



**STATEMENT BY HIS EXCELLENCY HON. UHURU KENYATTA, C.G.H, PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF KENYA AND COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF OF THE DEFENCE FORCES DURING THE ANNUAL PRESIDENTIAL BRIEFING TO THE DIPLOMATIC CORPS ON THURSDAY, 4th MARCH 2021 AT STATE HOUSE, NAIROBI**

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**Your Excellency Ambassador Beyene Russom, Dean of the Diplomatic Corps,  
Excellencies Regional Deans,  
Excellencies, Ambassadors and High Commissioners,  
Excellency, Head of the United Nations Office in Nairobi,  
Heads of Missions and International Organizations,  
Ladies and Gentlemen.**

Good morning!

I take this opportunity to welcome you to this briefing on Kenya's diplomatic engagements. I thank you for your service, which is key in promoting cooperation and friendly ties between Kenya and your countries as well as the international organizations you represent.

I congratulate the Ambassadors and High Commissioners who presented their letters of credence yesterday. I am confident you will have fruitful tours of duty that shall decidedly advance the excellent relations between Kenya and your respective countries.

This past year was extraordinary. While the Covid-19 pandemic created devastating socio-economic disruption, it also brought out the best in international cooperation, innovation and resilience. On behalf of a grateful nation, I thank many of you for the support you extended to us in our effort to contain the Pandemic.

Today we are meeting as partners in a common cause - to forge a shared vision as we advance progress in Kenya and globally. As John F. Kennedy aptly put it "... History has made us friends, economics has made us partners, and necessity has made us

allies". As friends, partners and allies we are more successful when we understand each other's vision and aspirations, and work together to fulfil it.

The purpose of this briefing, therefore, is to appraise you on key issues and developments in Kenya and the region; and to expound Kenya's position on global issues of mutual interest. Forging this shared understanding is particularly critical at this time when our world faces major realignments and disruptions.

**Excellencies,**

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Kenya is an open and democratic society, and our strong democratic credentials extend beyond our domestic context, to the global sphere. They inform our Foreign Policy and underpin our commitment to maintain regular engagements with the diplomatic corps. These interactions typify our commitment to foster greater understanding, deepen our partnerships and leverage opportunities for the common good.

Securing our interdependent future depends on us growing our economies, democratizing our governance, ensuring the equitable distribution of resources and managing our diversity at home; this is our agenda.

This transformative agenda is, anchored in the aspirations of Kenya's Vision 2030, which serves as a vehicle for accelerating transformation of our country into a rapidly industrializing prosperous middle-income nation by the year 2030.

Seven years into my term as President, I have focused on an agenda to build a united country with a fast-growing economy; where wealth is created and prosperity shared fairly amongst all citizens. This entails creating more and decent jobs, raising living standards of every Kenyan, ending inequality and lifting more Kenyans out of poverty.

The aspiration is captured in, the Big Four Agenda, which is a framework to organize and prioritize the delivery of government services towards the realization of the Vision 2030. The four components of this agenda are:-

Increase our manufacturing share to GDP to 15 percent; to offer decent employment to Kenyans and reduce our trade deficit. We have consistently improved the business environment and we are now close to achieving the set target of 50 in the World Bank Ease of Doing Business ranking; having been ranked at 56 in 2020. This is an unprecedented turnaround given that Kenya was at position 136 in 2016. We are also on course to establish special economic zones and industrial parks across the country.

Realize universal access to healthcare. We seek to improve equitable access to affordable health services and address the high disease burden. Our investments in health financing, improved service delivery, increased personnel, the digitization of

health records and better access to quality medical equipment, are bearing fruit. We are now rolling out the Universal Health Care programme, across the country.

These measures have strengthened our health system, improved the health of our citizens and enabled us to mitigate the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic.

To achieve affordable housing, and despite the COVID-19 pandemic, we broke ground on several projects in 2020. The housing programme supported by a sound policy, has created a conducive business environment for the building and construction sector.

It has provided subsidized land, tax breaks, flexible payment options and a framework for public-private partnerships. The Programme maintains an active pipeline of projects championed by both Government and the Private sector.

To address food insecurity, we have targeted 3.3million households which are most at risk; we have achieved a 50 percent reduction in the number of food insecure Kenyans, a 34 percent increase in the average daily income of farmers and a 47 percent reduction in the cost of food as a percentage of income. This success has been achieved through various targeted interventions, many of which, we are implementing in partnership with many of you.

Let me, however, hasten to add that the transformation towards a prosperous and equitable society is still very much work in progress. Further, the Covid-19 pandemic has adversely affected the implementation of our Big Four Agenda.

Significant financial resources have had to be re-allocated to address the effects of the pandemic, amidst a slowdown in economic activity. The economic and social disruptions induced by the COVID-19 pandemic have eroded some of the progress we had made in recent years.

Our private sector faces lower demand due to reduced consumption and demand for inputs. These challenges have been compounded further by growing uncertainty, disrupted supply chains and limited fiscal space.

I thank you all for your ongoing support to these programmes and invite you to redouble your efforts and work with us to rebuild the growth momentum towards the socioeconomic transformation of Kenya.

**Excellencies,**

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

It is ten years since Kenya adopted the new Constitution. Over this period, we have undertaken far-reaching reforms in the judiciary, the executive and the legislative arms of government.

We have expanded the freedoms of all Kenyans, devolved the system of governance, and we have reformed the Public Service and the security sector.

However, from the voices of Kenyans, we still hear a yearning for deeper national unity, inclusivity, peace, and reconciliation as well prosperity. This is why in March 2018, the former Prime Minister, the Rt. Hon. Raila Odinga and I, launched the Building Bridges Initiative, commonly known as the BBI.

The BBI Taskforce has completed its work and submitted its Report. The Report has elicited great public debate. The Report extensively evaluates our national challenges and makes robust and comprehensive practical recommendations to address them. The public debate that is ongoing and which, I am sure all of you are following, is a healthy one.

This is because the BBI is about perennial issues we need to address as a Nation – particularly political transitions, negative ethnicity; inclusion; equitable development and our fight against corruption. We are convinced that these debates epitomize our democratic culture and our commitment to popular participation and ownership.

Let me, however, clarify that the BBI does not promise to settle all the constitutional questions through a singular amendment. It is a starting point to a continuous process of constitution-making for our young nation, aimed at achieving three planks, namely:

Manage diversity and institutionalize inclusivity in Kenya;

Strengthen devolution by increasing funds allocated to counties by the National Government from 15% to 35%; and ensure every Kenyan has a just and fair avenue for participation in the actions of government.

**Excellencies,**

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Kenya remains an anchor for regional peace and security. Our contribution to peace and security is, inspired by an understanding that conflicts are rarely isolated occurrences, confined within national borders: their effects are often regional and global. We recognize that Kenya's fate is intricately intertwined with that of our neighbours.

Unfortunately, our region remains in a state of constant flux with volatility triggered by security challenges as well as climate change induced vulnerabilities. Before the COVID-19 pandemic struck in early last year, the Horn of Africa region was already grappling with the largest locust invasion in recent years as well as wide-scale flooding; which, in many instances, occasioned massive displacement, loss of lives and livelihoods. Now the region faces a looming threat of famine.

Further, the region has been a theatre of geopolitical competition from extra- regional interests. The threat posed by terrorism remains real, despite the positive strides made in curbing the scourge. All these factors compound an already dire humanitarian situation, and, combined they continue to test our resolve to achieve shared prosperity for our region.

The good news is that there are several positive developments in the region, which I invite all of you to note and support.

In South Sudan, the Peace Process remains on course. The progress made in tackling key contentious issues is laudable; in particular, the recent steps towards completing the formation of the Transitional Government of National Unity at the State and Local government levels, including the appointment of the Governor of Upper Nile. However, the establishment of the Transitional National Legislative Assembly remains a critical imperative. Equally important, is the urgency to implement the Transitional Security Arrangements.

In Sudan, the democratic transition is on course and the Transitional Government has implemented significant governance, legal and structural reforms. The signing of the Juba Peace Agreement was a landmark achievement, and its implementation is on track. Fast tracking the establishment of the Transitional Legislative Council, is critical in delivering the necessary reforms and tackling the economic situation in the country.

In Ethiopia, the government has indicated that the law enforcement operation is over and that the rehabilitation process in Tigray is underway. Kenya, as a brotherly country to Ethiopia, will continue to encourage efforts to provide information on any excesses by either side, as well as endeavor to hasten the much-needed humanitarian assistance to that troubled part of Ethiopia. Kenya continues to hope for greater and lasting reconciliation in Ethiopia.

As you all know, Kenya has for a long time invested heavily in the process of restoring stability in Somalia. Our prime motivation has always been to see a stable Somalia, a peaceful neighbour with whom we share a long history, and with whom the opportunities to grow and prosper together, are boundless.

A peaceful coexistence with Somalia is key towards enhancing a spirit of cooperation and solidarity for the benefit of our peoples in both countries; and for a prosperous and integrated region.

**Excellencies,**

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

The African Union Mission in Somalia has been at the forefront of supporting Somalia's transition and stabilization efforts, and the Mission could continue to play this pivotal

role beyond 2021. Considering the prevailing security situation in Somalia, Kenya and other Troop Contributing Countries call for the extension of the mandate of AMISOM.

The ongoing drawdown of the Mission has already exposed the potential risk of severely undermining the gains made; and we see Al-Shabaab taking advantage to claim abandoned territory. AMISOM will require greater support particularly adequate and predictable funding including drawing funding from UN assessed contributions as well as equipping it with the requisite force enablers and force multipliers.

**Excellencies,**

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Those of you who have been in our country for a significant amount of time must have noted that Kenya is a country of farmers, techno-savvy entrepreneurs, and has a vibrant private sector. We in Kenya believe firmly in creating the best and most enabling environment for promoting business and entrepreneurship, in order to drive greater prosperity for our people.

In this regard, Kenya recognizes the strength and promise of regional integration. We remain firmly committed to our obligations and responsibilities at the East African Community, the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD) as well as the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA).

Kenya also believes in the promise of Africa; we are fully committed to building new frameworks and developing innovative solutions; that are African inspired, African led and that speak to Africa's needs and priorities.

The African Continental Free Trade Area typifies the vision of a prosperous Africa at peace with herself, and occupying her rightful place on the world stage.

As the rest of the world grapples with growing protectionism, Africa has chosen the path towards greater partnership, closer collaboration and shared prosperity.

The African Continental Free Trade Area will not only further consolidate our efforts to realize the dream of a prosperous and integrated Africa but also propel our economies to a higher growth trajectory.

**Excellencies,**

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Kenya is also working with the African Union Member States as well as other economic and political formations in the world, to define how the world relates to our continent, including in the context of the African Continental Free Trade Area.

For Kenya, key pillars of this realignment include a reinvigorated and dynamic engagement with the United States of America through the Africa Growth and Opportunity Act and the prospective Free Trade Agreement.

And with the European Union through the Economic Partnership Agreements. It also includes scaled up cooperation with China through the China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC), and with Japan through the Tokyo International Conference of Africa's Development (TICAD).

Critically, these, and similar engagements, are anchored in the reinvigorated East African Community, whose Chairmanship I have recently assumed.

### **Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Africa remains an integral part of the African, Caribbean and Pacific States Organization (OACPS). This grouping is the second largest multilateral grouping of countries after the United Nations.

Its networks developing countries in special and meaningful ways to deal with development challenges such as sustainable development, climate change, and pandemics.

This was the context in which, I convened and chaired, as President-in-Office of the Organization, the first ever-intersessional virtual Summit, at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic last year.

### **Excellencies,**

### **Ladies and Gentlemen,**

As you all know, Kenya remains a steadfast advocate for multilateralism and a rules-based global order.

Kenya has been a force for good globally and has made an outsized contribution to global affairs such as in the development of the Sustainable Development Goals and the United Nations 2030 Agenda.

However, contemporary challenges have laid bare the limits of our multilateral institutions. Transactional politics, zero-sum global politics, protectionism, unilateral sanctions, treaty withdrawals, and even military and economic coercion, which impede multilateralism. These conditions are worsened by transnational organized crimes, terrorism and cyber security threats.

This necessitates an urgent re-engineering of the global order in a manner that not only addresses contemporary concerns but also meets the hopes and aspirations of all

people, in the present and for future generations. We have useful post Covid-19 lessons to draw from as we re-engineer the global order.

**Excellencies,**

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Let me take this opportunity to thank you once again for your support to Kenya's election to the African Union Peace and Security Council and the United Nations Security Council.

Now more than ever, it is imperative that we reimagine the future and chart a bold new course for man-kind to successfully navigate the peace and security issues we face.

It is this singular commitment that drives Kenya's membership at the United Nations General Assembly and its subsidiary bodies, as well as Kenya's tenure at the United Nations Security Council and the African Union Peace and Security Council.

Our contribution at the United Nations Security Council and indeed across all multilateral fora, is anchored in an enduring hope and the firm belief that, together, we can create a better world.

The seemingly intractable challenges to peace, security and development that confront us today are an opportunity to introspect; our differences are an opportunity to negotiate innovative engagements, which secure peace and prosperity.

Kenya will continue to work closely with all Member States to ensure that the United Nations Security Council discharges its mandate in an inclusive, responsive and consultative manner.

As a member of the African Union Peace and Security Council, Kenya will build bridges between the two bodies in working towards greater peace, stability and prosperity on our continent.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The COVID-19 pandemic notwithstanding, Kenya has maintained critical contacts throughout the last year. Since January 2020, I had the pleasure to visit France, Italy, the Vatican and the United Kingdom and the United States.

I also hosted Heads of State and Government from Ethiopia, Germany, Somaliland as well as delegations from Algeria, Japan, Nicaragua, Saudi Arabia and the United Kingdom.



We also maintained strong international engagement and cooperation through video conferences and made numerous calls with Presidents and Prime Ministers, from various countries including Barbados, Bangladesh, Canada, China, India, Jamaica, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, St Vincent and the Grenadines, Turkey, the United States and most African Countries.

These efforts served to not only deepen the excellent ties between our countries but also build global consensus on issues of mutual interest. As representatives of your countries in Nairobi, I encourage you to engage us at all levels on any matter before the United Nations Security Council, the United Nations General Assembly, and on any other issues that would advance our common agenda.

## **Excellencies,**

### **Ladies and Gentlemen,**

One of the most critical emerging challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic is– and one that is of particular concern to me and my Administration, the pandemic’s impact on education. The global COVID-19 pandemic has amplified the challenges facing the education sector across the world and constrained our capacities to guarantee our children's inalienable and fundamental right to quality education.

As most governments reprioritize limited budgets to address the urgent health and social protection concerns, there is a risk that education may be, side-lined.

My Administration has put education at the front and centre of our development strategy. Investing in quality education is the surest way to prepare our children and youth to seize the opportunities of the 21<sup>st</sup> century and make meaningful contributions to Kenya’s development agenda. I believe that your respective countries equally cherish these sentiments.

The current situation thereby places us at a significant crossroad. We cannot fail the young children of our nations; education must not be, compromised and the tremendous progress we have made on education cannot be, slowed down.

It is for these reasons that Kenya and the United Kingdom plan to co-host the Global Partnership for Education Financing Conference on the 28<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> of July 2021 in London, with the aim of raising US Dollars 5 Billion to ensure continued equitable access to education for children and youth across the world.

In the coming days, we will extend an invitation to your respective governments to participate and support this initiative. Your valued participation will make a lasting statement to the children of the world, that, despite the challenges of our time, we were not willing to compromise their future.

I wish to thank the United Nations for the establishment of the Generation Unlimited Initiative (GenU). This multi-stakeholder global alliance aims to ensure young people, aged 10-24 years, are either, in education, training, or employment by 2030. As a

Global Leader for GenU, I invite you to embrace this path-breaking programme and support Kenya to develop sustainable pathways for nurturing and preparing our young people for the future.

**Excellencies,**

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

In spite of the loss, disruption and upheavals caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, new opportunities and important lessons have emerged. The pandemic has strengthened our resolve to find innovative solutions and validated our homegrown answers to global challenges. It has spurred industry, research and innovation.

These developments have inspired renewed confidence across our continent; and will continue to enrich our contribution and participation at the world stage.

In this regard, I am particularly proud to have had the opportunity to serve as a member of the Bureau of the Chairperson of the African Union under the leadership of President Cyril Ramaphosa.

In the Bureau we were able to coordinate strategic and innovative African solutions to the challenges we faced with the COVID -19 pandemic in Africa. We also engaged international partners including the World Health Organization in helping us confront the pandemic.

At this critical phase of the pandemic, we must continue to work together, or we shall fail together. We need to maintain global cooperation and solidarity.

As we pull ourselves out of the pandemic, it will be important to ensure that we vaccinate all vulnerable groups as a matter of urgency and that we resist the temptation to hoard vaccines. "Vaccine nationalism" is deplorable and should not be tolerated.

73 During the past year Kenya has enjoyed considerable support from many countries from all over the world. And many of those countries are represented here. I want to thank all countries that have given our country the assistance that we required at our hour of need.

In this context I particularly would like to recognize the support that we received from The Republic of Cuba, a brotherly country in the global south, which despite its size and limited resources, has continued to provide help to Kenyans and my administration throughout the year of the Covid-19 crisis.

It gives me great pleasure today to announce that my administration has made the important decision to reciprocate the generosity and kindness that has been extended

to our diplomats abroad, in countries such as France and Russia, where our diplomats have been vaccinated against Covid-19, from their host governments.

My administration will extend the same courtesy to eligible diplomats resident in Kenya, including those of the United Nations, on an agreed schedule that will be announced by the Ministry of health soon.

73 (a) It is imperative that vaccines are made available equitably to all who need them irrespective of their nationality, race or creed, everywhere in the world. This is the immediate challenge of our time.

**Excellencies,**

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

As we continue to grapple with the challenges posed by the Covid-19 pandemic, we cannot lose sight of other global challenges that confront us and threaten the sustainability of our shared planet.

Kenya was honoured to co-lead the UN Secretary General's inaugural Climate Action Summit. The Summit adopted commitments that are fair for all, and which will support jobs, clean air for better health and protect the most vulnerable against the impacts of climate change. Kenya urges the international community to endeavor to implement these commitments.

It is absolutely vital that we reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 45 per cent over the next decade, and to net zero emissions by 2050.

Kenya recognizes that climate change is a threat multiplier and is compounding already existing, vulnerabilities and fragilities to undermine peace and human security. Climate and security are therefore one of the four areas of focus during our tenure in the United Nations Security Council. We are committed to ensure that the implications of climate change on security, are prioritized. This is to avoid trapping vulnerable countries and communities in a vicious cycle of fragility, conflict and climate disasters.

**Excellencies,**

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

The theme of this year's United Nations Environmental Assembly (UNEA 5) was "strengthening action for nature to achieve sustainable development goals", which underscores our shared commitment to protect and restore nature and the nature-based solutions to achieve Sustainable Development. This commitment to restoring nature will be an integral and important part of adapting to and mitigating the worst effects of climate change.

As many of you know, next year, the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP) turns 50. This will be an important moment to reflect and to take stock of our partnership in protecting the global environment. It will be a moment to envision an ambitious, effective and coherent agenda that shall guide the work of UNEP over the next 50 years. We are confident that this will contribute significantly to our achievement of the target of net zero emissions, from both our economy and society.

I was pleased to launch activities towards the commemoration of 50 years of UNEP, which are a call to action to take responsibility for the environment for this generation and the next.

**Excellencies,**

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

You will also recall that the Governments of Kenya and Portugal championed the UN General Assembly Resolution 73/292, adopted in May 2019, to convene the United Nations Oceans Conference. The first United Nations Conference was held in June 2017, which successfully raised awareness on the state of the oceans and seas.

This was succeeded by the Sustainable Blue Economy Conference held here in Nairobi in November 2018, whose focus was predicated on the productivity and sustainability of Oceans, Seas, Lakes, Rivers and other water bodies. The Conference, which was conceived and executed by us in Kenya, with the support of many friends among you, gave rise to over 101 commitments and led to the adoption of the "Nairobi Statement of Intent on the Blue Economy".

The United Nations Oceans Conference that is rescheduled to be held in Lisbon in 2022, will accord the international community an opportunity to take stock, and to bring about a new generation of concrete and ambitious commitments to help forge new, inclusive and effective partnerships to support the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14 on oceans.

The Conference will be informed by a Transformation Strategy, which has been developed under the auspices of the High-Level Panel on a Sustainable Ocean Economy; where I serve together with 12 other heads of State.

**Finally, Excellencies,**

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Despite the complexities we face today, the resounding human reality is characterized by the yearning and aspiration for a better tomorrow. More than any time before, we have to contemplate a future, together, as a community of nations, noting our global interlinkages, our common fragilities but also, our collective strengths that we possess.

The onus is, therefore, upon us all, in recognition of the urgency of our time, to renew the resolve and commitment to direct our efforts and unite our strengths in building a common future of shared prosperity.

Let me take this opportunity to recognize the support and contribution that I have received from the Cabinet Secretary, the Chief Administrative Secretary and the Principal Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and their team of dedicated officers, who, despite the COVID-19 pandemic, remained engaged at extremely high risk to themselves.

Let me also recognize the great work of my Ambassadors abroad and their teams and in particular their contribution to our national effort to secure the United Nations Security Council seat. I am proud of all our achievements together in what was indeed a most difficult year in 2020.

Let me conclude by urging us all to turn the COVID-19 pandemic into an opportunity to strengthen international cooperation, to be our brother's keeper as we work towards recovery. Equally important, we must become bold and ambitious in redefining new models of cooperation that will support sustainable recovery and lead to the achievement of the 2030 agenda.

I want to encourage you to enjoy your stay in Kenya. This is a free and secure country. I encourage you to travel and experience the magical beauty of our country, and our diverse cultural heritage.

We value your friendship and your partnership and your contribution to our economic and social transformation. Let us work together towards global peace and shared prosperity.

We look forward to the future with renewed hope and confidence.

Asanteni Sana.