

**SPEECH BY H.E. HON. MWAI KIBAKI, C.G.H., M.P., PRESIDENT AND COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF OF THE DEFENCE FORCES OF THE REPUBLIC OF KENYA ON THE OCCASION OF JAMHURI DAY CELEBRATIONS, NYAYO STADIUM, 12TH DECEMBER, 2011**

Fellow Kenyans,

I am pleased to join you all, as we mark the 48th Jamhuri Day. On this important occasion, we commemorate the attainment of Kenya's independence.

We pay special tribute to the thousands of patriots who played a role in our journey towards freedom and self-rule. I also salute the Kenyan people for their dedication to the responsible management of the affairs of our country.

The commemoration of this day provides an opportunity to reflect on the journey we have travelled as a nation. We thank the Almighty God for guiding us and for the many blessings he has bestowed upon our nation. We also reflect on the challenges we face and seek ways of addressing them.

Indeed, we are marking this year's Jamhuri day against the backdrop of increased inflationary pressures that have seen the cost of living rise for most Kenyans. Despite the many challenges, we have witnessed significant progress in national development.

The Government is now able to fund most of its budget. Annual economic growth jumped from less than one percent in the year 2002 to reach about 5 percent that is projected for this year.

In the area of revenue collection, we have seen a progressive increase over the years from just 200 billion shillings in 2002 to 600 billion shillings in the last financial year.

This increased revenue, has given the Government the resources needed to embark on our nation's most ambitious development agenda since independence. Various sectors of our economy have recorded positive growth. Electricity and water supply, for instance, have increased tremendously.

From less than 500,000 electricity connections ten years ago, over 1.7 million households and institutions are now connected to electric power.

The financial sector has also recorded impressive growth. Ten years ago, less than one million Kenyans had access to any form of banking service. Today, 18 million Kenyans have access to financial services including those served by the very successful mobile money transfer service. We have also increased investments in the modernization and development of our nation's infrastructure. These include roads, airports, railways, energy and telecommunications.

In the area of I.C.T., the laying of the fibre-optic cables linked Kenya to the global network. This provided the country with a reliable and affordable high capacity bandwidth. As a result, Kenya is today a major destination for investments in the I.C.T. sector, translating into more job opportunities for our youthful population.

In the roads sub-sector, we have witnessed tremendous growth in funding from both the Government and development partners. From a budget of 13 billion shillings in 2003, funding for the sub-sector has increased considerably to over 110 billion shillings in the current financial year.

We are undertaking construction of roads in every part of the country. The increased investments in roads is opening up more parts of our country to the modern economy and creating new frontiers of economic and social development.

The investments are also linking us to neighbouring countries and this holds great promise and opportunity for our people. The tourism sector has also experienced remarkable upward growth. Last year was our best year in terms of tourist arrivals.

We received one and a half million visitors and the sector generated 74 billion shillings in

revenue. Growth in tourism means that more of our people are engaged in productive employment. It also translates into increased demand for Kenyan goods and services such as agricultural and curio products. We must, therefore, jealously guard this sector that holds much promise.

We have also made great strides in the social sectors of health and education. Today, close to 10 million children are enjoying the benefits of our free primary education. The Government is paying the tuition fees of all students in public secondary schools. We are also funding, equipping and providing teachers to youth polytechnics. In the field of higher education, there are over 200,000 students enrolled in our universities. Our investments in education have made Kenya one of the leaders in human resource development on the African continent.

In the health sector, over 1,000 health centers have been built through the Constituency Development Fund. This has empowered communities to determine their grassroots development priorities. We have distributed over 20 million mosquito nets, leading to a tremendous drop in malaria prevalence.

Indeed, Kenya has not had a malaria epidemic in the last five years.

The prevalence of HIV/AIDS has greatly declined. The Government, with support from development partners has made available ARV treatment to about 500,000 patients from only three thousand people in the year 2003. Most importantly, ARV treatment is provided in all Government hospitals free of charge.

These achievements in various sectors of our economy have set a firm foundation for national transformation and implementation of our VISION TWENTY THIRTY. I urge all workers, investors, business leaders and policy makers to stay focused as we seek to improve the livelihoods of our people and create a globally competitive, prosperous and equitable nation.

Fellow Kenyans,

The economic challenges we have faced and which have led to the high cost of living should also spur us into taking additional steps that will cushion wananchi from increased financial strain. Following steps taken by the Government, the Kenyan shilling has appreciated in value over the last few weeks. The current rains should help boost our food output and reserves in the medium term.

I am, therefore, optimistic that a stronger shilling, increased food production and the expected reduction in fuel and electricity prices, will lower our overall inflation rate and reduce the cost of living. We must, however, draw lessons from the economic challenges that we have experienced.

For example, we must reduce our appetite for foreign produced goods and purchase more of our locally manufactured goods. As a nation, we must also urgently diversify our traditional export base and foreign exchange earning sectors of horticulture, tea, coffee and tourism.

Our focus should turn to manufacturing, mining and agriculture value-addition in order to cushion our economy from external shocks. As we seek to further grow the economy, the Government will remain sensitive to the plight and welfare of public servants and other workers. We must, however, remain patient and understanding on the overall national wage bill. We must also adopt a give and take attitude during negotiations in order to avoid a disruption in service delivery in our nation.

I am concerned that the doctors have been on strike over the last one week. We need doctors in the hospitals to attend to the many Kenyans needing medical attention on daily basis.

I direct the Minister for Public Service and all those involve in finding a solution to conclude the negotiations. At the same time, I appeal to the doctors to resume work.

Fellow Kenyans,

We are now in the second year of implementation of our new Constitution. The Government has facilitated the successful establishment of Commissions and Independent Offices as provided for by the Constitution. Many deserving Kenyans have been appointed to serve in the Independent Offices and Commissions. I call upon the new appointees to fully execute their mandates for the betterment of the welfare of Kenyans.

The Constitution provides for a two-tier Government at the National and County levels. The Government will enact several pieces of legislation to give full effect to devolution. Moreover, in fulfillment of the Constitutional obligation to support County governments, the Government has initiated a staff audit and deployment programme. This will ensure that various staff categories critical to the county governments are deployed to all counties.

More importantly, the Government will ensure that service delivery to wananchi is not disrupted in the transition period, as newly established County governments take over the running of public services at county level.

Fellow Kenyans,

The Judiciary has been reconstituted to ensure public confidence through competitive recruitment of judges and other court officials, vetting of judges and magistrates, increased funding and facilitating judicial independence. There is also enhancement of the number of judges and magistrates.

The creation of a Supreme Court has heralded a new era in the dispensation of justice and created an avenue to resolve constitutional, electoral and policy disputes. Kenyans now expect that the reformed judiciary will deliver speedy and just conclusions to the many cases that have taken long to be heard and determined by our courts.

Fellow Kenyans,

We are marking this year's Jamhuri Day, faced with security threats emanating from insurgents operating from Somalia. The insurgents have not only posed a major threat to our peace and security but have also negatively affected our economy. To address this challenge, the Government mandated the Kenyan Defense Forces to pursue the insurgents into Somali territory.

This operation is being undertaken jointly, by Kenyan troops and the Transitional Federal Government of Somalia forces.

It is, therefore, important for Kenyans, and indeed the international community, to understand that Kenya is not at war with Somalia.

Our Kenya Defense Forces will therefore work closely with the Transitional Federal Government of Somalia, AMISOM, IGAD, the African Union and the United Nations, in order to find a long term solution and ensure the stability of Somalia.

I thank the Kenyan people for their support for the operation in Somalia. To further enhance the security of our people, I call upon all Kenyans to be extra vigilant and supplement the good work of our security forces.

I also wish to appeal to all the people of Somalia to seize this historic opportunity to stabilize their country. It is time for them to reclaim their country and rejoin the family of nations. It is time to silence the cries of war and embrace the coming age of peace and prosperity in Somalia.

For twenty years the people of Somalia have been subjected to a senseless civil war. A generation of children has never seen the inside of a classroom, while another generation has been born and raised inside refugee camps.

The people of Somalia scattered all over the world, must take a collective position and reject those behind the problems in their country. This is the time that the voice of the suffering millions of Somalia people was heard and respected.

Kenya stands ready to walk this journey with the people and Government of Somalia that will see the dawn of a bright day of hope for them.

Fellow Kenyans,

Before I conclude my remarks, I wish to state that the stability of our country must always guide our decisions and actions. As we are aware, our country will hold the General Election next year.

In the run-up to the elections, I call upon our leaders to bear in mind that our country's future and destiny is greater than the interests of any one individual. Let us all promote peace and understanding during this very important time in our nation's history.

To this end, we will be convening a pre-election national cohesion and reconciliation conference early next year.

On its part, the Government has spearheaded preparations for the next elections by facilitating the appointment of an Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission and enacting of the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Act, the Political Parties Act and the Elections Act. I am confident that with the revamped institutions in place as well as a robust legal framework, Kenya will have a free, fair and peaceful General Election next year.

I would also like to assure all Kenyans that the Grand Coalition Government is committed to the social, economic, and political transformation of our beloved nation. I call upon all Kenyans; leaders and citizens alike, to pull together to build a united, peaceful and prosperous Kenya. Finally, I wish you all happy Jamhuri Day celebrations, a blessed Christmas and a happy and prosperous new year.

ASANTENI NA MUNGU AIBARIKI NCHI YETU.