



**Republic of Kenya**

**Diplomatic Briefing**

**by**

**Amb. Raychelle Omamo 'SC' EGH**

**CABINET SECRETARY**

**MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS**

**Monday, 2<sup>nd</sup> March, 2020**

**Radisson Blue Hotel**

**Upper Hill**

**Nairobi, Kenya**

**Excellencies, Ambassadors and High Commissioners,**

**Members of the Diplomatic Corps;**

**Colleagues from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs;**

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

1. I warmly welcome you all to my debut briefing session for members of the Diplomatic Corps. This is part of the Ministry's continued commitment to regularly update you on matters of importance and mutual interest. I deeply appreciate the numerous congratulations and kind words of encouragement that I have received

from you and Foreign Ministers from your respective countries. I have endeavoured to reply with strong assurances of Kenya's commitment to enhancing relations at all levels of our engagement.

2. I am most honoured that His Excellency President Kenyatta appointed me to this high office, after seven years of serving Kenya as Kenya's Minister of Defence. I am deeply humbled. As our key clientele, I actively seek your kind support and counsel as we continue to strengthen Kenya's partnerships with your respective countries and organizations.
3. Excellencies, I wish to express my deepest gratitude to you all for the numerous messages of sympathy and of condolences following the passing of our second President, the late Daniel Arap Moi. We remember his pivotal role in advancing regional peace and security. As colleagues, you will know that we always work under constantly fluid conditions. We should therefore all deeply appreciate each other and the vital our work we do for our respective countries. For us in the Foreign Affairs family, the past few months have been difficulty ones for us, as we have sadly lost valued colleagues at a very short time **Newton Odinga, from Protocol; Vivian Talash from my Office; Ambassador Chris Mburu, our immediate former Envoy to South Sudan; and Ambassador Anthony Andanje, our former Permanent Representative to UN HABITAT.**

**LETS ALL RISE AND OBSERVE A MINUTE OF SILENCE FOR OUR FALLEN COLLEAGUES.**

**(Pause-May Their Souls Rest in Eternal Peace-Thank You).**

4. Excellencies, the main focus of today's session is to update you on the current state of affairs in Kenya and within our region. In addition, I will touch on a few key international engagements pertinent to Kenya and to our partners.
5. It is worth beginning, by very briefly restating the **Cardinal Principles of Kenya's engagement with the rest of the world.** Kenya espouses a **rules-based ethos**, which we deploy in **all** our external relations. We uphold this ethos, because as a small country, rules matter. We cannot be reliable players and partners if we decide, willy-nilly to disregard the agreed foundation of civilized discourse and practice among nations. This philosophy frames our commitment to **Peace Diplomacy-** where we leverage our assets to ensure peace and security prevail in our region and beyond and in so doing protect Kenya's sovereignty and territorial integrity; **The Economic Pillar:** where we assert that prosperity shared, affirms peace and stability, within and without our borders- and that a rising tide, lifts all boats. Prosperity in our region insures prosperity for all, hence the importance of regional and economic integration, see for example in the Africa Continental Free Trade Area(ACFTA); **The Environmental Pillar:** the United

Nations located in Nairobi, the only UN Headquarters in the global South, housing the United Nations Environment Programme and UN Habitat. We cherish this reality and further posit that we hold our flora and fauna in trust, as the common heritage of mankind. This biodiversity has also enhanced our continent as a tourist destination. In securing this trust, we will continue working with all to combat climate change and other harmful policies and practices that damage our environment; **The Cultural Pillar:** aims to extoll Africa's cultural wealth, past, present and future and assert an Affirmative African Narrative, that leads to a clearer mindset about our past and a more robust projection of this rich varied culture into the future. We are a rich tapestry of mixed heritage rooted in timeless origins. That is why we warmly embrace and support Africa's Champion and Chair of the African Union Council of Peers of the Arts, Culture and Heritage, the President of Mali, His Excellency Boubacar Keita -He has invited President Kenyatta to be a Co -Chair- he has humbly accepted; **The Diaspora Pillar:** Protecting and promoting the interests of ALL Kenyans abroad and reaffirming our common ancestry with African descendants in diaspora.

### **Building Bridges Initiative**

6. The past ten years have re-affirmed Kenya's democratic credentials. Indeed, Africa is in an enviable position where the pursuit and entrenchment of democracy and its precepts is the norm rather than the exception. In other parts of the world we see democracy in retreat. Kenya's democratic journey continues to evolve. The "**handshake**" has become the epitome and evolving standard in shaping political systems and outcomes to suit socio-cultural and economic realities in Kenya. We realize that a one-size-fits-all straitjacket cannot work. Templates will not solve our problems. Each of us have to tweak our systems to match the aspirations of the most common denominator. This quest is what underpins and anchors the Building Bridges Initiative (BBI) which aims to comprehensively address both historical and emerging national challenges, to ensure predictable political competition that is democratic and inclusive in our ethnic, religious and regional diversity.
7. The Presidential Task Force to evaluate and recommend reform proposals thereafter submitted a report on '**Building Bridges to a United Kenya**' which was subsequently launched on Wednesday 27<sup>th</sup> November, 2019 at the BOMAS of Kenya, in Karen, in your distinguished presence. This report was presented to the public to prompt public discourse on the future of Kenya. Consequently, BBI rallies have been held in Kisii County, Kakamega County, Mombasa County, Kitui County, Narok County and will continue Nation-wide to elicit public participation. **We will keep you informed on material outcomes when available.**

## RECENT HIGH-LEVEL VISITS/IMPENDING ONES

8. The President of Germany held a successful State Visit to Kenya from 23<sup>rd</sup> to 27<sup>th</sup> February 2020. During his visit he reaffirmed Germany's commitment in continuing its robust partnership with Kenya as the first country to establish relations with independent Kenya in 1963. He rededicated Germany's focus on Agriculture, Health and Youth support especially on TVET, including KIST in neighbouring Kiambu County. He further pledged his country's support for humanitarian action including the building of secure accommodation in Kakuma Refugee Camp. On Peace and Security, the German Head of State reaffirmed support for regional security initiatives including AMISOM and pledged to work towards securing more funding for the force. He also proffered enhanced support for the Humanitarian Peace Support School HPSS in Embakasi as a fine example of partnership in peace support operations especially in capacity building in dealing with new asymmetric threats occasioned by innovation in terrorist methods.

## Kenya and the Region

9. **Excellencies**, the world as we know it today is faced with near intractable complexities that undermine our common aspirations for prosperity, peace and security. Despite the persistent asymmetric activity occurring in unilateral action; spreading protectionism; terrorism and violent extremism; biological threats and **disease pandemics such as COVID 19**; ecological disasters such as the locust plague, Kenya will continue to work closely with all partner countries to collectively pursue solutions to address these contemporary challenges. More than ever before, partnership between states is imperative.
10. In **South Sudan**, we celebrate with people of South Sudan and warmly commend the efforts of H.E. President Salva Kiir Mayardit for demonstrating leadership by dissolving the Transitional Government of National Unity (TGoNU) and making initial appointments, including his Vice President HE Riak Machar to the Reconstituted Transitional Government of National Unity (RTGoNU). Let us all support these important first steps. We urge the international community to continue exhibiting goodwill and support to ensure the successful implementation of the peace process.
11. In **Somalia**, we continue to work within AMISOM to facilitate Somalia peace building efforts including the imminent elections. We continue to play a measured and constructive role in laying the foundation for Somalia's future security and prosperity. We call for a de-escalation of the rhetoric and a renewed focus on stabilizing and consolidating democratic and security gains made.

## 33<sup>rd</sup> Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the African Union

12. **Excellencies**, as you are aware, the 33<sup>rd</sup> African Union Summit was held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia from 6<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup>, February, 2020. It was an honour to represent H.E. the President in this important Assembly, as my first assignment abroad after taking on the mantle of the Foreign Minister. Let me seize this opportunity, once again to congratulate the Arab Republic of Egypt for steering the AU so well in 2019 and to reiterate Kenya's appreciation for the role that Egypt played in spearheading our collective commitment to unity as we define the future of our continent. In the same vein Kenya welcomes and congratulates the Republic of South Africa as the new Chair of the AU and wish to assure of our dedication and support as we seek to Silence the Guns in Africa and promote shared prosperity through economic integration of our continent, while scrupulously upholding the letter and spirit of the AU's Constitutive Act-with its firm commitment to the rules we collectively agreed to abide by. This common goal is well articulated by H.E. President Cyril Ramaphosa that we seek a "**Africa that is prosperous and at peace with itself.**"

13. Some of the highlights from the successful 33<sup>rd</sup> AU Summit were:

- **Silencing The Guns;** The Summit was held on a highly ambitious theme for the continental body '*Silencing the Guns by 2020.*' The debates on the theme underscored the need to deal with the root causes of conflicts in Africa and the imperative to build concerted efforts to address challenges to peace and security in Africa including terrorism and violent extremism. The Summit concluded with a resounding commitment to resolve protracted conflicts in Africa and to unlock the continent's economic potential mainly through its economic integration agenda enshrined in the AfCFTA process. Towards this end, South Africa will host an extraordinary AU Summit on '*Silencing the Guns*' in May, 2020. We welcome and support this effort and will participate.
- **Africa Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA);** In adopting the Report by President of Niger, who is the Champion of the Africa's economic integration, the Summit undertook to fast-track the operationalization of the AfCFTA. Kenya welcomed the election of Mr. Wamkele Mene as the first Secretary General of the Accra based Headquarters. H.E. President Uhuru Kenyatta is a leader in Africa's integration project and a committed Pan-Africanist seeking to strengthen Africa's unity and beyond to include stronger collaboration with peoples of African descent.
- **IGAD Summit;** The 34th Extraordinary Summit of the IGAD Heads of State and Government held on the margins of the AU Summit deliberated on the situation in South Sudan and agreed to support political transition in the country within the deadline of 22nd February, 2020. The IGAD Summit also agreed to a regional framework to deal with the locust invasion and to implement the measures recommended by Kenya including calling for international support to deal with the

threat as well as the strengthening of the regional efforts to address desertification.

- **Africa Leaders Malaria Alliance (ALMA);** E. the President took over the 7th Chair of ALMA from His Majesty, King Mswati of Eswatini, for a 2-year period. The Chairmanship presents opportunity for the President to drive the continent's efforts to accelerate progress and end Malaria as part of improved health outcomes in line with the Africa We Want, Agenda 2063.
- **Africa Arts and Culture Champion;** E. the President assumed a co-chairing role with the President of Mali as African Champions for Arts and Culture in a Council of the African Union. The Council is expected to promote the implementation of the 2019 Charter on African Cultural Renaissance.
- **Africa-CARICOM Summit;** The AU Summit welcomed and adopted President Kenyatta's proposal agreeing on the **Declaration on Promoting Closer collaboration and Cooperation between the African Union, the African Diaspora (6<sup>th</sup> Region), People of African Descent and the Caribbean and Pacific Regions**. In fulfilling our commitment towards this end, Kenya is ready to host the Africa-CARICOM Summit in June, 2020.

### **Kenya's UNSC Bid**

14. **Excellencies,** Kenya's endorsement as Africa's candidate for a non-permanent seat of the United Nations Security Council for the 2021-2022 period, was reaffirmed at the recent 36th AU Executive Council Meeting. Egypt's Permanent Representative to the AU, as Chair of the PRC, submitted the Report of the PRC to the Council in which the decision to endorse Kenya was unequivocally declared as "fully completed" and confirmed. This was further by the opinion of the Legal Counsel of the African Union dated 5<sup>th</sup> November, 2019. The reality of our endorsement is not in question. We invite all to respect the African Union Process with clear decision. Let us abide by the rules of the game. If you agree on the rules, processes and outcomes you cannot have a change of mind and seek to upset a valid process through misinformation. The ramifications of not playing by the rules are immense.
15. Our global campaign is on good course and we continue to receive overwhelming endorsement and assurance of support by regional groupings and individual countries, not only because of our own credentials as a trusted member of the international community, but equally, importantly, arising from strong solidarity within Africa.
16. I again seek your support and request you to vote overwhelmingly for Kenya during elections to take place on 17<sup>th</sup> June, 2020 in New. Kenya is a safe pair of

hands; we are ready to serve and we will deliver on our commitment as a member of the international community.

17. I look forward to engaging with you all as we continue to promote to the world. Africa's values and principle through our endorsed candidature.

### **United Nations 2020 Oceans Conference**

18. **Excellencies**, the Governments of Kenya and Portugal championed the UN General Assembly Resolution 73/292 adopted in May 2019 to convene the United Nations 2020 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 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 gave rise to over 191 commitments and led to the adoption of the Nairobi Statement of Intent. Noteworthy was the statement by H.E. President Yoweri Museveni articulating the importance of the Blue Economy by equating the Blue Economy Conference as a dialogue about '*life*'.
19. This year from 2<sup>nd</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup> June 2020, in Lisbon, Portugal, the United Nations 2020 Conference will accord the international community an opportunity to bring about a new generation of concrete and ambitious commitments to help forge new, inclusive and effective partnerships to support the implementations of Sustainable Development Goal 14: '*To conserve and sustainably use oceans, seas and maritime resources for sustainable development*'. Invitations have been sent out through the Office of the United Nations Secretary General to all Heads of State and Government of the UN member states. We look forward to your active participation and sustainable outcomes.

### **Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group (CMAG)**

20. As Co-chair of the C-MAG, Kenya looks forward to host the 56<sup>th</sup> Session on the 31<sup>st</sup> of March, 2020 here in Nairobi. I am confident this will contribute to the ongoing debate on enhancing the effectiveness of the Commonwealth in delivering the collective interests of the members states. The meeting will also deliberate on the forthcoming Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) in from 22<sup>nd</sup>– 27<sup>th</sup> June 2020, in Kigali, Rwanda.

### **PRIVILEGES AND IMMUNITIES**

### **REVITALIZATION OF THE HOST COUNTRY LIAISON COMMITTEE**

21. I am fully briefed on the challenges you have been facing in implementing your mandate as diplomats in Kenya. I am happy to announce that great progress has been made under the tutelage of Ambassador Sam Getonga. We will facilitate him to continue delivering on his important remit. Two Town Hall meetings were held on Thursday 27<sup>th</sup> February 2020 between the relevant Government agencies and the Diplomatic Corps. On Friday 28<sup>th</sup> February a second Town Hall Meeting for UNON, Regional and International Organizations was held. Together, both had over 260 participants. I know this outfit in the Ministry has approved over 3500 cases for VAT reimbursement up from a few hundred, since last September. We are still trying to clear the backlog. I am also aware that some other issues require more focus. These include;

- Difficulties faced in the issuance of Dependency Passes
- Delays in VAT reimbursements
- Difficulties in the registration of vehicles and issuance of Drivers licences for Diplomats
- Delays in issuance of Diplomatic ID cards
- High electricity bills
- High cost of Work Permits for Local Staff
- Non – functional Components of the Integrated Protocol Management Information System (IPMIS).
- Security Concerns for Diplomatic Staff.

***I strongly reaffirm my personal commitment and that of my Ministry's commitment to serving the Diplomatic Corps, UNON, International and Regional Organizations much much better, including the revitalization of the HOST COUNTRY LIAISON COMMITTEE.***

22. **In conclusion**, I look forward to working closely with each one of you, directly and through my staff as we continue to nurture and promote Kenya's relations with your respective countries and organizations. In this regard, I will seize every opportunity available to engage each one of you on important issues. ***I will schedule initial meetings with Regional Groupings and then on a case-by-case basis depending on the matter.*** I have a very competent group of directors who I request you to work very closely with. Do not wait to see me when the matter can be quickly resolved by my senior staff. Inevitably any matter raised with them gets to me immediately. Work with them, PS Macharia and PDS Amolo as well. We are a team. That is why I wish all Directors to stand up and be formally introduced by PDS Amolo. (Pause – introductions made). We will get the job done. I assure you that under my leadership, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs will avail every opportunity possible to engage with the diplomatic corps as we collectively build Kenya's ties with other countries and the international community.