

REPUBLIC OF KENYA



SPEECH BY HIS EXCELLENCY HON. UHURU KENYATTA, C.G.H., PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF KENYA AND COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF OF THE DEFENCE FORCES DURING INTERNATIONAL YOUTH DAY HELD IN KWALE COUNTY ON 12TH AUGUST 2019

Fellow Kenyans

Ladies and Gentlemen

1) I am happy to join you in Kwale County today as we commemorate the International Youth Day 2019 under the **Theme: "*Transforming Education*"**. I thank you the people of Kwale for the warm welcome and for hosting this event. *Shukrani sana.*

2) This day was set aside by the United Nations' General Assembly because the international community of nations realized that for humanity to achieve sustainable and equitable development, every country must invest in the youth. This day presents us with the opportunity to reflect on how well our interventions in programmes and projects are achieving the desired goal of enhancing youth potential and agency.

3) The theme of this year's celebration is anchored on Goal Number 4 of the Sustainable Development Goals; this goal calls on Governments to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education that promotes lifelong learning opportunities for all. It invites us to examine how we are transforming education so that it becomes a powerful tool for the achievement of Sustainable Development. In Kenya, we have held weeklong activities that have highlighted efforts by multiple stakeholders to make education more inclusive, accessible and relevant for all youth.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

4) Last year, the theme of the celebrations centered on **creating safe spaces** for young people to harness and nurture their talents, creativity and potential. Tangible actions have been undertaken by the Ministry of Public Service, Youth and Gender to actualize the spirit of the conversations held with the youth last year. The Youth Empowerment Center we have commissioned this morning at Matuga is one such safe space. **150 other facilities are being rehabilitated country-wide**, to provide a friendly environment for our youth to engage in self-empowerment programs.

5) These centers are equipped with ICT and sporting infrastructure, as well as counseling services for the utility of young Kenyans. The centers will serve as avenues for acquisition of digital skills and promotion of talent, as well as routes for accessing information. They will ensure social inclusion and holistic development of the youth.

6) The commitment from the Ministry of Youth is to continue developing these facilities until there is a Youth Empowerment Center in every Sub-County as envisioned in our development agenda, Kenya Vision 2030.

7) **This year's celebrations** are timely for us because we in Cabinet, just approved the new **Kenya Youth Development Policy**. The policy prioritizes 8 areas on which efforts and resources meant for the youth of Kenya shall be focused in the next 5 years. These areas comprise a set of interventions that will help Kenya realize a youth population that is empowered, healthy, safe, competent, earning decent livelihoods, creative, innovative, patriotic, and participating in decision making, upholding ethical values, and protecting the environment. I urge on behalf of my colleagues that we all collaborate under the coordination framework provided to realize the goals set out in the policy.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

- 8)** It is our vision as a nation to attain and maintain a sustained economic growth of 10% per annum. To achieve this, we must create a globally competitive and adaptive human resource base that has the capacity and competence to meet the requirements of a rapidly industrializing economy. Indeed, the fourth industrial revolution is upon us.
- 9)** This year's theme of transforming education is indeed pertinent as it prompts us to ready ourselves for **a digital and industrial future** anchored on international standards in a globalized world. As a priority, therefore, steps are being taken to transform the education and skills sector to prepare the next generation for the future.
- 10)** The Government invests heavily in education to ensure **that every Kenyan regardless of sex or background acquires basic education skills.**

11) We are the 7th largest funder of Education in the world, relative to GDP, investing Ksh.300 billion annually in the sector¹. The transition rate from primary to secondary school is over 90% in majority of counties. Measures are being taken to close the gaps and ensure no child is left behind. We have taken deliberate steps to enhance technology training in our education system. Our aim is to ensure **that every Kenyan has literacy and know-how to use technology**. We are investing in the development of digital skills in the youth to meet the competencies and expertise required for the digital economy.

12) Some of the programs already under implementation in this regard include the digital literacy programme in primary schools; Ajira Digital programme; the Presidential Digital Talent Programme; creation of 102 STEM centers of excellence in public secondary schools; introduction of robotics science in model schools; and the training of teachers in the use of EV 3 robotic kits for teaching and learning.

¹ PDU: Education (www.delivery.go.ke/flagship)

13) These initiatives are geared towards ensuring that our young people acquire skills relevant to future jobs. **Further**, we are enhancing skills training to increase youth technical abilities for the future. We have established 152 new technical training institutions and increased training opportunities.

14) Consequently, student enrollment in TVETs has doubled from **127,691** in 2012 to **275,139** in 2017 according to a KIPPRA study conducted earlier this year. The TVETs have been equipped with new state of the art equipment and their curriculum has been reviewed to ensure that we develop skills that meet the needs of the job market and our development agenda.

15) Measures have been taken to ensure that the education system enables **lifelong training for people to continuously improve themselves and adapt to social changes and transitions.**

- 16)** Our Institutions have embraced flexible, open, distance, and e-learning. These innovative approaches are responding to the growing need for continued skills upgrading and retraining. We are committed to resolving the infrastructure and connectivity challenges that may hinder access to this vital innovation.
- 17)** We have transformed our curriculum to one that recognizes talent, in recognition that different children are gifted differently. The change of the curriculum to a Competency based approach focuses more on the ability of the student to self-learn and develop relevant skills for universal engagement.
- 18)** The Government has established Talent Academies to harness and develop talent with the ultimate aim of commercializing it for the economic benefit of our youth. We are happy that the **Youth Empowerment center here in Matuga and in Nyeri** have had major impact in supporting artistes.

19) The government has been encouraging changes in the system to **enhance collaboration between industry and training institutions to promote research, innovation and entrepreneurship.** Collaboration between learning institutions and the industry is one way to narrow the gap between what is required by employers and the supply of technical skills.

Ladies and Gentlemen;

20) Youth unemployment is a national challenge that we are constantly grappling with. The Government dedicated considerable resources to the Affirmative Action Programmes to promote entrepreneurship, provide **financial support** and **market access** to women and youth. Since the inception of affirmative funds, **Kshs. 42 Billion** has been transferred to SME's providing support to **4.5 million** beneficiaries across the country.

- 21)** This financial year Kshs **2.5 billion** in affordable credit will be issued to youth, women and People with Disabilities. Similarly, under the Access to Government Procurement opportunities, over **Kshs 150 Billion** worth of tenders have been accessed by women, youth and Persons Living with Disability.
- 22)** Two months ago, His Excellency the President launched the **Young Africa Works Programme**, in partnership with Equity, KCB and MasterCard Foundation which targets to create more than **2 million jobs** in the next 5 years. The initiative adds on to the Kenya Youth Employment Opportunities Project which is availing on the job training and **internship** opportunities to 280,000 youth in **24 counties**.
- 23)** Recently the '**MbeleNaBiz**' Business Plan Competition was also launched under the Kenya Youth Employment and Opportunities Project. The best ideas from **500** young entrepreneurs will receive **Ksh.900,000 each** and another **250** will receive **Ksh.3,600,000 each** to expand their businesses. I encourage every enterprising youth to participate and make their case.

- 24)** Through the **Ajira Digital Project** we are positioning Kenya as a choice labor destination for multinationals. Since inception in 2017, the program has provided **638,400 youth** with continuous training and mentorship for the acquisition of skills to access digital jobs locally and internationally.
- 25)** Investments in the sports and **arts sector** have seen significant growth of opportunities and incomes for our young people. The Live and Recording Industry for example contributed **1.9 Billion Kenya Shillings** to our economy in the last two years. This sector is projected to generate revenue of 2.9 Billion Kenya Shillings by 2020. I encourage talented youth to exploit these avenues that are now open.
- 26)** These efforts at youth empowerment are supported by a robust **infrastructure** agenda aimed at attracting foreign direct investments and making Kenya a choice destination for businesses. As envisaged under the Big Four Agenda, the rail, roads, ports, energy and ICT infrastructure projects aim to **ease doing business** in Kenya.

27) The policy of "**Buy Kenya Build Kenya**" directed by His Excellency the President has strengthened local SMEs by providing a ready market for our homemade goods. The Government will continue to provide favorable conditions and incentives to enable investors and businesses to thrive for the benefit of our youth.

28) Efforts to revamp our **manufacturing sector** and create jobs for our youth have been heightened. Recently we re-opened Rivatex Factory in Eldoret and KCC factory in Nairobi. The efforts of this administration are bearing fruit.

29) In 2018 the economy was able to generate more than **840,000 jobs** as the current 2019 Economic Survey has revealed. This however is not adequate, and our youth have had to seek opportunities beyond our borders. We are taking note of the increased interest of multinational companies recruiting Kenyans through accredited employment agencies.

- 30)** Thousands of young people have secured safe jobs in Dubai and Qatar as skilled and semi-skilled workers, earning decent wages averaging Kshs 50,000 per month. The Government has signed agreements with leaders in the Gulf region to offer Kenyans higher minimum wage and better working conditions.
- 31)** Kenya's diplomatic engagement continues to advocate for removal of Non-Trade Barriers within EAC region to promote positive migration for business and employment opportunities for our youth. In this regard the Ministry of Public Service, Youth and Gender, to jointly work together with the Ministries of Labor and Foreign Affairs will explore ways of maximizing the potential of labor export and explore new markets while ensuring the safety and dignity of our youth.

Ladies and Gentlemen;

32) Our youth cannot prosper if every coin they make ends up in **gambling**. Gambling has entrapped many youth in a cycle of poverty and hopelessness. Gambling also erodes the benefits of disposable income in our economy. The Government has therefore taken deliberate measures to protect the youth against gambling and has revoked licenses for betting organizations that have not complied with our laws and shut down their Pay bill accounts. We are determined to see every youth realize their potential and contribute to the national development of our country.

33) As I conclude my remarks, I wish to recognize those partners who have stood with us in mitigating the challenge of youth empowerment. From the private sector, I give special mention to the Manu Chandaria Foundation, the Rockefeller Foundation, the KCB Foundation, Equity Bank Foundation, McKinsey together with international development partners particularly the UN Family and the World Bank.

34) Jointly you have invested over Kshs 100 billion in Kenya's youth over the last five years. Your contribution to the empowerment of young people is commendable and I look forward to our continued fruitful engagement.

35) I call on all of us to support His Excellency the President in his role as the Global Leader for the Young Peoples Agenda. We have his firm commitment that this administration shall continue to support every effort that empowers the youth to achieve their highest agency in social, economic and political spheres as laid out on article 55 of our constitution.

36) Finally, I thank you all once again for being part of these celebrations and wish you a happy International Youth Day.

THANK YOU AND GOD BLESS YOU!