost of living was substantially high, with prices of basic commodities beyond the reach of many households.

Today, I am proud to report that the macroeconomic indicators point to a positive turnaround and an upward trajectory. Allow me to highlight a few milestones that underscore this progress. The shilling has stabilised significantly, appreciating from Kshs162 to the dollar in February 2024 to Kshs129 today, a remarkable gain of 20 per cent.

This recovery has restored confidence in our financial markets and significantly reduced the cost of servicing external debt, creating physical space for our development imperatives. Inflation has declined dramatically from 9.6 per cent in September 2022 to 2.7 per cent in October this year, the lowest rate in 17 years. This achievement has been the consequence of favourable weather and our deliberate efforts to support farmers with affordable inputs, including subsidised fertiliser, leading not only to increased production, but also productivity and lowering the prices of many cereals, including maize and pulses, such as beans and peas.

Our foreign exchange reserves have surged by US dollars 2.4 billion to hit a new record of US dollars 9.5 billion, providing a 4.8 month of import cover, the highest in 10 years. This resilience shields us from external shocks in the global economy and restores investor confidence.

Ladies and gentlemen, interest rates are also trending downwards, reducing borrowing costs and freeing up fiscal space for growth-enhancing initiatives by businesses.

Tax revenues have grown by 11.5 per cent in the year to June 2024, reflecting the success of our tax-base expansion measures. The economy continues to grow steadily, recording a 5.6 per cent growth rate in 2023 among the highest globally. We project 5 per cent growth this year and 5.6 per cent growth next year.

Hon. Members, our efforts to secure food security and stability are already bearing fruit. Since February, we have distributed subsidised fertiliser to 6.45 million registered farmers in 45 counties, enabling them to increase their yields. This year, we have procured and through e-vouchers distributed seven million bags of both planting and top-dressing fertiliser to boost food production across the country.

This intervention will see a projected increase in maize production, for example, to a record 74 million 90-kilogramme bags. We have also concluded long-term agreements with 11 suppliers of assorted fertilisers to make this commodity available all year round. Fertiliser for the long rain season will be stocked in outlets nationwide ensuring our farmers are ready to plant, grow and produce.

This forward momentum will not only increase our agricultural output, but also reduce our reliance on costly food imports, securing a more self-reliant and a more prosperous Kenya. This approach, rooted in my administration's policy to support production rather than subsidised consumption, has already made food more accessible and more affordable to many households. Today, Kenya boasts substantial national stocks.

About 47 million bags of 90-kilogramme bags of maize are in our stores, 8.8 million bags of beans, 10.4 million bags of wheat, and 2.1 million bags of rice. Slowly but, surely, we are building a food-secure Kenya where families need not worry or worry less about their next meal.

In the sugar sector, we have achieved a historic milestone. All 17 sugar factories across Kenya are operational, producing at impressive levels, while four new sugar factories are under construction. In July alone, domestic sugar production reached 84,000 metric tonnes, surpassing the national monthly consumption average of 40,000 metric tonnes. For the first time in recent history, Kenya is producing enough sugar to meet our local demand.

This success is attributed to many factors; subsidised fertiliser for sugar cane farmers, an additional 500,000 acres that has been brought under production and improved management of the sugar sector, which has revitalised production and brought the industry back to life. I just signed, as you know, the new sugar laws to provide further policy guidance as we seek to be a sugar-exporting country shortly.

In the coffee sector, we are on track to increase exports from 51,000 metric tonnes this year to 150,000 metric tonnes by 2027.

The Government has also raised disbursements from the Cherry Advance Fund from Kshs2.7 billion to Kshs6 billion, complemented by an additional disbursement of Kshs1.5 billion by the Commodities Fund. Average prices of the Nairobi Coffee Exchange have risen by 25 per cent. In the last financial year, the country produced and exported 48,000 metric tonnes, earning farmers Kshs25 billion.

Additionally, 320,000 bags of fertiliser have been allocated specifically for the coffee sector. We will be working with cooperatives to make sure this fertiliser is distributed at the nearest possible destination to the farmers. These interventions are expected to boost smallholder farmer earnings from Kshs300,000 to Kshs500,000 per acre annually by the year 2027.

Hon. Members, the dairy sector remains a vital value chain with a quick turnaround impact on households in the economy. The Government of Kenya has released, and you, Members, approved Kshs3 billion to modernize the New KCC, ensure farmers are paid on time and maintain a high price of Kshs50 per litre. As a result, intake to KCC has increased from 100,000 litres a day to 220,000 litres a day by last month.

(Applause)

Other strategic interventions include the extension of duty-free imports for feed manufacturing raw materials, subsidized Artificial Insemination services and the reduction of sexed semen costs from Kshs7,000 to Kshs2,900 through the Kenya Animal Genetic Resource Centre.

These measures have led to a 14 per cent increase in milk production, from 4.6 billion litres in 2022 to 5.2 billion litres in 2023, with projections exceeding 6 billion litres this year.

The value of exported dairy products has nearly doubled, rising from Kshs4.8 billion in 2022 to Kshs7.2 billion in 2023. These gains demonstrate how targeted policies can deliver tangible benefits to dairy farmers and drive growth in our economy.

Hon. Members, by 2022, the education sector was in a crisis with a lack of clarity in transition to the Competency Based Curriculum (CBC), a shortage of 110,000 teachers and 23 out of 40 public universities were technically bankrupt and at risk of closure.

Among those facing severe challenges were huge institutions such as my own alma mater, the University of Nairobi, Kenyatta University, Moi University, Egerton University, Maseno University and Masinde Muliro University.

To address this issue in our education sector, we have already hired, as you know Members, 56,000 teachers and are in the process of recruiting another 20,000 by January next year.

(Applause)

We have also ensured the seamless transition of learners from primary to junior secondary and domiciled Grades 7, 8 and 9 in primary school, optimizing the use of existing infrastructure, ensuring the safety of young learners and protecting parents from the high costs associated with boarding schools far away.

Recognizing the financial challenges faced by our universities and Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET), we introduced a new student-centred higher education funding model. This model gives priority to the most vulnerable students, offering them up to 95 per cent government support, while also pulling our universities back from the brink of collapse.

The remaining challenges for a few universities such as Moi University, are related to internal administrative and governance issues, which I have given firm instructions that they should be addressed.

(Applause)

To further enhance access to higher education, we launched the Open University of Kenya, and this House approved that exercise, paving the way for more students to achieve their academic goals. The institution's first cohort of students is scheduled to graduate next week, on 29th November, 2024.

Hon. Members, Universal Health Coverage (UHC), is the cornerstone of our transformation agenda and a matter that touches every Kenyan family. Despite Health being a devolved function, we acknowledge the immense financial burden that comes with health. Counties have struggled with shortages of medicine, equipment, and sometimes staff, hindering service delivery and leaving countless Kenyans with sub-optimal access to healthcare.

It would have been easy for me to step back and leave this responsibility to counties alone, but that would have been a disservice to Kenyans and a betrayal to our Constitution. Instead of engaging in debates about healthcare being devolved, I have chosen the hardest, but necessary path of addressing this challenge head on.

(Applause)

Health delivery is not just about fulfilling a constitutional mandate followed by whatever level of government. It is about ensuring that healthcare is not a privilege for the few who can afford and a pipe dream for the many that cannot.

For years, National Hospital Insurance Fund (NHIF) was saddled with debts and inefficiencies, and healthcare was being severely and negatively impacted. For far too long, too many households have lived on the edge, just one inch less away from financial catastrophe.

Our healthcare system has historically neglected the poor and vulnerable, leaving them without any option, while private sector medical coverage remained out of reach for the majority. This is precisely what we will correct through the provision of universal health coverage.

This agenda is not just about a promise; it is about a bold commitment to deliver health through transformative financing reforms, making healthcare accessible and affordable, digitizing our healthcare services to enhance efficiency, eliminate fraud and stop corruption, and to empower a skilled and motivated health workforce.

To honour our commitment on the UHC, I signed into law four groundbreaking legislations on the 19th October, 2024, passed by this august House. The Social Health Insurance Act replaced the outdated National Hospital Insurance Fund (NHIF) and established the Social Health Authority (SHA), which oversees three essential funds.

This modern framework ensures that every Kenyan, especially the most vulnerable, can access quality healthcare services when they need it most. The shift from the NHIF model to Taifa Care is fundamental and radical in both skill and character.

If I may give you a bit of example, NHIF served a few salaried Kenyans and those who could afford to pay, but Taifa Care covers every Kenyan, regardless of employment or financial status.

Secondly, despite serving a limited class of citizens, NHIF nevertheless accumulated billions of shillings of debt because of misalignment between contributions and the actual cost of healthcare.

Taifa Care has undertaken an accurate costing of all healthcare-related goods and services in order to provide affordable, timely, effective, and efficient service to every Kenyan.

Additionally, the NHIF had a waiting period lasting between registration and eligibility for service; I think it was about three months. Under Taifa Care, citizens are eligible for all services upon registration.

I, therefore, urge every Kenyan to take the most important step in securing dependable healthcare for themselves and their families - register. Register now, or at the earliest possible opportunity.

(Applause)

Hon. Members, for the first time in our nation's history, free primary healthcare is increasingly becoming available at dispensaries, health centres and hospitals. Ambulance and emergency services are also slowly, but surely being made available at no fee.

Under the Taifa Care, we have introduced a comprehensive benefits package that brings specialized care, such as cardiothoracic surgery, within reach for many Kenyans without the burden of financial strain. Through the Digital Health Act, we are revolutionizing healthcare delivery. Every step of the process, from registration, eligibility checks to claims is now

digitized. By eliminating unnecessary human interaction, we are tackling corruption, reducing inefficiencies and ensuring that resources are used where they are needed most.

As a result, the good news is, SHA will pay all October claims in full by next week and it will continue like that going into the future.

(Applause)

To date, over 15 million Kenyans have enrolled in Taifa Care and more than 60 per cent of employers have successfully transitioned into its framework.

The newly established Social Health Insurance Fund (SHIF) empowers citizens to contribute towards accessing a broad range of healthcare benefits. This represents a seismic change from the old reactive healthcare model to a forward-looking system that prioritises prevention and preparedness.

Once the transition from NHIF is complete and SHIF becomes fully operational, Kenya will have a healthcare system that guarantees dignity, peace of mind and equitable access for every citizen for the first time in our 60 years of Independence.

Hon. Members, we have launched an ambitious healthcare programme, one that Kenya has always needed and deserved. Like any major transition, there are challenges, but I promise you, we are fully committed to making the system work.

(Applause)

As we roll out this programme, we are listening to citizen voices and collaborating with counties to deliver better healthcare services. Through the Facility Improvement Fund (FIF), which you in this House passed, we will ensure that hospitals are equipped with the tools they need; medicine, equipment and other resources necessary to provide quality care, while involving citizens in decision-making at every facility.

We are now doing the heavy lifting, clearing decade-old debts, ensuring access to medicine and equipment and stabilizing a system that has failed too many for too long. We are building a healthcare system that serves every citizen with equity and dignity.

Over the past month, we have disbursed Kshs5 billion to settle historical debts owed to the public, private and faith-based medical facilities, some of which have been pending for over a decade. Another Kshs3.7 billion will be disbursed tomorrow.

(Applause)

This underscores our commitment to ensuring uninterrupted delivery of healthcare services and we will continue to clear the remaining balances in a phased-out approach over the coming months. This sustained effort aims to restore confidence in the healthcare system and ensure seamless access of quality services.

Hon. Members, there is a compelling body of data projecting that not only is the future of humanity urban, but also that Africa has the fastest rate of urbanization. Kenya is no exception. In fact, many of our counties are urbanizing rapidly.

Dear Kenyans, we have a date with an urban future and the only choice we have is what this urban future will look like. Will it be characterized by decent, dignified, safe and liveable

neighbourhoods and communities, or will it be haphazard, unsanitary, unsafe slum dwellings? This is the fundamental question that our Affordable Housing plan seeks to answer.

Kenya has a serious housing deficit and the cost of housing is beyond the reach of the majority. While the social and economic efforts of this shortage are far-reaching, rent as a component of the cost of living is unsustainable. People are forced to choose between enduring long, punishing commutes to faraway homes or taking up less desirable spaces within reach. Supplying the number of units required to fill the affordable housing gap requires us to undertake construction throughout the country at the rate of 200,000 new housing units every year for 10 years.

Many people have asked why they should be interested in affordable housing projects in rural areas. If you look around, you will witness the signs of our urban future. Land sizes are becoming smaller as the population grows in rural agricultural areas. To protect agriculture and food security from the effects of uncontrolled land fragmentation, urbanization must be planned and controlled.

The Affordable Housing Programme is, therefore, a vital component of integrated land use planning and development programme that we are implementing throughout the country and in every county. Each unit of housing drives demand for different types of labour, professional services and materials, bringing labourers, masons, bricklayers, artisans, electricians, carpenters, as well as architects, engineers, quantity surveyors, lawyers and real estate economists into the equation.

The Affordable Housing Programme is also a major opportunity for manufacturers, developers and other industries. In other words, the economic boost from housing pillar of our Bottom-up Economic Transformation Agenda is significant and undeniably much needed. As we speak, the Affordable Housing Programme now directly accounts for 164,000 new jobs created over the past one year.

Hon. Members, today marks a significant milestone in our journey towards providing decent and affordable housing for all. After two years of hard work under the Affordable Housing Programme, I am proud to announce, and you have seen it in the newspapers, the launch of the sale of the first 4,888 housing units now in completion across 21 social housing projects. These units, comprising studios, one-bedroom, two-bedroom and three-bedroom homes are tailored to meet the needs of our people, offering 1,041 social housing units, 2,133 affordable housing units and 1,714 affordable mid-class housing units in 24 counties.

I invite every Kenyan above the age of 18 to join this historic journey towards home ownership, guided by our principle of fairness; one Identity Card (ID), one house. Every eligible Kenyan is encouraged to express interest, visit these developments, view the show houses and engage with on-site staff who are already too willing to assist. The allocation process will be transparent and equitable, ensuring that every qualified applicant has an equal opportunity to own a home.

Hon. Members, as part of the Government's endeavour to build a nation grounded in intergenerational equity opportunities and empowerment for all Kenyans, we have made significant strides in implementing another key pillar of our manifesto; labour migration. This initiative seeks to harness Kenya's abundant human capital by creating meaningful job opportunities abroad, empowering our citizens and positioning Kenyan talent on the global stage. Since July, 2023, we have successfully facilitated employment of 105,367 Kenyans across multiple countries in a wide range of jobs.

(Applause)

These opportunities span professional, semi-skilled, skilled and unskilled sectors, including positions for nurses, teachers and chefs. The National Employment Authority (NEA), the lead agency driving our ambitious initiative to create job opportunities for qualified Kenyans locally and internationally, currently has a role of 560,000 job openings worldwide.

I have encouraged many Members to participate in this space. Our focus extends beyond destinations such as the United Kingdom (UK), Canada, Australia, Bahrain, Oman, United Arab Emirates (UAE), Germany, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Qatar.

We are also expanding our reach by actively negotiating bilateral labour agreements with new potential markets, including Russia, Poland and Jordan. These efforts are driven by our commitment to open up new pathways for employment, ensuring that Kenyans are well represented in the global workforce.

In the digital economy, we are expanding last mile fiber optic connectivity using the extensive Kenya Power transmission lines network to the most remote and underserved areas of Kenya and making significant strides to establish digital and Information Communication Technology (ICT) hubs. This has created a foundation for digital transformation, enabling Information Technology (IT) economy workers, young digital creators and entrepreneurs to access a wealth of opportunities locally and globally.

By bridging the digital divide, we are empowering our youth to compete on an equal footing in the global marketplace and showcasing Kenya's ingenuity and innovation. I congratulate members of this august House for being part of this grand digital plan. Your support, encouragement and effort is duly recognised.

(Applause)

We have also prioritised the empowerment of individuals within the informal sector by unlocking their potential through targeted investment. This includes accessible loans, capacity building programmes and regulatory reforms designed to ease growth. A notable achievement is the partnership with the banking industry, which I participated in a month ago. This extended an additional Kshs150 billion in loans to Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), complementing the Government's efforts to nurture this vital sector.

On financial inclusion, we have made remarkable progress through the Hustler Fund. To date, this innovative initiative has disbursed Kshs60 billion, benefiting 24.6 million Kenyans and mobilized over Kshs3.3 billion in savings. The Fund maintains a repeat customer base of 8.5 million beneficiaries, with a repayment rate of 79 per cent.

To mark the Fund's second anniversary, we have taken a bold step by launching a third product, specifically tailored for Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs). This new initiative will initially target two million beneficiaries who have demonstrated a strong credit history with the Fund.

By so doing, we aim to create a pathway for these entrepreneurs to transition into the formal banking system, thereby deepening financial inclusion and strengthening the SME sector. This milestone underscores our commitment to build a financially inclusive and economically resilient nation.

The progress we have made has been possible only because the people of Kenya have been courageous, strong, determined and patriotic. It has also been enabled by a number of early

interventions under our Bottom-Up Economic Transformation Agenda (BETA), and at the same time created space for us to implement the agenda in full.

As we proceed with the implementation, we expect to quickly capitalise on the gains we have secured and invest resources in the economy, with an emphasis on strategic pillars of our plan. As more projects get off the ground, more people get hired, liquidity levels improve, more money ends up in people's pockets.

Hon. Members, you know we are a democracy. Democracy is a founding principle and defining value of our nation. Democracy is a hard-won non-negotiable right and guarantees freedom that we are proud of and must always defend.

Our national democratic culture expresses itself energetically through robust discourse, boldly speaking truth to power and holding leadership to account. It is a tradition of fearless expression and vigorous public participation. This is who we are and there is nothing anyone can do about it.

We understand, therefore, that protests are always legitimate and permitted by the Constitution. Protests are conducted by citizens who are peaceful and unarmed. Assemblies, demonstrations and picketing to advance constitutionalism, increase accountability and defend the rule of law are constitutional imperatives.

Conversely, mobilisation in pursuit of criminal agenda, chaos and anarchy are explicitly forbidden because we all have a duty to defend our Republic, our Constitution and the rights of all people. The Government, in particular, must remain vigilant at all times against modern threats to the sovereignty and territorial integrity of our nation, as well as public order, peace and security.

(Applause)

In this digital era characterised by transformative innovations, including Artificial Intelligence (AI), it has never been easier to inform, educate and entertain the people. At the same time, it has never been easier to misinform, mislead, disinform, incite and alarm the public.

Criminals and subversive elements who infiltrate and hijack peaceful protests are a threat both to legitimate protesters and the public. Incidences of violent criminality in the name of protests threaten the safety of innocent people, public assets, private property and the social order. The tension here is stark.

We have a democracy which we are proud of, must defend and should defend by all means. At the same time, we have citizens whose lives and rights we must protect and a nation whose security, stability and prosperity we must safeguard.

The task at hand is complicated if citizens and state agencies dilute the distinction between the lawful and the criminal, the just and the unjust, thereby making it difficult to tell protesters and security officers from bandits, gangsters and criminals. It is only by following the law that we are able to achieve our aims and apportion accountability properly. It should not be possible for robbers and looters to escape accountability by claiming that they were taking part in a protest.

(Applause)

Likewise, it should not be possible for security officers to wound, maim or even kill citizens and claim that they were engaging violent criminals. We all have a duty to make the

necessary distinction and do so clearly to protect democratic expression and guarantee public safety and security.

I must now confront an issue of widespread concern regarding the relationship between citizens and the security services in the context of immense threat and intense political dynamism.

Numerous allegations have been made concerning disappearance of people during protests. A number of these cases have been resolved, while others have been uncovered as fake news, undermining efforts to find genuine cases of missing persons. A good number of alleged disappearances have also turned out to be arrests made by police officers. In such cases, the suspects have been duly arraigned in court.

I must, however, make it very clear that there is no attempt to justify or excuse illegal arrests. Such would be a serious threat to the life and liberty of citizens. I condemn any excessive or extrajudicial action, which puts the life and liberty of any person at risk, including disappearances and threats to life.

(Applause)

I urge all Kenyans with information about such cases to forward the information to the Directorate of Criminal Investigation (DPP) and to Independent Policing Oversight Authority (IPOA), where they suspect members of the police service to be implicated. I am aware, for example, that many of the cases that have been raised are being handled by the IPOA, an important step in accountability and justice.

Many citizens, as well as various organizations representing and championing women's rights and welfare, have expressed concern about gender-based violence and the increasing cases of killings of female victims by male criminals, motivated by primitive expressions of gender-based brutality and impunity. Left unaddressed, these incidences will cause the women of our nation to feel increasingly unsafe, even in their own homes.

(Applause)

This is both tragic and unacceptable. It also complicates, in disturbing ways, the struggle by Kenyan women for inclusion, equality, dignity, social justice, their rights and protection, a section of our society that has been marginalised for a long time.

(Applause)

I am aware that most of these cases of murder of women by men have been investigated and prosecuted. It is my hope that, in due course, those found culpable will face the full force of the law.

(Applause)

Hon. Members, it is time for each of us, political leaders, public officers, religious leaders, traditional institutions and family members, to do our part in raising boys into morally upright men. Men who will never need to affirm their masculinity at the expense of women, but instead contribute to making our society just, safe, equal and inclusive.

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I appreciate women leaders who have taken time to engage me and propose solutions to address this issue. I have held discussions with other leaders in Government and I have tasked the Deputy President, to reach out and facilitate collaborative, broad-based and multi-sectoral deliberations and recommend effective and radically transformative and affirmative action within the next six months.

(Applause)

This Parliament will recall that early in my tenure, I engaged the leadership of both Houses, with recommendations on a working formula to actualize meaningful inclusion of women in national leadership.

(Applause)

We must seriously question the drivers and the motives of resistance and reluctance to take the next step in actualizing the two-third gender rule. We must call out those who continue to sabotage this right of women to contribute to the governance of our nation. Women are not second-class citizens. They deserve equal representation at all levels.

(Applause)

Hon. Members, without a doubt every shilling of our national revenue matters and must be used to deliver maximum value to Kenyans. Wastage, corruption and the abuse of women in our office are grave risks to national transformation and a direct threat to the well-being of the people.

I have given my full commitment to serve as a responsible steward of public resources. To begin with, I have championed the automation and digitization of Government services and revenue collection to promote transparency, seal loopholes that lead to revenue losses, enhance accountability and eliminate opportunities for corruption, therefore improving efficiency, transparency and integrity.

I am delighted to report to this House on the dramatic improvements we have recorded by automating and digitizing our revenue collection and service delivery through e-Citizen. We have so far digitized 20,855 Government services, up from 350 in 2022, representing an increase of almost 6,000 per cent, while we have significantly improved revenue collection.

Take the case of Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS) whose total revenue for the year ending June 30th, 2023, was Kshs5.3 billion. Nonetheless, after implementing a digital revenue collection system, the revenue grew to Kshs7.6 billion in the year ending June 30th this year, representing a 43 percent increase. This initiative alone has firmly put the KWS on the path to self-sufficiency, freeing the corporation from reliance on exchequer support.

(Applause)

I commend the teams at KWS, as well as all other Government institutions that have leveraged technology and the digitization process to improve revenue collection. Under the Digital Health Act that you, Members, passed in this House, we are determined to enhance

efficiency and transparency provided by technology in the provision of health care services to eliminate fraud and fake claims.

Tax revenue mobilization by the Kenya Revenue Authority (KRA), starting with its customs revenue system, is equally being worked on to ensure that revenue leaks are eliminated. Since corruption is a serious risk to social justice, sustainable development, national security and the bottom-up economic transformation agenda; I am harnessing our working relationship with other arms of Government to encourage the Judiciary and Parliament to enhance integrity and efficiency by adopting digitization and automation.

As I do so, I must caution, that all these measures will only achieve intended results if, and only if, the institutions charged with combating corruption and promoting efficiency and integrity stop hiding behind the transparent screen of independence and rise up to meet the people's expectation on matters integrity.

Let me say this, it cannot be the case that the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP) keeps dropping cases because somehow, they are unable to produce witnesses.

(Applause)

It cannot also be the case that corruption suspects rush to court to obtain anticipatory bail that shields them from due process and enables them to compromise investigations. There is also no reason for corruption cases to drag in our courts for years when the same courts are able to determine Election Petitions and related disputes within six months.

(Applause)

Members, it is also unacceptable for the Houses of Parliament to deny the nation a much-needed instrument in the war against corruption, by continuing to sabotage the passage of the Conflict of Interest Bill.

(Laughter)

I implore you, I implore you, hon. Members, to stop dragging your feet on this Bill, unless my friends, there is a conflict of interest in the passing of the Conflict of Interest Legislation.

(Laughter)

Similarly, the National Treasury has been dragging its feet in the implementation of an e-Procurement system for the last 10 years. Today, I have directed the National Treasury to roll out the e-procurement system by the end of the first quarter of 2025, and ensure that going forward, only procurement undertaken through this system is sanctioned and paid for.

Of the many difficult assignments I have undertaken, the fight against corruption is one I now take on with resolve, going forward. Let this serve as notice to all. Independent institutions charged with this responsibility must up their game, pull up their socks and match up to the expectations of the people of Kenya.

Hon. Members, I have stated in the past and now reiterate today that in the face of undisputed evidence or credible information on corruption, I will not hesitate to take decisive action.

Accordingly, I now direct in furtherance of the principles enshrined in Article 10 of the Constitution on transparency and accountability, and based on new information provided by investigative agencies and partner nations, that the procuring agencies within the Ministry of Transport and the Ministry of Energy and Petroleum, immediately cancel the ongoing procurement process for the Jomo Kenyatta International Airport (JKIA) expansion public-private partnership transaction. Let me let me repeat this for clarity.

(Applause)

I have said, because of the information that has been provided to us by partner nations, I have directed agencies within the Ministry of Transport and the Ministry of Energy and Petroleum to immediately cancel the ongoing procurement process for the JKIA expansion public-private partnership transaction as well as the recently concluded Kenya Electricity Transmission Company Limited (KETRACO) transmission in public-private partnership transaction, and immediately commence the process of onboarding alternative partners because these are important projects.

(Applause)

Hon. Members, the work of taking our nation forward is our collective responsibility as citizens. For this reason, we value the contribution of all, whether they come in the form of support or encouragement, suggestion or proposal, criticism or protest. I believe that the most powerful component of leadership is listening and learning.

Therefore, I engage with you and listen to all citizens, their elected leaders, public officers, administrators, teachers and other professionals, learners and the youth, farmers, fisher folk, pastoralists, traders, craftsmen, artisans, nurses, doctors, community health promoters and workers across all types of sectors in every sector.

I listen too to religious leaders, the civil society, industrialists, entrepreneurs and professionals. Their contributions and everyone else's have my full attention and commitment to respond through positive affirmative action that takes the national transformation endeavour forward. I commit to continue listening and acting to engage, debate, deliberate with you and to take your input into consideration in serving our nation.

By design, the bottom-up economic transformation agenda is defined by its capacity to elicit feedback in the course of implementation and incorporate the same in making improvements and further progress. With every input from stakeholders, our ability to drive progress increases. By listening to you and to every Kenyan, I am able to serve this nation better.

As we take part in this necessary discourse, I want to make one thing clear. That I am fully invested in the success of the strategies, policies, programmes and projects under our plan. For this reason, I am committed to do all it takes and work with every willing Kenyan until we succeed because failure is not an option.

Given the challenges our nation has faced, it has become clear, Hon. Members, that overcoming these obstacles requires the collective energy, wisdom, ideas and goodwill of Kenyans of all political, cultural persuasions, religious beliefs and walks of life. The wisdom of

entrenching national unity and inclusivity as a national value in our constitution is clearly evident. Our diversity is our source of power and this moment in the history of our nation calls for radical collaboration to transcend our challenges.

We do not have the luxury of magnifying our differences. It is time for all of us to pull together and usher the nation into the future of our dreams. With this in mind, I initiated extensive consultations with leaders from across all divides, public and private.

Through these engagements, we resolved to re-imagine unity and inclusivity and harness the full potential of our nation through bipartisanship, which culminated in the formation of the broad-based Cabinet. The imperative to accommodate the contribution of leaders across the aisle inspired us to constitute the broad-based government, a partnership based on shared purpose and premise on a commitment to bring our national values into action to turbo-charge the implementation of the transformation of our nation.

Being a farmer, transformation is like farming. A lot of resources are invested in ploughing the land and planting the seeds, after which there is nothing to see for all the work, except stretches of bare earth. Impatience might lead to anxiety and lamentation of the waste of effort in seed buried in the earth. However, after a brief wait, seedlings sprout, requiring close attention, weeding and patient tending into the crop that will be ready for harvest. So is economic transformation; it requires hard work, investment of resources, patience and faith. We have planted the seed and all over the field it is beginning to sprout.

While, admittedly, there remains much to fulfill, our collective hope to deliver the national economic transformation that this nation so dearly deserves, is on course. I am proud to declare that we have also made undeniable progress in building on the strong foundation laid in previous years and getting the national development project off the ground.

Hon. Members, from the reports that I have the honour to table for your consideration and debate, there is reason to be optimistic that our forward march is unstoppable, and that our capacity and commitment to live and work by our national values and principles of governance are stronger than ever before.

Our nation is a proud member of the international community, making our contributions to the global progress boldly and with great determination. We stand collectively facing the dawn with confidence that our expectations of a bright daylight are not in vain.

In summary, Hon. Members and all fellow citizens, the state of our nation is resilient. Hon. Speakers, it is my pleasure to submit to Parliament the following three reports as required by the Constitution-

- (1) Report on all measures taken and progress achieved in the realization of national values.
- (2) Report on progress made in fulfilling the international obligations of the Republic of Kenya.
- (3) Report on the state of our security.

Now therefore, I hand over the Reports to the Speaker of the Senate and to the Speaker of the National Assembly.

Thank you all. God bless you and God bless Kenya.

(Applause)

ADJOURNMENT

The Speaker of the Senate (Hon. Amason Kingi): Order, Hon. Members. Your Excellency the President, the Right Hon. Speaker of the National Assembly, Hon. Members, distinguished guests, please be upstanding.

We have come to the end of the business of the day and it is now time to adjourn.

The Senate stands adjourned until Tuesday, 26th November, 2024 at 2.30 p.m. in the Senate chamber.

The Speaker of the National Assembly (Hon. Moses Wetangula): Hon. Members of the National Assembly, the National Assembly now stands adjourned until Monday, 25th November, 2024 at 2.30 p.m.

I will repeat. The National Assembly stands adjourned until Monday, 25th November, 2024 at 2.30 p.m.

I also take this opportunity to invite all Hon. Members and our guests to a reception at the Parliament's courtyard.

I also request all of you, Hon. Members and our guests to remain standing in your places until the procession of His Excellency the President and the Speakers of the two Houses leave the Chamber.

DEPARTURE OF HIS EXCELLENCY THE PRESIDENT

*(Members of Parliament stood in their places while
His Excellency the President left the Chamber)*

Parliament rose at 4.03 p.m.

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