

SPEECH BY H.E. HON. UHURU KENYATTA, C.G.H., PRESIDENT AND COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF OF THE DEFENCE FORCES OF THE REPUBLIC OF KENYA DURING THE MADARAKA DAY CELEBRATIONS, 1ST JUNE, 2014

Distinguished guests, fellow Kenyans,

Fifty one years ago today - within the memory of many still living - this nation, regained its self-rule, after nearly a century of painful struggle. We pay tribute to the men and women who gave all they had so that we might be free, and we will always remember those who paid the ultimate price for our freedom. This nation is their gift to us.

On that first day of our self-government, we rallied behind leaders who demanded not just sovereignty, but also freedom from ignorance, poverty, and disease. Ours is to complete the journey they began.

The road has been long. But while we cannot claim that every Kenyan lives in dignity and freedom, there is no doubt that we have made immense progress.

Fellow Kenyans,

At the dawn of our freedom in 1963, the average Kenyan could expect to live 35 years. Today, thanks to the investment in health undertaken by Kenyans and their government over the last 51 years, the average Kenyan can expect to live to 64 years.

We have fought ignorance valiantly. Fifty one years ago, just over eight hundred thousand of our children were in primary school. Today, ten million children have the chance of an education paid for by the state.

Fifty one years ago, there were 82 secondary schools in Kenya. Today, there are nearly ten thousand. Fifty one years ago, we had a single public university in the country. Now, we have 22 and 9 constituent colleges, while the private sector has established 19 universities and 5 constituent colleges.

We take pride in the fact that our armed services have defended our sovereignty, and contributed to peace in our region. Let me pause now to remember those who fell in recent missions.

We also take special pride in the bold reform of our most basic law in 2010, to let every Kenyan taste the fruits of our freedom.

Of course, these achievements did not come by our strength alone; the grace of God has led us through difficult times. There have been failures, setbacks and missed opportunities.

But instead of lamenting what might have been, we are grateful for the distance we have travelled, and we look forward to what is to come.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We should also admit the difficulties and dangers of self-government.

Madaraka does not require unanimity: in a country as diverse as Kenya, we will always find issues to disagree about. What Madaraka asks of us is that when we disagree, we reason together respectfully. *Kila Mkenya astahili heshima.*

Some of us have forgotten these truths. Some of us have forgotten that self-rule comes with responsibility. They have yielded to a narrative of negativity, which sees every ill in their mother-land, and their countrymen, and rejects every good.

Our self-rule faces other challenges. Our young people want to match the self-reliance of their elders. But too many of them cannot start their own businesses, or find the work that would give them freedom.

Let us also admit a hard truth: 51 years after independence, poverty still robs too many Kenyans of their dignity. And let us admit another: Kenya is not yet food secure.

As if that were not enough, we must confront a new breed of terrorists, who use our freedom and tolerance against us, and use our commitment to the security and prosperity of our friends and neighbours as an excuse for murder. These extremists will attack even a child, like Satrin Osinya. Nothing can justify such heinous acts, and nothing will stop us from bringing their perpetrators to justice.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Madaraka demands that we respond to our trials as a free people in control of our destiny. As we have done since independence, Kenya will meet these challenges.

For half a century, too many of us took education to be little more than a path to a job. But experience has taught that we need many more young Kenyans to start the businesses that will grow our common prosperity. That is why the Youth Enterprise and Development Fund distributed more than 1.8 billion shillings to 130,000 of our young people last year, in 21,000 groups across the nation.

That is also why my government established the Uwezo Fund, which is supplying 6 billion shillings in the capital and training that our enterprising young people so urgently need.

If we are to create the opportunities that our youth deserve, our economy must grow and diversify. In my government's first year in power, we attained GDP growth of 4.7%. When we meet at next year's celebration, I expect to report even better performance.

If we look away from sheer growth, our economy is diversifying - we are on course for the transformation required to deliver opportunity and work for every Kenyan.

That is as it should be, for even though we have 16 years to make Vision 2030 a reality, it is now clear that we can achieve it sooner. Guided by this goal, my government has prepared a number of programmes.

The central part is Kenya's first all-inclusive budget for the 2014/15 financial year, aimed at delivering direct benefits in five key areas to each Kenyan household in the months to come.

First, we chose to create a conducive business environment by cleaning up the land registries and our land transaction processes; by accelerating business licensing and registration; by extending and improving public services through the Huduma centres; and by establishing a cashless economy for government services.

Second, we invested in agricultural transformation and food security. We have built hundreds of dams and water pans around the country, and we have made fertiliser, and other farming inputs and information, cheaper and more easily available to our farmers.

Next year, cane farmers will be fully integrated into the programme.

My government also established the Galana irrigation scheme last year, which will eventually bring a million acres under irrigation. This year, we have set aside more than 3 billion shillings to continue the project. Kenya's food supplies

will be secured.

Much of our prosperity will come, as it long has, from joining the skills of our men and women with the trade that comes from our position as the hub of our region.

We will be the bridge that connects Africa's rising economies with capital, technology and markets from across the world, and particularly from Asia.

This is one reason why it was so important to complete the agreements for the new standard gauge railway, and to begin work on it, as we have. And that is why we were quick to protect and diversify our tourism. Our devotion to closer integration with our neighbours – the tri-partite agreements we have signed, the upgrading of our port, and the building of the new Lamu-Lokichar road and pipeline – serve the same end. And it is why we have added a fourth terminal to the JKIA, which we expect to open on the July 4. The new infrastructure we are building shows our resolve to make the most of our place in the world.

These advances mean little if we are not healthy, and if the most vulnerable among us are abandoned. Last year, my government invested heavily in maternal care: in the first Madaraka day speech of my administration, it was my pleasure to announce that maternal care was now free of charge at public health facilities. At last count, two-thirds of deliveries were in the hands of trained personnel – fewer of our mothers suffer unnecessarily in childbirth. Four billion shillings have been set aside to strengthen that programme in the financial year to come.

That new investment in an old programme will be joined by new investment in a new programme: we will set up a fund to pay for the treatment of Kenyans with rare medical conditions. The importance of this initiative was brought home to us a few days ago, when a local newspaper carried the story of a young man from Athi River, with a rare medical condition.

The Ministry of Health quickly arranged for surgery at Kenyatta National Hospital, but the case is a reminder that it is time to systematise our handling of these conditions. We have not forgotten existing facilities, which remain unevenly distributed across the country.

Last year, we began to close these gaps with the substantial devolution of health services. In the next financial year, 3 billion shillings will be set aside for the leasing of medical equipment. Every county will have access to that fund,

to bring equipment where it is most needed, and to equalise access.

We also stretched our national social safety net to cover more than 230,000 households - our orphans and vulnerable children, our elderly, and Kenyans who live with severe disabilities. Families in the arid parts of our nation have not been forgotten: more than 100,000 households received cash transfers last year.

This year, my government has set aside more than 7 billion shillings for our vulnerable children and 4.9 billion shillings for our elders, to cover 450,000 households. Our self-government must work for our most vulnerable; we will make certain it does.

If there is one thing our founders prized, ladies and gentlemen, it was education. When we won our freedom, one of their first promises was seven years of free primary education for every Kenyan child. We build on their legacy. We have already begun to connect every primary school in the republic to the national grid - a project that will be completed by the end of the next financial year. In the new budget, we will our allocation for primary education will rise twenty percent, and thirty percent for secondary education.

The extra money means that within three years, we will have truly free primary and secondary education, achieving an aspiration as old as the republic.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Together, as we did for the first time fifty-one years ago, we exercise our Madaraka. Together, we chose a new constitution that renewed the promise of self-rule. Together, we will enact the collective choice for change that it articulates.

My government has ensured that resources and support to devolution are delivered with all possible dispatch - that is why, only four years after we promulgated the constitution, Kenya is a country with a working system of devolved government.

This year, we have raised the county share of revenue to 46%, and we will continue to restructure the institutions of government - our intergovernmental bodies, in particular - to fulfil the promise of the new law.

Though the bickering of some of our leaders is occasionally louder than the calm retelling of these achievements, the fact is that we have much to be proud of. Kenya is doing in a few years what many of the oldest and most powerful nations on earth took centuries to achieve.

Fellow Kenyans,

Our unity is needed now than never before. Terrorists, thieves and poachers threaten our lives, our property and our national heritage. Our first defence is our men and women in the disciplined services.

My government will stand with them. We have introduced CCTV cameras in major cities and towns, as well as broadband connectivity at border points. We have already provided at least 1200 vehicles for police, which in time will also be equipped with CCTV cameras. Nearly 8,000 young men and women have already joined our disciplined services to strengthen them for the challenges to come; this year, we have set aside 2.9 billion shillings for the recruitment of 10,000 more police officers.

They will enter a police service whose conditions of service are rapidly improving: new housing and insurance will soon be theirs, as we have already set aside 1.6 billion shillings for the Police Medical Insurance Scheme. In return, we expect that their standards of discipline and service will rise to meet the expectations of Kenyans.

Our initiatives are not confined to security. To manage it, as well as our immigration, and to gather data far more accurate than we have now, my government will establish a national digital register in the coming financial year.

The resources we need have already been set aside and we can expect a full and comprehensive register of persons and property, enterprises and land. Contrary to the voices of controversy, our only aim is to unify the management of our information into a single, credible source of truth about matters of public concern.

The whole enterprise calls for responsibility and partnership between Kenyans and their government. Each of us above the age of 12 should make sure that our details are captured in the new register.

Equally, the Ministries of Interior and Information, should show diligence, so that we can see the exercise done before the end of the next financial year.

Fellow Kenyans,

Even with all this technology and all these programmes we plan to execute, our togetherness remains our most potent weapon. This, I urge you once again, is the time for unity and tolerance. That is why we should meet the neighbours on whom we each depend for our safety.

That is the truth behind the Nyumba Kumi Initiative. If each Kenyan will join with his neighbour and his government, then, neighbourhood by neighbourhood, we will secure this country.

Let us not, Fellow Kenyans, forget the lesson taught here; let us not forget the power of a nation united in goodwill. Indeed, it is our unity - our unity of purpose - that won the freedom of speech which we enjoy now.

Fellow Kenyans,

That unity of purpose requires each of us to do our jobs. Those of us in government must serve all Kenyans impartially. Those in opposition are called to offer the ideas that will help this nation leap the hurdles that block our path to the prosperity and unity we deserve.

Fellow Kenyans,

I have said much, and could say more. But mine now is to ask you to protect our precious inheritance. It is easy to look at the distance we have to travel, and despair. It is easy to fall into division, and to accept the narrative of negativity. But if we do that, we will have dishonoured our heritage. The better course is look back in gratitude at the distance we have come, and then to work together for the day when, under God's guidance, we will fulfil the dreams of our founders.

In conclusion, let me reaffirm that this is our year for action. We have made elaborate plans and now we must make a solemn pledge that this year, we shall work smarter and harder and we shall be driven by the tried truth: that hard work and responsibility bring progress.

Citizenship and patriotism means playing your part, obeying the laws, paying your taxes and being responsible. Every one of us must devote some of our talents and time to serving our fellow country men and women. I am confident we shall succeed for we are determined.

I thank you, fellow Kenyans, and friends of Kenya.

God bless you, and God Bless Kenya.