

**SPEECH 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  
53RD ANNIVERSARY OF MADARAKA DAY  
ON WEDNESDAY, 1ST JUNE, 2016**

FELLOW KENYANS, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

Let me start by thanking the people of Nakuru County for their warm welcome today. The decision to share the celebrations of our nationhood among the counties is part of the Jubilee administration's desire to include every Kenyan, in word and in deed.

We gather to commemorate the day, fifty three years ago, when Kenyans finally took control of their own government: the day we began to govern ourselves; the day we took responsibility for our social, economic and political destiny.

Today, ladies and gentlemen, I am proud to be Kenyan for three reasons. First, after half a century of self-rule, we have shown our ability to renew and re-imagine our nationhood. We won our independence and became a centralized state; today we have constitutionally devolved the responsibilities of governance to 47 counties.

Our journey since that first Madaraka day has been one of growing political and administrative maturity. In embracing devolution, we set the stage for equitable access to resources and opportunity, brought government services closer to Kenyans, and reshaped our representative politics.

That's why we are in Nakuru today. We are here because Government is no longer a distant administration, based in Nairobi; rather, Government is now part and parcel of this community, and every other like it across Kenya.

You and I have a second reason to stand tall as Kenyans. Our forefathers suffered greatly to free us from the colonial yoke. Loved ones were lost, and our freedom fighters endured the bitter pain of injustice. Still, they paid the price, and won our freedom for us. We are grateful for their commitment and sacrifice, and we are the proud inheritors of their heroism.

Our fathers won because of their unity, and that is why they vowed to fuse the aspirations of all our different communities into a single national purpose. They joined together in a national covenant that would bind them, and all who came after them. In making that covenant, they vowed to build a nation that would earn its place in the world: a nation in which poverty, disease and ignorance would have no home. This nation would be founded in fairness, allowing every Kenyan the liberty to achieve their dreams. They also declared that all men would be equal under this covenant. With this exchange of promises, all of us became Kenya; and Kenya became all of us. The nationalist covenant agreed all those years ago still binds us together.

In 2007, we sorely tested this covenant. But when we realized our folly, we paused to reflect, we retraced our steps and found the path to peace by painstakingly negotiating and ultimately ratifying a new Constitution in 2010.

The scars of 2007 remind us of the shame of political competition without limits or wisdom. But our patriotism prevailed; and today, we take pride as a nation in showing ourselves and the world that we have brought good out of troubled times, and that we have learned to limit political conflict, so that it no longer threatens the self-government that our forefathers so painfully won.

Let me turn to the third reason why I am proud to be Kenyan. We Kenyans love our politics. Some are perplexed by this passion; I celebrate it, for it shows the love and care that Kenyans have for our country. But passion without control is a

fire that can destroy the house we have so painstakingly built these last fifty years. It must be tempered with the moderation of wisdom. As your fourth President, I remind you that we shall have a fifth, a sixth, and even a tenth President. Leaders will come and go, but Kenya will remain.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The nationalist covenant of which I have spoken was negotiated and crafted by young people. Today, young Kenyans have the opportunity to emulate the achievements of the founding generation.

As your President, I believe in Kenya's young people; you are my partners in remaking this nation. If men and women of your age could conceive and build Kenya, then we must be open to your energy and hope. That is why I am so passionate about investing in you—our founding fathers were in their twenties when they founded Kenya, you too can found a new Kenya in our lifetime.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is not said often enough, but it is true: this country is great because Kenyan women are great. We did not acquire self-rule in 1963 only because men fought; we acquired self-rule because Kenya's women also stood. In the fight for our liberty, it was our founding mothers who supplied intelligence, who offered sanctuary, who nursed the wounded, and who fed the hungry fighters.

In the 53 years since, Kenya's women have come to the aid of the nation: often, they have been the voices of reason, of compromise and of tolerance. My Government will continue to honour the mothers of our independence, and indeed all the women of this country. I will do everything possible and practical to ensure that their entitlements in our Constitution are enshrined in law.

Ladies and Gentlemen, Fellow Kenyans,

Let me speak to you about what our Government has achieved since you gave me the mandate to be your President. 900 days ago, when I took office, I promised that children in standard one would learn using the latest digital technology. That promise has been fulfilled: by August this year, we will have over 600,000 pupils learning with tablets and laptops, with another 600,000 to follow by December. We're not just giving them a device; we are opening a world of connection and innovation to the Kenyan child. In a few years, we will see an entire generation of Kenyans with the new skills they need to build a new Kenya.

In three short years, we have transferred more than a trillion shillings to the counties. That money has gone to the grassroots, bringing paved roads where there were none before; bringing clean water to households that had long thirsted for it; and bringing medicines to some of the most vulnerable Kenyans.

Similarly, we have built more kilometres of roads in the last three years than were built in the first 50 years of our independence. Since 2013, we have connected an additional 2.2 million households to power, and 22,000 primary schools to the national grid. Just last weekend, I launched the Last Mile Connectivity Project, which will bring electricity to every household in the Republic within five years.

900 days ago, Kenyans said they wanted an answer to the land question. That's why we have issued more than 2.4 million title deeds to Kenyans across the country, and that is why the process of titling continues.

During our time in office, the most vulnerable Kenyans have received unprecedented support under the Inua Jamii cash-transfer programme. In the last year alone, 725,000 households drawn from every constituency in the country have received 17.4 billion shillings in bi-monthly cash transfers. That sum

eases their lives, restores their dignity, and fulfils the promise of our self-government.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

If you allowed me to list our achievements of the last 900 days, we would be here for a while longer. But today, let us talk nationhood, not numbers.

To tell you the truth, a few Kenyans have chosen selective histories — histories that have encouraged contempt for our rich past, contempt for our achievements, and contempt for our identity. Yet, we remain a young nation.

There is still time to break out of the bad habits of our youth. We need to look back at the distance we have come, the progress we have made, and to be thankful for it. Of course, we have made mistakes. But we are here today because we won our independence from the most powerful empire the world had ever seen, and because we gave ourselves a new Constitution after years of debate, discussion and delay. The history of this nation fills me with hope, because it shows that in the end, Kenyans prevail.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to end this address with three thoughts. First, my Government is in a rush, because we know Kenyans expect us to find answers to their problems without delay. That's why we were elected, and that's why we have worked so hard for the last 900 days.

You can be sure that our commitment to transforming this country in the shortest time possible is unchanged. Other nations have done it. We can do it too. The difference, as always, is leadership. With the help of the Almighty God, I will do everything in my power to give this nation that leadership. But I must also implore other leaders to join me in this endeavour.

We must lead by example. We must learn to listen, to acknowledge and applaud the good work of others, and to criticize where necessary. This is the core of great leadership—and this is the leadership with which I am looking to partner as we seek greatness.

My second thought is this. Our sovereignty and self-rule are precious. So I ask you all to join me in honouring our men and women in uniform, who so diligently protect that sovereignty. I thank them all, and I remember those who have paid the ultimate price.

Now, in defence of that sovereignty, we must pre-empt any threat. That's why my Government took the painful step of closing the Dadaab Refugee Camp in Garissa County. The decision was difficult, but our security, and our national interests, dictated it. Kenya comes first.

The closure of one refugee camp is neither cruelty nor a change of heart. For twenty-five years, Kenya has hosted refugees from Somalia, from South Sudan, and from our other neighbours. We will continue to provide a safe haven for refugees, but that generosity will be balanced against the imperative of keeping Kenya safe.

Now, my final thought goes back to the nationalist covenant. The covenant is the spirit of our Constitution, breathing life into the letter of the law. Equally, constitutionalism is the practice of ordering our politics by the letter and the spirit of the Constitution. If you love this country, then you will obey both the letter of its laws, and the covenant that inspired them.

In 2010, Kenyans chose unity and peace over division and violence. Wisely, Kenyans left room in the Constitution for appropriate change. They knew that the Constitution is a living document. So I urge Kenyans to make the most of the privilege they gave themselves, and to discuss any matter that they feel

requires attention for the good of our nation. Any Kenyan who submits a petition in good faith, and in observance of our laws, will have my administration's full support. This country belongs to all of us, so come and let us reason together.

As I close, let me recognize that Ramadhan is about to start. As our Muslim brothers and sisters prepare to observe this holy month of fasting and purification, I send them my best wishes. Let me ask KRA to waive duty on dates, to help our Muslim brothers and sisters as they fulfil their religious obligations. I also direct the State Department for Special programmes to ensure that vulnerable families are supported with the foods they will require during the month.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Half a century ago, young men and women made a new nation. They were armed with nothing more than their belief in justice, their conviction that they deserved to rule themselves, and their trust in one another. Those young Kenyans won our freedom for us. We only have to follow their example: if we hold to justice, and if we trust one another, then we too will achieve as much as they did.

*I THANK YOU.*

*GOD BLESS YOU, GOD BLESS AND KEEP KENYA.*