



REPUBLIC OF KENYA

**NATIONAL ADDRESS BY HIS EXCELLENCY
HON. WILLIAM SAMOEI RUTO, PHD., C.G.H
PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF KENYA
AND COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF OF THE
DEFENCE FORCES ON THE OCCASION OF
MASHUJAA DAY CELEBRATIONS HELD ON
THE 20TH OCTOBER 2022, AT UHURU
GARDENS NAIROBI.**

1. I am tremendously privileged to join Kenyans and our visitors today as we commemorate the 59th anniversary of **Mashujaa Day**. It is with great humility that I preside over this year's celebrations for the first time as President and I am humbled and grateful for the honour.
2. We solemnly **observe** this important day every year in order for us to **reflect** upon where we have come from as a nation. We mark this date to consider the troubled road we trod through, the sorrowful wilderness of cruel colonial injustice and the price that was paid in blood, toil, anguish and death for us to be a free people.
3. We take this opportunity to also celebrate the histories of the heroes and heroines who sacrificed valiantly in our freedom struggle, their character and most importantly, the values and principles which inspired, sustained and vindicated them, so that we may emulate them by leading lives worthy of their sacrifices. We ask ourselves today: What must we do to transmit this noble history and ensure that future generations appreciate us, not only as worthy heirs of our illustrious ancestors, but also as skillful stewards of their heritage?
4. We do this in pursuit of a solemn covenant proclaimed in the preamble of our Constitution that we, the people of Kenya, shall **honour** those who heroically struggled to bring freedom and justice to our land by adopting, enacting and giving the Constitution to ourselves and to our future generations.
5. Our Constitution articulates a vision of Kenya our heroes and heroines would have approved: A Kenya worth fighting for and worth paying the ultimate price for. It is their legacy to us and it sets the stage for us to continue their patriotic work in that noble spirit that roused the first freedom fighters to resist colonial rule and their successors to reject post-colonial repression.
6. Our heroes and heroines were neither elected nor appointed. They were not sponsored and they were not funded. They had no offices or budgets. They were ordinary people invested in the struggle to make good their unwavering belief that all people are equal and deserve to live in freedom. People of all walks of life: subsistence farmers and traders, clerks and former soldiers, teachers and their learners, preachers and their congregants, drivers, cooks and farm workers ran away to the forest, armed with nothing but the conviction that a more just way of life is possible and that it is worth fighting for.

7. The legacy of independence is the historic achievement of value-driven **bottom-up heroism**. The people were distinguished by their unity and commitment to selfless endeavour, determination, patriotism and an unyielding sense of justice. Every time we have come together, we have accomplished major feats. That is why, as a nation, we are exhorted by the National Anthem: “Let one and all arise, with hearts both strong and true”.
8. Our Constitution, the people’s sovereign charter, is an instrument of collective memory. It proscribes tyranny, marginalization and oppression, provides institutional means to dismantle injustice and eradicate inequality and gives us an opportunity to expand freedom and actualise rights. It also defines human well-being to be the reason for individual and collective action as well as the object of the totality of national enterprise.
9. We are united in common endeavor with those who came before us and did so much for our country. We may define ourselves as a nation proudly standing on the foundation of the Constitution, united in pursuit of the wellbeing of every citizen.
10. The principal reason for promulgating our Constitution, then, was to inscribe the values which animated our history of accomplishment and to project them in a manner that resonates across generations. The national values and principles of governance set out in Article 10 form the soul of its dispensation. They define the parameters of patriotism, exemplary service, selfless sacrifice and profile us in terms of who we are and who we ought to be, individually and as a nation.
11. We can and we must employ these values as beacons for identifying people whose contributions honour the memory of our heroes and heroines and bring glory to our nation.
12. It is time to direct our focus on the work that each one of us does to understand how we contribute to our individual well-being, as well as that of our communities and nation. In this understanding, we must take into account that individuals make up the greater national family and that Kenya’s stature and splendor is always greater than the sum total of our individual efforts or community endeavor. Similarly, our national capacity determines the extent of opportunities all Kenyans have to pursue and attain their aspirations. What I am saying is that regardless of the type and scale of our

pursuits, every contribution matters. And regardless of our walk of life, our work matters, our intentions matter and our thoughts matter, because we all matter.

13. I congratulate every citizen for their part in ensuring that the last election was peaceful. I know of attempts at division, disunity, confusion and even some who did everything in their power to entice and pressure our people to engage in criminal activities. But I also know that, despite a competitive campaign period characterised by intense rivalry, Kenyans resolved, in unison, to remain peaceful, united and compassionate. We set a new standard for ourselves: issue-based campaigns, transparent elections and a peaceful outcome.
14. I salute all Kenyans who set out every day, everywhere, doing ordinary things in inspired and extraordinary ways to fend for themselves and their families, thereby keeping the country going. I commend those whose work involves service to others. I celebrate those who volunteer and give, expecting nothing in return, yet serve selflessly. From the **farmers** who feed our nation to the **drivers** who connect all parts of the country by conveying people and goods, **educators** who impart knowledge to our infants in kindergartens, children in schools and youth in tertiary institutions, **medical staff** in wards, in the field and training institutions, **workers** in quarries and construction sites, **artisans** in their small sheds and in large workshops, **traders** on the side streets in rural and urban markets, and all the way to the Nairobi Securities Exchange, **professionals** who give their best in every sector of national endeavour and our men and women in uniform, whose bravery and commitment continue to set the gold standard for sterling devotion to our flag - this nation salutes your service and celebrates your contribution. These are real acts of heroism.
15. Because of the contributions of Kenyans everywhere, our country continues to make great strides towards socio-economic transformation, shared prosperity and enhanced wellbeing for our people. In the East and Horn of Africa regions, the larger African continent and globally, this nation expresses our values with greater clarity, and the State projects our aspirations more emphatically.

Agriculture

16. It is now time to lay the foundation for our future. Agriculture, as the lead sector to the economic transformation of our country, is the place to start, owing to its potential for high and quick returns on investment. But the situation in the country is wanting and we have a severe food shortage as a result of a prolonged drought in Kenya and the larger Horn of Africa region, the worst in nearly half a century, with three years of failed rain. Coupled with this are the extremely high global fertiliser prices. Our government's initial intervention to mitigate these challenges has been to step up food supply in northern Kenya and other regions and ensure better coordination between government and development partners. We thank our partners for their input that has gone a long way in relieving the dire situation.

17. World fertiliser prices have more than doubled in the past 2 years since Covid-19. The prices were passed on to farmers, and the cost skyrocketed to more than Ksh7,000 for a 50-kg bag. This had a huge impact on productivity of farmers last year. For example, maize production suffered a deficit of more than 10 million bags. Our government's first intervention to address the fertiliser challenge and make it available to counties and regions that plant in the short rain season, was to import 1.5 million 50kg bags and distribute them at a lower cost of Ksh3,500. We have also made arrangements to make another 6 million bags of various types of fertiliser available for the long rains season. We have also asked county governments to work with us on last-mile delivery to centres close to farmers.

18. These, however, are short-term measures, and we have to take very bold steps to end the perpetual cycle of hunger and dependency on rain-fed agriculture. We must eradicate hunger in our country in the shortest time possible. To do this, we have the following plans:
 - a) We have to increase agriculture productivity. We will support all farmers to access quality inputs such as seeds, fertiliser and pesticides, among others and also ensure that our farmers have access to extension services in order to improve farming skills. In the short-term, we will continue with the fertiliser import programme. But in the medium term, the government plans to have fertiliser manufactured in partnership with EAC countries in our region.

- b) On seeds, our government will work with local research institutions and both the public and private sectors to scale up seed multiplication for all crops.
- c) However, irrigation is the ultimate solution in guaranteeing food security. In 2017, the government set out to build 57 dams to harness water for irrigation and domestic use. Many did not even start, few are complete while the rest are ongoing. The huge capital outlay required for dam construction in the context of competing budgetary priorities, poses a huge challenge to this programme.
- d) To address this challenge, we are working on innovative investment mechanisms through public-private partnerships to construct at least 100 dams. Consequently, it would be possible to progressively irrigate the 3 million acres already identified as irrigable land. In the next three years, the government plans to double the land under irrigation to 1.4 million acres. Of these, 200,000 acres will be under rice irrigation and 500,000 under other food crops. Rice production in Bunyala, the Tana Delta, Rohole in Garissa, Mwea and Ahero will take priority.
- e) Our dairy farmers struggle with the high cost of feed and challenges of storage, preservation of milk and access to markets. To assure them that they are on our priority list, we have taken immediate steps to reinstate the stalled milk coolers' programme and the distribution of 650 milk coolers will resume shortly. In our plan, we have identified dairy and livestock economy as sub-sectors with the quickest economic turnaround time and they will become key drivers in improving food security, creating jobs and boosting exports.

Housing

19. We have equally committed to close the housing gap, which stands at 2 million units as at now. Our target is to increase the supply four-fold from 50,000 to 200,000 per year. Already, 2,592 units have been completed, 40,452 are under construction and over 500,000 units that require financial backstopping and funding for bulk infrastructure are in the pipeline.

20. I am happy to report today that the interest in the housing sector has grown immensely and that many private investors, including pension funds, have submitted proposals on the housing projects they would like to invest in. We will work together on these projects to facilitate their realisation.
21. It is clear from engagements with investors that the Government needs to evolve from being a mere enabler to becoming a sponsor of projects. Not only will we provide land and bulk infrastructure, but I will personally take charge of the process to unlock the challenges that inhibit investment. For instance, VAT exemption on inputs has been enacted to lower the cost of construction, but its implementation has been curtailed by delays in approving applications for VAT refunds. As a result, developers pay VAT, but the cost saving is not enjoyed by the end buyers. Government will resolve such issues with the urgency required.
22. Let me emphasise that the housing agenda is not just about four walls and a roof. The demand for affordable housing is an opportunity to create jobs and stimulate the economy. Our manufacturing sector, which already supplies many products in the construction industry, will have expanded business opportunities. Other housing inputs such as doors, windows, gates and hinges will be made by our *jua kali* industry. We are designing the programme in a way that will upgrade and support Jua Kali by linking it with technical and vocational education institutions. In the end, we expect enterprises that produce housing products to emerge or expand, creating jobs and wealth for hustlers, making our housing plan truly transformational from the bottom up.
23. We want to recreate the experience of hardworking Kenyans like John Ochieng, who is present as one of my guests today. I met him two days ago when I handed over keys to new homeowners in Ongata Rongai in Kajjado County under the affordable housing scheme. Ochieng began working as a carpenter in that housing project when it began two years ago; then, home ownership to him was a mere dream. Two years later, he owns an apartment in the same estate. Given that there are developments today that cater to the housing needs of ordinary Kenyans like John, I am convinced that it is possible to provide quality affordable housing for rent and sale, and Ochieng's story will be replicated multiple times over throughout the country. We, therefore, proceed with the confidence that we will provide quality climate-smart housing that Kenyans can

buy with mortgages for as low as **Ksh5,000** a month to be made available through various home financing arrangements.

24. Next week on Tuesday, I will break ground at the Kibera Soweto B in Nairobi for a housing project which will deliver thousands of social housing units. Going forward, we intend to collaborate with county governments to achieve a target of at least 5,000 units in every county. Counties with larger metropolitan areas have a greater opportunity and can target as many as 50,000 units since as demand is higher due to population density. We have asked counties to identify land for this Housing program.

Access to Credit

25. Access to credit is a stimulant that invigorates the economy. However, high interest rates crowd out the private sector, and especially the small and medium enterprises. Our commitment on affordable credit was at the heart of the Kenya Kwanza election campaign. Already, expectations are very high across the country on our promise to provide a fund that will offer affordable credit to those at the bottom of the pyramid. We are aware that the most significant question in the streets, boda boda parking lots and fresh produce markets is: WHEN will the Hustlers Fund become operational? I have an answer for you today.
26. Even before the fund is set up, we have made several interventions to make credit accessible.
 - a) Safaricom and their financial partners have brought down the cost of Fuliza by reducing interest rates by 50 per cent. As part of that agreement, 4 million borrowers, who had been blacklisted, will be freed from the yoke of the Credit Reference Bureau (CRB), in the coming days. We have also secured an agreement with CRB that it will abandon the punitive penalty of blacklisting borrowers and move to a credit scoring system that makes borrowers eligible for credit even as they work to improve their creditworthiness.
27. As a result, no citizen will be excluded from the credit system. They will, therefore, be eligible to access credit as they work their way out in paying their loans.

28. On the Hustlers Fund, three issues are crucial:

- a) Credit products will be available to small businesses on digital platforms at affordable rates to individuals and through *chamas*, groups, *saccos* and cooperatives.
- b) All borrowers on this platform will also participate in a short-term savings plan and long-term pensions program. Every saving made by borrowers on this platform will be merged by the government of Kenya on a 2:1 ratio to a level to be determined by the program.
- c) I will launch this Hustler Fund credit and savings product on the 1st of December this year.

Universal Health Care

29. Health is front and centre of socio-economic development. The failure of a healthcare system undermines prosperity. Kenyan families spend a total of Ksh150 billion in out-of-pocket expenditures on health services a year mobilised from various sources, including harambees, Whatsapp **MPESA**, loans, sale of land and other assets, to pay hospital bills for loved ones. Also, many small businesses fail when owners fall ill and cannot work, or divert money to pay medical expenses. It is no wonder, then, that it is commonly said that most families and individuals in Kenya are one illness away from poverty. 1 million Kenyans sink into poverty every year because of medical expenses.

30. We want to lift this punitive burden from the shoulders of Kenyans and their businesses through our universal health care plan. The plan is to revitalise primary healthcare by laying more emphasis on preventive and promotive strategies. Many critical health illnesses, including cancer, heart complications, kidney failure and hypertension, can be detected and addressed at this level without the need for a hospital visit or admission.

31. Our health reform commitment is, therefore, three-fold:

- a) In partnership with county governments, we will mainstream community health workers and make them the foundation of our healthcare system.

- b) Reforming the National Health Insurance Fund (NHIF) is a necessary imperative. Progress has been made in enrolling more members. In the past 10 years, 12 million Kenyans have joined the fund. The challenge, however, is that the NHIF is an occupational scheme for salaried people on payroll in the public and private sectors, and not the social insurance scheme it ought to be. We shall change the contribution structure from an individual contributory scheme to a household contribution model.
- c) We intend to address the challenge of inadequate human resources in the public hospitals and the poor industrial relations between health professionals and county governments. We are particularly committed to the professional development of health workers. I take this opportunity to assure health workers that we have listened to them and we will propose ways, in collaboration with county governments, of resolving their outstanding issues.

Digital Superhighway

- 32. Kenya is a strong leader in the information, communication and technology space. We are the proud regional and continental hub of innovation. We have the appropriate policy framework, constitutionally protected freedoms of expression, media, information and communication to dominate the creative arts and entertainment arena.
- 33. Our **youth** have consistently shown robust interest in this field and are engaged on various platforms, generating captivating content that is appreciated globally. There is tremendous potential for our country to become a global leader, employ hundreds of thousands of young people and generate immense wealth if we facilitate the young people to plug into the **global digital economy**.
- 34. To achieve these purposes, the government is committed to invest in the **digital superhighway** and the **creative economy**, which will be enablers of transformation, productivity and overall competitiveness. Over the next 5 years, the government will ensure universal broadband availability through the roll-out of connectivity throughout the country. The laying out of an additional **100,000km** of the national fibre-optic network is expected to deliver this target.

35. Government services shall be made available throughout the country at greater convenience to citizens through **digitisation and automation** of all critical government processes, with a view to bringing at least **80 per cent of all government services online**.
36. Moreover, to bring more Kenyans, especially the youth online for business, learning, entertainment and socialisation, the government intends to take measures to bring down the **cost of calls and data**. This initiative converges with the efforts to boost the creative economy and scale up cultural production and the arts industry.
37. Our government is also committed to the establishment of more arts and culture infrastructure, including **theatres, music auditoriums and art galleries**, and extensive refurbishing of facilities to expand spaces for artistic and cultural expression and production.
38. The government is also firmly committed in investing in the robust delivery of the five pillars of our plan for socio-economic transformation. This investment is undertaken in full recognition of national values and principles of governance as well as broader national interests and goals. They include policy, legislative and regulatory framework, national security, justice, law and order and education.

Rule of Law

39. There are parts of this country where personal safety and security are precarious, and life expectancy is low. Poverty and the cost of living are high because markets and supply chains have been disrupted or threatened by insecurity. The well-being of residents in these areas is as paramount as that of every other citizen of Kenya. They, too, deserve to live and work in safety and dignity, and to pursue happiness without let or hindrance. And yet terrorists, bandits, cattle rustlers and all manner of violent criminals have wreaked havoc on their lives for far too long. Criminals have held them back, extinguishing or deferring far too many hopes and dreams as the rest of the country progresses.
40. It is time for this lawlessness to stop for good. Our Government has undertaken necessary personnel realignments in the security services to facilitate the rapid achievement of our objectives. On my first day in office, I executed the instrument to actualise the financial autonomy of the **National Police Service**, and have given the necessary

directives to enable it rapidly achieve national security strategic objectives. These actions extend to the facilitation of the **Director of Criminal Investigations** to expeditiously resolve investigations to a standard that can support effective prosecution and secure conviction.

41. The independence of the National Police Service is essential for its institutional credibility and efficiency, citizen safety and welfare, and effective maintenance of law and order. A professional police service fosters harmonious relationships with citizens and communities, cannot be **weaponised** in pursuit of divisive or partisan agenda and can never resort to disastrous policies like **extra-judicial murder** as part of policing. I believe we can keep this country safe and secure without tormenting our people. We can efficiently and effectively **suppress crime, monitor, disrupt and apprehend** criminals without abducting, torturing, killing or causing citizens to disappear.

It is time to retire these terrible tactics and professionalise our criminal justice system. That is why our government is taking strong measures to facilitate the enhancement of capacities along the chain. I have directed that immediate measures be undertaken to disband the **Special Services Unit in the Directorate of Criminal Investigations** and with urgency investigations must commence so that those found culpable are held accountable. There must also be robust mechanisms throughout the police service to maintain high professional standards, scrupulous adherence to the rule of law, accountability for actions and decisions and operational transparency.

42. At the terminal end of this chain, the government has undertaken its obligations to observe judicial independence while actualising the **Judiciary Fund**, enhancing budgetary allocation to enable it invest in infrastructure and facilitate the appointment of more judges to expand access to justice. Effective deterrence of crime requires robust prosecution, while economic efficiency, investor confidence and competitiveness all depend on effective dispute resolution. A well-resourced, independent, impartial and thoroughly professional **judiciary** is indispensable for good governance, law and order and is also essential for financial sustainability, transactional effectiveness and business competitiveness.
43. The institutional independence of the judiciary must be upheld at all times, and the independence of judges respected as the minimum gesture of respect for the rule of law.

44. The fight against corruption must be won. Our government intends to wage this fight and demonstrate its commitment to zero tolerance to corruption by making all public servants accountable, and submitting to the oversight of **Parliament** and other constitutionally mandated institutions. We are committed to the rule of law, fidelity to constitutional due process and implementation of judicial decrees and orders. Most critically, under my administration, there shall be no interference with, or any attempts to control, direct or undermine independent institutions, including those in the justice, law and order sector. The **National Police Service**, the **Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions**, the **Judiciary** and the **Ethics and Anti-Corruption Commission** shall perform their duties independently and professionally, and likewise subject themselves to oversight by appropriate agencies. This is our vision for ensuring that the war on corruption is not itself corrupted by inappropriate interventions.

Education

45. For our socio-economic transformation to be truly inclusive, we must empower all Kenyans, regardless of background, to effectively play their part by contributing to the nation building effort, and partaking of the dividends of shared prosperity. High-quality and relevant **education** is vital in imparting the necessary skills and competencies to learners from pre-primary to the tertiary level, in order to enable citizens engage meaningfully with the world of the present and the future.
46. A week ago, we launched the **Presidential Working Party on Education Reforms** to review all aspects of education in Kenya. Its findings and recommendations shall inform subsequent necessary intervention to ensure that Kenya delivers the calibre of education, skills and training needed to successfully pursue sustainable development.

Climate Change

47. We are concerned about **climate change** and its impact on Kenya generally and our arid and semi-arid regions in particular. We will address the effects of this phenomenon and its ravaging effects at home and abroad. Our pastoralist communities have experienced scarcity of pasture due to a prolonged drought, the worst in 40 years,

and three years of absolute rain failure. As a result, we have lost 2.5 million head of livestock owing to drought. Rising food prices have made an already bad situation worse. Elsewhere, communities in rural and urban areas across the country are equally struggling under the weight of high food prices and shortages of water.

48. **Without a doubt, climate change** is complicating our roadmap towards socio-economic transformation and achievement of **Sustainable Development Goals**.
49. As we seek short-term measures to respond to the evolving situation, I have directed that a long-term and sustainable solution to the planetary challenges be put in place. The ultimate solution includes greening our country to more than 30 per cent of tree cover by 2032.
50. The central role forests play in addressing the effects of climate change has become more prominent now than ever before, thanks to their unparalleled capacity to absorb, store carbon and regulate climate. Of the 59.2 million hectares land area in Kenya, only 5.2 hectares are under forest cover. The remaining 54 million hectares are largely in arid and semi-arid lands.
51. The 10 counties with the highest forest cover are Nyeri, Lamu, Vihiga, Kirinyaga, Elgeyo-Marakwet, Meru, Embu, Murang'a, Kilifi and Nyandarua. On the reverse, the 10 counties with the lowest tree cover are Marsabit, Mandera, Wajir, Isiolo, Siaya, Migori, Busia, Machakos, Taita-Taveta and Uasin Gishu. I call upon the Council of Governors to facilitate more discussions to achieve parity in tree cover by using peer-to-peer learning and exchange of information. The government will champion the transformation of forestry and rangeland restoration to support the greening of Kenya so as to combat climate change.
52. We are at the final stages of designing a Special Presidential Forestry and Rangeland Restoration Programme. This effort is spearheaded by the ministry of environment and Forestry, various experts and partners in government, UN organisations, NGOs and academia. The objective is to grow 5 billion trees in the next 5 years, and an additional 10 billion trees by 2032. This will eventually lead to the rehabilitation and restoration of 10.6 million hectares in the 290 constituencies, as well as some specially selected ecosystem and water towers threatened by degradation and destruction.

53. To achieve this ambitious PLAN, the Government will continue to support efforts by the Kenya Forestry Research Institute (KEFRI) in high quality tree seed production in their 18 Tree Seeds Centers countrywide.
54. Agro-forestry and farming of avocados, mangoes and macadamia will also open new value chains for our export market, creating new green jobs in the sector. I, therefore, urge all Kenyans to support the government's call to grow at least 15 billion trees in the next 10 years. To achieve this target, every Kenyan should grow 300 trees.
55. Reforestation in the presidential programme will be undertaken by youth and women groups, civil society, community and religious organisations, leveraging on private sector and government financing. To ensure sustainable funding, Kenya is developing policies and strategies to tap into the global carbon market opportunities, accessible through carbon trading.
56. Additionally, the Government will secure and protect public forests, rehabilitate and restore all degraded water towers and other forest ecosystems across the country. We will work towards fencing all fragile water towers and other ecosystems to protect them from encroachment. To resolve the capacity constraints at the Kenya Forestry Service, I have directed the immediate recruitment of an additional 2,700 forest rangers and 600 forest officers to augment our interventions in this sector.
57. Shortly, I will also be inaugurating the Climate Change Council that will steer Kenya's climate action through stakeholder engagements coordinated in the presidency, as required by the Climate Change Act, 2016.
58. Under the programme, we will start mobilising finance from public, private and multilateral sources, to fund the proposed activities. This is anchored on the United Nations goals and backed by the Tree Growing and Sustainable Forestry Finance Management Programme, supported UN and other international institutions. The programme also responds to Kenya's commitments to help reduce global greenhouse gas emissions articulated in various multi-lateral environmental agreements, and the United Nations Decade of Action on Ecosystem Restoration. Kenya will rally the globe towards more ambitious climate action in next month's 27th UN Climate Change Conference, at Sharm-el-Sheikh, Egypt.

59. In an increasingly interconnected world, our well-being depends on the engagement with our neighbours, continental fraternity and international partners. In all these arenas, Kenya has continued to be a dependable ally, faithful friend and effective partner, ever committed to win-win bilateral as well as multilateral outcomes, that achieve mutual gains for the benefit of humanity.
60. In the **East African Community**, the rigid territorial borders are firmly on the way out, as we move towards full **integration. Non-tariff barriers** have come down, and trade volumes have soared. The community is becoming even more tightly connected with infrastructure systems criss-crossing the member countries. The possibility of an **East African Federation** is no longer a wild imagination or an idle dream. **It is no longer a matter of if, it is a matter of when.**
61. In recent days, I have been to our sister countries in East Africa to take care of mutually beneficial regional business. In Ethiopia, we launched **Safaricom Ethiopia** telecoms' money business, which expanded **Safaricom** and **Mpesa**'s regional footprint, dispersing **ICT innovation** and deepening the revenue base of the company. Simultaneously, **Safaricom** became the largest foreign investor in Ethiopia, and Kenya's biggest foreign investor abroad.
62. The **East African Community** has become a close-knit neighbourhood, and everyone's well-being has become everybody's business. With this unity and integration, we will achieve much in our lifetime. And with these bonds of solidarity and fraternity, we shall establish an oasis of hope and infinite possibility that will be irresistible to the whole world.
63. In the **Horn of Africa**, peace and security efforts continue to dominate our engagement. They are important components of a broader strategy to recover stability in what has become a truly rough neighbourhood. **Countering violent extremism**, controlling the illegal movement of small arms, peace-building and peace-keeping initiatives will continue to dominate the agenda.
64. The conflict in the Tigray region of Ethiopia which, according to reports from the office of the United Nations secretary-general, is escalating, is a great source of concern for our region. Kenya shall continue to play its role by making such contributions as is required of us, by the Africa Union-sponsored mediation efforts. The sooner hostilities cease and face-to-face talks commence, the better for our region.

65. The region is experiencing its 5th season of severely low rain due to climate change. As a result, mitigation strategies, resilience-building initiatives and climate change management programmes have become urgent. The pressure on the capacity of regional States has never been greater.
66. On the continental stage, we have sustained our **Pan-African** credentials since the dawn of **African unity**. That is why various frameworks of the **African Union** find expression in our domestic agenda. The **AU's Agenda 2063**, for example, is part of our economic development plan.
67. Kenya is committed to the pursuit of trade-driven pan-Africanism as the best means of rapidly delivering shared prosperity throughout our continent. As we open up our borders and expand the scope of collaboration beyond traditional economic blocs, the reality of a continental free market has become a reality.
68. Kenya is a champion of the **Africa Continental Free Trade Area, AfCTA**. Beyond ratifying the instruments establishing it and domesticating its framework, Kenya has been a consistent participant in efforts to make this continental agreement a reality. We see this as the pathway that guarantees inclusive African economic growth and sustainable self-reliance. In turn, this will hasten our continent's post-pandemic recovery, enhance climate change resilience and underpin stability in the face of multiple regional and global crises, including energy volatility.
69. Our **implementation strategy** envisions pan-African free trade as a vehicle for empowering **small and medium enterprises**.
70. To signal this commitment, I recently flagged off a symbolic consignment of KETEPA tea to **Ghana** under the **Guided Trading Initiative**. Trade between **Ghana** and Kenya is off to an admirable start and several firms and traders in the two countries have undertaken brisk business, involving exports of incinerators, sisal fibre, leather bags, fuel filters, beadworks and baskets from *jua kali* artisans. This points to the huge potential of trade across the continent.

71. Beyond our continent, Kenya continues to pursue a robust policy of economic diplomacy. We are continuously aligning our strategic interests with the welfare of our people. Therefore, we are focused on finding opportunities for our people and deeper trade relations around the globe. We are receiving encouraging returns on our efforts. This week, our **international port at Lamu** scored a shining first, with the export of livestock from **northern Kenya** to the **Sultanate of Oman**. This signals the opening up of tremendous opportunities for the pastoralists in our rangeland communities who deserve relief from the devastating losses of ravaging drought.
72. We also remain devoted to our strategic engagements with key development partners like the **United States**, which is now Kenya's premier trading partner, as well as the **United Kingdom** - which for long held that position - the European Union, **Middle Eastern** nations, the **Far East**, including **China** and **Japan**, and, indeed, many other parts of the world.
73. Kenya's diplomacy is deliberately shifting into emerging opportunities. We are prepared to exploit the potential of the **blue economy** and the fast-evolving digital universe to position our young generation as competitive global players.
74. Kenya's commitment to multilateralism is a fundamental plank of our diplomatic strategy and foreign policy. This has defined our international outlook since the advent of self-government and full sovereignty. We have hosted several multilateral institutions and aspire to receive more. Kenya has participated in many multilateral undertakings, including humanitarian missions, international peace-keeping and pandemic responses.
75. We join other nations of the **Global South** to advocate democratisation of global governance, and to invest the multilateral system with higher moral imagination. We believe that global governance must reflect the values it claims to advance and protect.
76. To effectively drive our diplomacy and international engagement, Kenya has unified and clarified its policy in our **Vision 2030** and our government's **5-Pillar Plan for socio-economic transformation, the 5th East African Community Development Strategy, AU Agenda 2063 and the UN Sustainable Development Goals**. The purpose of this alignment is to ensure that we forge a path for the achievement of our objectives of enhancing the well-being of humanity.

77. We have warned the international community about global fertiliser shortage and the risk it poses to global food shortage. Whether we are speaking at the **United Nations Environment Programme** in Nairobi, or the **UN Oceans Conference** in Lisbon, our commitment to enhancing climate change responses is strong and vocal.
78. Kenya advocates post-pandemic solidarity on a global scale to avert economic crisis in the wake of Covid-19 by mobilising international partnership and cooperation for recovery and resilience. This extends to the need to ease the debt burden of economically vulnerable developing countries and to afford them liquidity and fiscal space to manage shocks, enhance social investment, invest in climate change adaptation and mitigation, address security needs and finance development.
79. As an anchor state in the **Eastern Africa and the Horn**, Kenya has sustained its robust efforts to achieve lasting peace and security. We have also used the opportunity to serve at the UN Security Council to give priority to regional peace, counter terrorism and violent extremism, support peace operations and to further the **climate and security** agenda. We consider these contributions to be critical in building a safe and peaceful world that is safe, and conducive to human flourishing.
80. Government efforts to affirm and project Kenya's stature globally has always been complemented by the contributions of Kenyan citizens who live and work in various parts of the world. This demonstrates the complementarity of State and citizen action, and the inevitable alignment between patriotism and national well-being. We are all united in the quest for a Kenya we can all be proud to call home. Our **diaspora** continues to serve as Kenya's excellent ambassadors along with our **sports people** and the Kenyans who continue to **excel** abroad in diverse fields. You make us proud and, in so doing, demonstrate the true spirit of *uShujaa*.
81. Kenya is a good neighbour, true friend, loyal ally, dependable partner and hardworking member of the international community. It lives up to its strong value system, fluently articulating the ideals of compassion, solidarity, justice, freedom and sovereignty. As a nation, we project and amplify values and principles familiar to each one of us, and which form the heart of our constitutional system. Greater **fidelity** to the **Constitution** and better compliance with its mandates and principles will not only make us better citizens and worthy patriots, it will make Kenya a stronger nation. We, therefore, have a duty to **respect, uphold and defend the Constitution**. The nation building enterprise enlists all citizens to recognise their stake in making and keeping Kenya great. Patriotism is a bottom up affair.

82. We are called upon to stand firmly on our values and strengthen our resolve to wage war on poverty and inequality by pursuing inclusive growth. Our aim is to remove all obstacles and bring down every barrier to progress. By celebrating our values, we honour our **heroes**. Every act of nation-building is an expression of these values, and a most appropriate remembrance of those who began our journey towards sovereignty, freedom and happiness.
83. This is a time for action. The opportunities to contribute to this historic project are limitless. It is time for us as citizens to play our part in making the Kenya we imagine come true and to turn the nation we dream of into our lived experience. This moment calls for the exercise all our abilities, talents, gifts, skills and strengths in pursuit of national as well as personal self-actualisation. It demands that we demonstrate the **patriotism of a new age** and express the **timeless values**, which unite us with our heroes and heroines.
84. We are endowed with far greater capacity today than ever in our history to pursue and accomplish major feats. Our predecessors, with far modest means, nevertheless scored monumental triumphs. There is absolutely no ceiling on our dreams, no limit to our determination, and no barrier to our collective power. Nothing stops us from becoming what we wish to be, and nothing can stand in the way of our resolve to drive Kenya to its destiny of glory and abundance.
85. I stand here, therefore, on this sacred ground where we first raised our proud flag at the dawn of freedom, where we made a covenant to honour their glorious triumph and fine example by embracing their values and serving our nation, to rally every Kenyan to rise up. This is our moment to get up, work hard, take our chances, chase our dreams, knock on doors and explore possibilities, because the horizon of our destiny is draped in the splendor of our vision, and before us lies potential of a magnitude never before imagined. It is all ours for the taking, and I know we are ready, for it is our time.
86. Happy Mashujaa Day. May our heroes continue to inspire us, and may our national values ever remain the True North of our moral compass.

**God bless you,
God bless Kenya.**