

**REPUBLIC OF KENYA**



**THE PRESIDENCY  
MINISTRY OF PUBLIC SERVICE, YOUTH AND GENDER**

**REMARKS BY PROF. MARGARET KOBIA, (PhD), MGH, CABINET SECRETARY, MINISTRY OF PUBLIC SERVICE, YOUTH AND GENDER DURING THE NATIONAL STAKEHOLDERS' BREAKFAST MEETING ON THE 12<sup>TH</sup> COMMONWEALTH WOMEN AFFAIRS MINISTERS MEETING (12WAMM), 13<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER, 2019, INTERCONTINENTAL HOTEL, NAIROBI.**

**SALUTATIONS**

**Cabinet Secretaries present**

**Principal Secretaries**

**Commonwealth Secretariat team from London**

**Excellences High Commissioners from the Commonwealth**

**Development Partners**

**The Media fraternity**

**Invited Guests**

**INTRODUCTION**

**Ladies and Gentlemen**

On behalf of the Ministry of Public Service, Youth and Gender, I would like to take this early opportunity to greatly appreciate your presence this morning. Thank you for making time to attend this meeting.

The Government of Kenya is set to host the 12<sup>th</sup> Women Affairs Minister's Meeting next week following the decision made during the 11WAMM held

in Apia, Samoa in 2016. We appreciate the opportunity accorded to Kenya to host this important meeting for the second time. Nairobi is the home of WAMM given that the first WAMM was held in Nairobi in 1985, during the third World Conference on Women.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

## **BACKGROUND OF WAMM**

Thirty four years ago, since the first Commonwealth Women Affairs Ministers meeting was held, we have made tremendous progress in accelerating the realization of gender equality and empowerment of women and girls.

The Commonwealth gender priorities to be discussed in the 12th WAMM converge with other global processes such as the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), Sustainable Development Goals especially Goal 5, all which have served as critical instruments for accelerating gender equality and empowerment of women and girls.

As a country, these international human rights frameworks continue to inform our gender equality interventions. More specifically, the frameworks have served to re-affirm the Government's commitment to upholding the fundamental principal that: ***the rights of women and girls are an "inalienable, integral and indivisible part of universal human rights"*** as demonstrated through the various progressive gender interventions initiated in *the country*.

***The theme of 12WAMM "From commitment to Action: Accelerating Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment for sustainable***

***Development***” is ideal. It is inspiring and strengthens our resolve to move the gender agenda forward in our endeavor to deliver on the four gender priorities of the Commonwealth: **Women in leadership; Women’s economic empowerment; Ending violence against women and girls; and, Gender and climate change.**

**Ladies and gentlemen,**

## **APPRECIATING ACHIEVEMENTS IN GEWE IN KENYA**

Allow me to share with you how we have fared as a country in addressing the four gender priorities of the Commonwealth, which resonate positively with our national agenda on gender equality and empowerment of women and girls.

**First: On the legislative front,** fundamental changes have taken place through the supreme law of our Country. We have a progressive constitution that guarantees equality and freedom from discrimination, provides for equality before the law, the right to equal protection and equal benefit.

Over time, Kenya has also developed robust legislation and policies that have transformed the social, economic and political landscape, especially for women and girls and other special groups that have faced marginalization.

Key among these is **Kenya Vision 2030**, our Blue print for development that is implemented in 5 year-development phases. Gender equality and women’s empowerment is engrained throughout the Medium-Term Plans of the Vision 2030.

Today, our interventions efforts are boosted by implementation of the **Government's Big 4 Agenda** that will enhance gender equality and the empowerment of women. This is an action plan being implemented by the Government which entails boosting manufacturing activities, achieving universal health coverage, enhancing food and nutrition security and supporting the construction of at least 500,000 affordable houses by 2022.

### **Ladies and Gentlemen,**

**Second: On the economic front,** an area where women were marginalized in the past, significant strides have been made in improving the economic status of women. A number of measures aimed at empowering women and increasing their participation in the country's development in all sectors have been initiated.

The Government **Affirmative funds** including the Women's Enterprise Fund, the Youth Enterprise Development Fund and the Uwezo Fund, National Government Affirmative Action Fund among others have made tremendous impact. These funds have enabled women grow their business ventures without burdensome conditions. This includes enactment of procurement laws which provide that 30 percent of Government tenders should be allocated to women, the youth and persons with disability.

**Third: On Women's Leadership,** Kenya has steadily made progress. The policy and legislative framework in the country is positive given that the Constitution of Kenya explicitly stipulates ***"not more than two thirds of the members of elective public bodies shall be of the same gender"*** and prioritizes women's representation in the National Assembly and County Assemblies. Kenya has also enacted laws to reform electoral laws through the

Political Parties Act (2016) that among other laws have progressively enhanced women's representation in leadership.

As a result of the legislative and policy interventions, we have the highest number of women in leadership since independence. It is notable that women's representation has been increasing steadily from 8.1% in 2002 to 19.3 % in 2013.

Women have been appointed in senior leadership positions in the Executive, Legislature, Judiciary and the private sector. Also notable are improvements following the 2017 General Elections where women captured 21.1 % of the National Assembly seats, 26.9% Senate, Governors 6.4 % for the first time ever and 30.5 % in the County assemblies.

**Fourth: There have also been marked improvements in the health sector,** due to key strategic investments and interventions. As a result significant progress has been realized through maternal utilization and delivery uptake which has increased from 52% to 60% while skilled delivery increased from 62% to 74%. Maternal mortality rate has declined from 488 to 362 per 100,000 live births. Infant mortality rate per 1000 live births has dropped from 42.4 in 2010 to 35.5 in 2015. Female Life Expectancy has also been growing at an annual average rate of 0.35% and stood at 69.9 years in 2018.

**Fifth: Ending Gender Based Violence** has and continues to be a major priority of the Government. In Kenya, 45 % of women and 44% of men age 15-49 have experienced violence since the age of 15 according to the Demographic Health Survey 2014. The national prevalence of FGM which stands at 21% has been declining over the years from 32.% in 2003 due to concerted efforts in the country.

The Government commitment to addressing prevention and response to GBV has informed the development of robust policies and laws which include: the National Policy on Prevention and Response to Gender Based Violence. The policy was launched by His Excellency the President of the Republic of Kenya in 2014 as a demonstration of his commitment to lead from the front to end all forms of violence. It was followed by the passage of the Protection Against Domestic Violence Act, 2015.

### **Ladies and gentlemen,**

What I have shared with you are some examples of how Kenya is addressing the gender priorities of the Commonwealth.

We therefore look forward to the 12WAMM next week where much more will be discussed among other emerging issues. It will be an important forum for sharing knowledge and experiences, cross learning through best practices, networking and exploring innovative strategies in moving forward our common goal of achieving gender equality and empowerment of women and girls.

More importantly, the Nairobi outcome document of the 12WAMM to be adopted by Ministers at the conclusion of the meeting, will be crucial as a framework for responding to gender equality and advancement of women in different spheres within member states.

### **CONCLUSION**

#### **Ladies and Gentlemen,**

As I conclude, I commend our national leadership through His Excellency the President of Kenya who has continued to ensure that gender concerns are at the center of Kenya's development agenda. Indeed, as you might be

aware, in November, Kenya is set to host the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD 25). This is yet again an important event that shines global spotlight on the importance of advancing Sexual Reproductive Health Rights, a key priority for Kenya and the Commonwealth member states.

I wish to affirm our commitment to enhance our engagement with the Commonwealth Secretariat and other actors towards the full realization of the 12WAMM outcomes. In so doing, we appreciate the linkage of the outcomes of 12WAMM to the upcoming Commonwealth Head of Governments meeting and other global processes such as the Beijing Declaration, ICPD+25, CEDAW and SDGS. 12WAMM will greatly contribute to the acceleration of Gender equality and empowerment of women and girls.

**Finally** let me take this opportunity to thank you all, once again for honoring and making time to be here today, affording us a platform to share important information that will enable us continue to shape the gender equality landscape across the board - nationally, regionally and Globally.

**God Bless you.**