



DRAFT SPEECH BY HIS EXCELLENCY THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF KENYA AND COMMANDER IN CHIEF OF THE ARMED FORCES, HON. UHURU MUIGAI KENYATTA, CGH, DURING THE OFFICIAL OPENING OF THE 9TH AFRICITIES SUMMIT AT JOMO KENYATTA SPORTS GROUNDS, KISUMU ON 17TH MAY, 2022

**Distinguished Guests
Ladies and Gentlemen:**

Good morning and welcome to Kenya and by extension, to our beautiful Lake Side City of Kisumu.

It is with great pride that I join you today to officially open the 9th Africities Summit, a Continental Summit that is held every three years in one of the five regions of Africa.

As you are all aware, Kisumu was accorded the rare privilege of hosting the Africities Summit, the first intermediary City to ever host this Summit, during the 8th Africities Summit that was held in Marrakech, Morocco, in 2018. Indeed, Kenya is lucky as this is the second time we are hosting this iconic Summit, after Nairobi held the inaugural Summit in 2006.

I am informed that the theme of this year's Summit is "***The role of Intermediary Cities of Africa in the implementation of the Agenda 2030 of the United Nations and the African Union Agenda 2063***". The theme thus ties very well with Kisumu being one such Intermediary City.

As part of my Government's commitment in hosting this Summit, I accepted to be the Patron of the 9th Africities Summit and have ensured that Kisumu has been accorded all the necessary support to host the Summit.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

This Summit comes at a critical time when Africa's rapid urbanization and the challenges of future cities is increasingly coming into sharp focus. Consequently, the role of Intermediary Cities as the next frontiers of African urbanization and development, cannot be overstated.

Deliberations at the just concluded High Level Meeting of the UN General Assembly on the progress in the implementation of the New Urban Agenda, recognized that Africa is rapidly urbanizing leading to substantive challenges of ensuring a liveable future for urban residents in social, economic and environmental terms.

Indeed, Africa is among the fastest urbanizing regions in the World and this calls for careful planning to balance the demands on the Continent's ecosystem and biodiversity with the delivery of smart cities.

Africa's population is projected to rise to 2.5 Billion by 2050, out of which 55% will live in urban areas. Intermediary Cities will therefore play a bigger role in hosting the increased urban populations.

This thus calls for proper planning to create smart cities that meet future urbanization challenges and that are able to address the emerging needs related to food, security, health, shelter, environmental conservation and infrastructure. The need for this was clearly demonstrated during the peak of the Covid-19 pandemic when it became necessary to support those living in informal settlements in our cities and urban centres with food rations and the provision of sanitary facilities.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

My Administration has put in place measures that have contributed to urban rebirth especially under the Country's Big 4 Agenda flagship projects. My Government has put in massive investments to improve road network, infrastructure developments and planned urban housing, which are critical ingredients in the growth of urban centres.

I am reliably informed that Kisumu has drawn up a physical and spatial plan to guide the development of the City for the next 50 years, clearly demarcating its future development aspirations and needs. I wish to congratulate Prof. Anyang' Nyong'o, the Governor, County Government of Kisumu, for his visionary leadership and stewardship of the affairs of this great County and urge other leaders to follow his example.

As leaders in Africa's Local Governance space, this Conference is a good opportunity to critically analyze the importance of good governance and visionary leadership in the prosperity of our Counties/States/Districts or Local Authorities. As peers, it is important to use this great forum to learn from each other.

In addition, the Summit gives us the enviable opportunity to renew our commitment as a Continent to tackling urbanization challenges through the diverse expertise, among whom are taking part in the Summit proceedings and events. The time to move the African Urban Agenda is now, and the place to launch the African Urban mobilization is this 9th Edition of the Africities Summit

Ladies and Gentlemen:

Almost 10 years ago, Kenya embraced, the devolved system of government in line with the Constitution of Kenya, 2010. Implementing a new system of governance is never easy and as a Country, we have experienced many teething problems but I am happy to report that despite these challenges, we have reaped and continue to reap the benefits of devolution, as a Nation and in each of our 47 Counties.

Devolution for us has led to a more equitable distribution of national resources. You will all agree with me that before devolution most of the resources, including public institutions, were concentrated in major urban centres. With devolution however, this has changed and each County has a chance for growth as resources are distributed equally according to the parameters put in place for division of resources.

Kenya's setup is steadily moving from exclusion to inclusion as marginalized communities and minorities have found a voice and are now starting to reap the fruits of self-governance as decisions made at the County level focus more on the local needs of the people. The institutionalization of public participation in decision making and dedicated civic education have positively impacted on and brought about improved governance.

This 9th Africities Summit thus presents a golden opportunity to showcase what devolution has achieved for Kenya. I believe Kisumu will be a great case study for the delegates to see for themselves the impact of devolution on the socio-economic and political fabric of our Nation.

A visitor to Kisumu 10 years ago, can indeed tell the major transformation that Kisumu has undergone in the last 10 years of

devolution. This scenario is replicated in almost all the other 46 Counties and it gives me great pleasure to have overseen these major changes in Kenya's landscape.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

The World is slowly reawakening from the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic that brought about total disruptions of all activities including travel. As we are all aware, this Summit would have been held last year but had to be postponed due to COVID. Economies are now slowly recovering and as Country, we are greatly honoured to be hosting this Summit at this time.

According to our latest Economic Survey, Kenya's economy has grown by 7.8 percent due to the recovery measures we have instituted from the crippling effects of the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions. The easing of restrictions has resulted in the opening up of the economy with our trade volumes rising to Kshs, 2,894.9 Billion in 2021 from 2,287.3 Billion in 2020. I believe this scenario is replicated in each of the 54 African Countries and the rest of the World in general.

I believe one of the lessons of the COVID-19 pandemic is the need to enhance our capacity for growth and to build more resilience in our institutions in order to better cope with unforeseen circumstances in the future. Indeed, Africa has huge proportions of natural resources (both renewable and non-renewable, which are in high demand by the advanced economies, yet remain largely unexploited. These resources include arable land, water, oil, natural gases, minerals and wildlife.

To mention but a few, our Continent is home to the World's largest arable land mass; has the second largest and longest rivers (Congo and Nile); the second largest tropical forest; 30 percent of the global mineral resources while the total value of its' fisheries and agriculture sector is estimated at USD 24 Billion. The Continent's proven oil reserves constitute eight (8) percent of the World stock while natural gas reserves amount to seven (7) percent. In addition, minerals contribute roughly 70 percent of Africa's exports.

As global citizens, we are also experiencing the impact of various events influenced by geo-politics. Similar to other Continents, we are experiencing constrained global supply chain that has resulted in high prices of energy, crude oil, food and farm inputs.

My take is that as emerging markets and developing economies, we need to prepare ourselves to get a slice of the global market. There is a lot we can do to strengthen the trade between and amongst ourselves.

Coming together and learning from each other will enable us leverage on the Continent's natural resources to enhance our inclusivity and sustainable economic growth. This coming together of County/Local Government Leadership is a step in the right direction. After these five days of deliberations, it is my hope that you will come up with a roadmap on how this can be achieved.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

Allow me to draw your attention on the urgent need to prioritize building resilience of urban institutions within our Secondary Towns, and Intermediary Cities, which encompasses Municipalities, Towns and Market Centres across the African Continent.

Of great concern is the climate change crisis, which is a reality and goes against the need to secure our future and that of our next generations. Africa has been a victim of adverse climate change impacts which have destroyed lives, livelihoods, properties and economies. This therefore calls for an increased and dedicated public resources to address emerging urban emergencies and disasters and to carter for urban revitalization.

The situation in urban areas is worsened by the increasing mass migration of population from rural areas. This has compounded the already precarious situation as the governance structures of Intermediary Cities of Africa are characterized by inadequate infrastructure and socio-economic opportunities to meet the needs of the victims of the climate change crisis.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

As a commitment to address the challenges and bring back hope to urban populace, Kenya championed the Building Climate Resilience for the Urban Poor (BCRUP) Initiative. I launched this initiative on behalf of the Global Community at the UN Climate Action Summit, 2019 in New York. I therefore implore the African Continent to embrace this initiative on climate ambition with the urban lens. Later today, I welcome you to the BCRUP-Kenya Initiative National Launch at High Level Climate Day.

In collaboration with UCLGA we intend to move this process from the level of engagement to implementation.

The Government of Kenya is keen to sign a pact with the United Cities and Local Government of Africa during this Summit in supporting this initiative on the operations of Intermediary Cities and other urban areas in Kenya. Our close ties with the organization has been strong and to bring this closer home, I urge the UCLGA leadership to move fast and establish their office in Nairobi.

To empower Intermediary Cities to optimally meet the obligations under the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development Goals: Particularly, SDG 11 on Sustainable Cities and Communities; and to enhance our commitment on the implementation of the New Urban Agenda; the Paris Agreement (COP21); and the Sendai Framework on Disaster Risk Reduction; Kenya has prioritized the implementation of the National Urban Development Policy, and the Urban Areas and Cities Act. The Policy and the Act will regulate the establishment and strengthening the management of urban institutions including Cities, Municipalities, Towns and Market Centres.

We look forward to collaborating with UCLGA and other partners in moving forward practical and people centred urban policies and instruments that will turn-around the content of our African urbanization framework.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

The health status of our economies, and the wealth of our Nations and indeed the continent is measured by the quality of our urbanization. Indeed many African Countries are on the drive to realizing middle-income status. I urge that we recognize that no country can achieve middle-income status except on the basis of quality urbanization. This makes it more urgent to refocus our urban objectives as a continent.

To achieve holistic urbanization and ensure that urban areas lead in the drive towards inclusivity, quality living and economic transformation, there is greater need now for developing and putting in place effective

urban institutions that are fully equipped to run urban areas professionally.

Kenya through the Sub - National Governments has taken lead in creating 59 municipalities across all our Counties, which have benefited from key programmes notably; the Kenya Devolution Support Programme, Kenya(KDSP);Urban Support Programme (KUSP); Kenya Slum Upgrading Programme (KSUP); Kenya Informal Settlements Improvement Programme (KISP): and the Affordable Housing Programme under the Big Four Agenda.

The major hindrance to realization of sustainable urbanization in Africa is the prevailing inadequate technical and financial capacities. Kenya is focused on the establishment of the National Urban Development Fund, to bridge this gap. We are therefore urging for the creation of dedicated conditional grants throughout Africa to move the African Urban Agenda from engagement to implementation. We are also urging for closer working relationships with the World Bank, the Africa Development Bank and other partners for the provision of technical assistance and logistical support to see this through.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

As I conclude, I want to wish you all fruitful deliberations during the five days of the Summit. I also urge you to find time out of your busy schedules and sample some of our tourism sites within the Western Region Tourism Circuit.

We, Kenyans, are renowned for our warmth and hospitality. As a Government we welcome all the delegates to sample our hospitality on the sidelines of the 9th Africities Summit.

Karibuni Kisumu. Karibuni Kenya.

THANK YOU

H.E HON. UHURU KENYATTA, CGH,

**PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF KENYA AND COMMANDER IN
CHIEF OF THE KENYA DEFENCE FORCES.**

17TH MAY, 2022