

SPEECH BY HIS EXCELLENCY HON. MWAI KIBAKI, C.G.H., M.P., PRESIDENT AND COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF OF THE ARMED FORCES OF THE REPUBLIC OF KENYA DURING THE 2007 KENYATTA DAY CELEBRATIONS AT NYAYO NATIONAL STADIUM, NAIROBI, 20TH OCTOBER, 2007

Fellow Kenyans,

It is my pleasure to once again join my fellow countrymen and women in commemorating this year's Kenyatta Day. This is a special day in our national calendar, when we remember our brave countrymen and women who lost their lives in the struggle for uhuru, and all those who made a contribution to the achievement of our independence.

We pay tribute to all of them for liberating our country and our people from the yoke of colonialism. I call on all Kenyans to emulate the selflessness of these heroes in sacrificing all that they had for their country and their people.

When we gather together as a nation on an occasion such as this, let us also review the progress of our individual as well as national efforts in this regard. We also need to ask ourselves whether our daily actions and efforts are contributing to the well being of this nation and the welfare of our people. We are fortunate to have been bequeathed a beautiful country with diverse cultures, abundant flora and fauna, a beautiful climate and enchanting landscapes. These are resources which if harnessed fully will generate wealth for all our people.

This is why I have on many occasions called on Kenyans to embrace a culture of a working and caring nation. As caring Kenyans, we should not feel contented with our individual achievements, when some of our fellow citizens are suffering from lack of basic needs such as food, shelter, clothing, health and education.

This is the spirit which guided the action of our national heroes who fought for a land in which they would have freedom and liberty, and a society that would be free from poverty, disease, and ignorance. This is also the spirit that inspires the policies that my Government has formulated and implemented since 2003. Indeed, my Government has waged successful battles against each one of the three adversaries, and achieved meaningful victories for the Kenyan people.

With regard to the fight against poverty, the economy has witnessed substantial growth to nearly twice its previous size with the growth rate rising from 0.5 percent in 2002 to an estimated 7 percent by the end of this year. The tide created by this growth has reduced the national poverty rate from 56 to 46 percent thereby lifting about 2 million people out of abject poverty. Furthermore, over 1.8 million new jobs were created between 2003 and 2006, and per capita incomes increased from 400 US dollars in 2002 to over 630 US dollars currently. As we look ahead towards the next five years, my goals are to attain a growth rate of 10 percent, and reduce poverty levels further to 30 percent by 2012.

The fight against ignorance is also on course. Buoyed by revenues from the growing economy, every child now has the opportunity to attend school whether rich or poor. Indeed, today, more than 1.7 million children who would otherwise be out of school

because of poverty or disability, are now learning, and have a chance of success in life.

We are now ready to extend the successes and benefits of Free Primary Education to the secondary school level. Beginning next year, I pledge to see that every child including those with special needs, will be educated for free in public schools from primary to secondary school level. This will give every child, no matter their social background an equal opportunity in life through education. Education is the single most important determinant of a country's development, which is why my Government has accorded it the highest priority in its development strategy. This is also the best way of enabling every child in this country to realize its full potential and thus reducing inequality. There is no reason for parents not to send their children to school. I call on all parents and local administration officials to ensure that all children attend school without exception.

Concerning the fight against disease, we have reversed decades of declining health standards by investing heavily in the health sector. For instance, all children under five are now treated and provided with drugs without charge in all our public health facilities. In addition, treatment for malaria, TB, and HIV/AIDS is free. Further, today, Kenyan mothers can deliver for no charge at all in our public dispensaries and health centres. We have also waged a successful anti-malaria campaign by providing free insecticide treated nets to mothers with children. As a result of our efforts to make healthcare affordable and available to all Kenyans, HIV prevalence rates are down from 13 to below 6 percent, child mortality rates are also down by 44 percent, while maternity survival rates for mothers have risen substantially.

Having achieved these successes, I would like to see that in the next five years every child under five years of age, children with special needs, and every child enrolled in primary or secondary school will receive free treatment and drugs in public health facilities, thus giving every single Kenyan child the opportunity to grow up healthy and strong.

Fellow Kenyans,

There are many challenges facing our country. But the solution to these does not lie in making empty or alarming statements. The only way forward for our country is to harness the full potential of our people and the economy so as to provide more and better services to the people. And this is the reason why we are investing heavily in several key sectors of the economy, in order to provide a highly improved environment for business and farming that will create more jobs and wealth for our young people. Five years ago, we promised an economy that would generate 500,000 jobs a year. During the period up to 2006, we succeeded in generating an average of 467,000 jobs annually.

Moreover, the Youth Enterprise Development Fund has so far disbursed 534 million shillings to more than 14,000 youth groups and individual young people to start up or expand their businesses. I know that we still have a large number of young men and women who remain unemployed or underemployed. Majority of these feel frustrated because they are unable to realize their hopes and dreams. I want to tell these young men and women that my heart and mind remains focused on tackling this challenge.

In the next five years, under my leadership, we shall grow the economy to double its current size, creating decent jobs and business opportunities for our youth, and good incomes for our urban and rural families. To achieve these goals, I intend to double our investment in infrastructure so as to build world-class networks of airports, seaports, roads, railways, and low-cost housing.

These investments in infrastructure will in turn create a globally competitive environment for investors in tourism, manufacturing, communications, financial and social services as well as value adding industries in agriculture, livestock production, and fishing in various parts of the country.

I expect these investments to generate tens of thousands of decent jobs and business opportunities for our youth. For the young people in Nairobi and other major urban centres, we have started building hawkers' markets. We intend to go a step further by building jua kali and small business parks in every city, town and municipality so as to support and encourage employment and business opportunities for this crucial segment of our population.

I wish assure our young people that the last five years saw us change the economy from a no-jobs economy into one with many jobs. We have just started to bake the cake, and it is becoming bigger by the day. We will grow this cake into a huge one under my stewardship with enough slices for everyone in the next five years as we transform this economy into one that will see most of you employed gainfully in the formal or informal sectors.

Fellow Kenyans,

The prosperity and welfare of our people will depend on the degree of probity and accountability exercised by those who govern them. We recognize that we cannot eradicate corruption merely by staging dramatic events around those who are alleged to be corrupt. We have instead chosen the route of developing and establishing laws, regulations, and institutions that will over time inculcate and entrench a culture of ethical public conduct and accountability. We have also made provisions for declaration of personal wealth, tightened procurement and expenditure procedures, and provided the mechanisms for reporting, investigation, and prosecution of economic crimes.

We have further made it more difficult for individuals to abuse public office or misuse public resources by undertaking far reaching public service reforms that demand personal and institutional accountability in service delivery and use of resources. These include the strategic plans, performance contracts, service charters and in some cases, citizens charters. I commend civil society and the media, whose continuous vigilance has contributed to further reduction in the levels of corruption being reported in public institutions. This has resulted in an accountability and development dividend that is enabling us to implement major social programmes in the education and health sectors.

Fellow Kenyans,

We have spent the last five years building an inclusive and caring society. This has been one of the key themes of my leadership. As our country moves forward in development, we must ensure that no one is left behind, and those who may have

been neglected in the past must be brought into the fold. This is why I have continuously promoted the inclusion of women in every aspect of our special life, because I firmly believe that given the opportunity, women will contribute as effectively to the development of our nation as men.

In this regard, we have set up the Women's Enterprise Development Fund, and committed ourselves to guaranteeing women 30 percent of all public employment opportunities. I have also directed that women be represented in every one of the constituency level development committees.

Further, we have taken note of the children who live in slums, and registered their learning institutions into non-formal primary schools that receive the same level of support as regular public primary schools. We are providing grants and equipment for children with special needs, building boarding schools for children living in nomadic communities, and are in the process of putting in place a disability fund. We have done our best to incorporate minorities into this government, and to ensure that areas that were previously marginalized receive their equitable share of development resources.

Fellow Kenyans,

An other area of great concern to me is the security of our people and that of their property. Over the last four years and nine months we have relentlessly fought crime in all its forms. Today, cases of armed robbery, banditry and carjackings have been reduced to a minimum. Our people feel free and confident to move about in the country and do business. We will continue to ensure the security and well-being of our people and their property by providing effective security through joint efforts involving the police, provincial administration and local communities, and by observing and upholding the rule of law.

Further, we are committed to observing and upholding the sanctity of property rights. In this regard, Kenyans holding title deeds, intellectual property rights, and any other securities, should feel secure that these will be honoured. Indeed, my Government has sought to deal with the issues of squatters and the landless fairly, with the desire of arriving at mutually beneficial outcomes between the landless and the landlords. We have also accelerated the adjudication and titling of land for both squatters as well as those who live in areas that are suitable for land titling and registration. In this regard, my Government has issued over 1.95 million title deeds in the last five years, and we will continue to set aside more resources to buy farms to settle the landless, especially in the Coast and Rift Valley provinces.

Fellow Kenyans,

As the political environment becomes more charged in anticipation of the General Elections, a lot of things are being said and will continue to be said.

In an effort to win voters' attention, some political leaders are making pledges without giving any serious consideration to the unity of our nation or the peace and security of our people. The issue of federalism for instance, has been portrayed as the one solution to the social and economic challenges we face. This is misleading because you cannot generate more resources for development simply by telling communities to stay in their own reservations. This is only likely to fan tribal

sentiments. Moreover, in a rapidly globalizing world, countries are forming even bigger unions in order to harness opportunities that arise from having larger markets.

This is why from the outset, we have sought to use devolution as our principle approach in creating an inclusive and equitable society. The most well known instrument of devolution we have used in the last five years is the Constituency Development Fund (CDF), where we have ensured that the most needy areas receive the most resources. Others include the Bursary Fund that has allowed secondary school enrolment to increase by almost a quarter of a million more students in the last five years, and the Local Authorities Transfer Fund (LATF). Our experience with these financial and decision-making devolution instruments has been positive, with increased local participation, and greater investment in meeting the priorities of the local people.

We will continue to devolve even more resources and decision making to the people, as more financial resources become available from a growing economy, and as stronger and more accountable devolved institutions are formed at the grassroots. We will also commit to recognising community rights and cultural interests of all, while at the same time striving to promote cohesion, tolerance and mutual respect for the cultural diversity of our people. We want all Kenyans to feel free, respected, and secure, wherever they are in the country. Indeed, no Kenyan should feel discriminated or harassed on the basis of ethnicity, religion, race, gender or social status.

In conclusion, and as we head towards the general elections in a few weeks time, I urge all of you to carefully evaluate all those seeking elected leadership positions. Scrutinize their past records, examine their character, and judge them on the basis of what they have done for this country. I urge you to make prudent choices so that this country may enjoy leadership that unites the country and leads to a brighter and more equitable future.

Thank You and May God Bless You All.