

**SPEECH BY HIS EXCELLENCY THE PRESIDENT,  
HON. DANIEL T. ARAP MOI, C.G.H., M.P.,  
ON THE OCCASION OF KENYATTA DAY,  
WEDNESDAY, 20TH OCTOBER, 1999**

FELLOW KENYANS,  
DISTINGUISHED GUESTS,  
LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

We have gathered here today, to celebrate Kenyatta Day. This is an important occasion for all of us, since it reminds us all of the struggle and sacrifices that led to the founding of our nation. On this memorable day, I send my greetings to all fellow Kenyans wherever they may be. I also take the opportunity to thank all our friends who have sent us messages of good wishes.

As we celebrate this day, we should also reflect on the events that led to our independence. Kenyans still recall that the path to our independence was not easy. Indeed, as the founding father of our nation, the late Mzee Jomo Kenyatta constantly used to remind us, we did not get our independence on a silver platter, rather brave sons and daughters of Kenya waged a hard struggle and shed their blood to win our freedom. On this occasion of Kenyatta Day, therefore, we pay tribute to the heroes of the freedom struggle. Their loyalty, exemplary courage and patriotism enabled them to persevere many difficulties, and ensure the success of the freedom struggle.

Among the great sons of the struggle for freedom in Africa is Mwalimu Julius Kambarage Nyerere, who passed away at St. Thomas Hospital, in London, on Thursday, 14th October, 1999. Mwalimu Nyerere, as he was fondly known to his people, was not only the founding father of the Tanzanian nation, but also a great Pan-africanist. He, together with Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana, Jomo Kenyatta of Kenya, Gamal Abdel Nasser of Egypt and other patriotic sons of Africa spearheaded the struggle for freedom and unity on our continent.

Mwalimu Nyerere was also a strong believer in the unity of the people of East Africa, and despite the collapse of the then East African Community, he continued to support initiatives towards renewed East African co-operation. He was closely involved in the East African effort to bring peace in Burundi and the Great Lakes Area. Africa, has indeed, lost a great son who for many, came to be known as "The Conscience of Africa". May I ask you all to rise up and join me in observing a minute's silence in his honour.....Thank you.

Fellow Kenyans,

The founders of our nationhood, fully recognized the fact that winning political independence was only the first step. Nation-building is a real challenge, and it calls for unity and hard work by each and everyone of us. Indeed, the experience of many countries on our continent shows that failure to cope with this challenge has caused instability in many countries. Kenyans should be proud that our country has maintained peace and stability since independence. The vision of the founders of our nationhood laid a firm foundation for our nation's unity and economic progress.

The freedom struggle is now behind us. We are now standing on the threshold of a new century and a challenging future for our country. On the first Kenyatta Day, on 20th October, 1964, the late Mzee Kenyatta said, and I wish to quote him: "Let this be the day on which all of us commit ourselves to erase from our minds, the hatreds and difficulties of those years which belong to history. Let us agree that we shall never refer to the past. Let us instead, unite in all our utterances and activities in concern for the reconstruction of our country and vitality of Kenya's future".

Even at that early stage in the history of our independent nation, the late Mzee Jomo Kenyatta had a dream and a vision about the future of our country. For us who stand on the threshold of a new millennium, what is our dream for Kenya? What is our vision of the future? My vision is of a united and prosperous Kenya marching on proudly into the twenty-first century as the economic giant of this region. It is my conviction

that we have the relevant human and other resources to enable us realize this. We have a vibrant private sector which has flourished under the conditions of peace prevailing in our country. Through unity and hard work, we can make Kenya a central and pivotal player in the future of Africa. Kenya can become the financial, commercial and banking hub for this region.

The recent actions which I have taken demonstrate my deep concern that the downward trend in Kenya's economy must be halted. This will not be done by people from outside, but by Kenyans themselves. I have always emphasized that the solutions to our economic problems must come from Kenyans. Continued loss of productivity in our farms and industries must be reversed. Kenyans must work harder to produce more in all sectors of the economy. Above all, patriotism to our country should also move us to take pride in, and buy what is our own. Preference for goods from outside will only build the economies of other people. We must buy Kenyan made goods, so that we can build our economy and our country.

For its part, my Government will continue to monitor all imports to our country. Kenya must not become a dumping ground for cheap and sub-standard imports. Equally important, however, local manufacturers should also realize that the business environment is fast changing. Quality and competitiveness are the new catchwords in the modern business environment. Local manufacturers should therefore ensure production of high quality products at competitive prices.

In addition, my Government will continue to systematically address the concerns expressed by leaders, professionals and members of the business community at various fora. The poor state of our roads has been identified as one of the major constraints to increased productivity and economic recovery. Roads rehabilitation works are now taking place throughout the country, including our urban centres. I am also encouraged by the improved performance of the tourism sector, which has been adversely affected by negative publicity. Tourism has tremendous potential and will remain a major priority of my Government.

With regard to crime, let me emphasize that Kenyans fought for freedom so that they may enjoy the fruits of their labour. Accordingly, there is no room for those who wish to benefit from the sweat of others. Our laws provide severe penalties for those engaged in acts of thuggery and other criminal activities, including corruption and misappropriation of public funds. However, all Kenyans should help in this effort. They should report any criminal elements to the authorities so that they can be dealt with.

Concerning the continued spread of HIV/AIDS in our society, I wish to remind you all that the development of our nation depends on strong and healthy youth. It is a matter of great concern to us all, therefore, that the spread of HIV/AIDS has targeted the productive section of our society, mainly, the youth. We must ensure the future of our country by protecting our children, and young people from AIDS.

This disease is a reality and Kenyans should stop meaningless debates which only serve to create confusion in our society. We should all join hands in sensitizing our youth about the danger of this disease. In particular, parents should realize that they bear the responsibility for their children's safety. Refusal by parents to discuss these matters with their children will not help. I urge parents to be more open and frank with their children and assist them to make wise choices in their social behaviour. In addition, religious leaders should play their role in moulding a morally upright society.

As I conclude my remarks today fellow Kenyans, I wish to note that the conflicts in neighbouring countries demonstrate the need for us to maintain peace in our country. Let us therefore cherish the peace we enjoy. For its part, my Government will continue to support peaceful resolution of conflicts in our region and beyond. Furthermore, we will continue to strengthen co-operation with all countries of our region in order to ensure peace, increased trade and economic development. We will continue to work for the strengthening of the existing co-operation arrangements within

the framework of East African Co-operation and COMESA for the benefit of all the people of this region.

Finally, fellow Kenyans, ladies and gentlemen. I urge you all to remain united so that we may give to our children a lasting legacy of a peaceful, united and prosperous country.

*THANK YOU.*