



**SPEECH: OPENING BY THE GUEST OF HONOUR, HIS
EXCELLENCY HON. UHURU KENYATTA,
C.G.H., PRESIDENT AND COMMANDER IN
CHIEF OF THE DEFENCE FORCES OF THE
REPUBLIC OF KENYA**

**OCCASION: THE ICGRL HIGH-LEVEL REGIONAL
CONSULTATION ON JUSTICE AND GOOD
GOVERNANCE**

**VENUE: WINDSOR HOTEL AND COUNTRY CLUB,
NAIROBI**

DATE: 15TH MAY 2019

Mr. Huang Xia, United Nations Special Envoy for the Great Lakes Region;

Mr. Andrew Gilmour, United Nations Assistant-Secretary-General for Human Rights;

Ambassador Zachary Muburi-Muita, Executive Secretary International Conference for Great Lakes Region;

Fellow Ministers of Justice,

Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Excellencies, Ambassadors and Members of the Diplomatic Corp,

1. Good Morning, and as we say in Kiswahili, *Karibuni Kenya!* The Republic of Kenya is delighted to host all of you at this **ICGRL High-Level Regional Consultation on Justice and Good Governance.**

2. The prosperity, security and stability of the Great Lakes Region depends on our willingness and success in strengthening

access to justice, delivering good governance, and adhering to the Rule of Law. Your presence here signifies your Governments' commitment to this **journey that we shall need to make together knowing that none of our countries can truly rise if others are struggling.**

Distinguished colleagues

3. Our road to nationhood and governing ourselves as modern states has not been easy. Generations of our people in the Great Lakes Region have suffered greatly from poor governance and weak Rule of Law. Every one of our independent states inherited and extended colonial systems of government that had both positive and negative effects.

4. Our people gained from our new independent states' economic viability in a global economy, and were enriched by becoming part of **multi-ethnic nations with rich histories and cultures to share.** The states that we lead and work for are better able to protect our independence in a **dangerous global system.**

5. Our people also lose and suffer when the fight to access own our natural resources drives conflict and war, and our diversity

is used to divide us. Our people's incredible potential and endeavor to scale the heights has been too often squandered and frustrated by **inefficient and corrupt governance**.

6. You are here to fight the good fight. To use this conference to advance our struggle to uphold human rights, transparency and accountability as core values of the ICGLR Pact and Protocols and the PSC Framework that our Member States have committed themselves to building. We need friends to succeed. In that regard, I salute *the UN Secretary-General's Special Envoy for the Great Lakes Region, the African Union, the ICGLR and the Southern African Development Community* who are the Guarantors of the PSC Framework.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

7. A big part of the journey to our destination is strengthening the Judiciary to have the skills, legal standing and responsibility to dispense justice without fear and favour. It is only when every person is equal before the eyes of the law that we will have a chance to build the kinds of **mighty economies** that are **engines for decent jobs for our citizens and lasting peace and stability.**

8. Our Governments have invested heavily in capacity building of judicial officers, and taken steps to establish independent judiciaries. The work is not complete; there is still a lot to do before we reach our destination.

Ladies and Gentlemen

9. Indulge me as I tell you a bit of our journey here in Kenya, in the hope that it can serve as a guide, or a caution, to you.

10. Kenya has established a **National Committee on International and Regional Human Rights Obligations** to monitor, evaluate and report on our regional, continental and global commitments in this area. The committee also advises the Government on necessary measures to ensure compliance.

11. In order to enhance **Access to Justice**, Kenya has recently established **the National Legal Aid Service** that for the first time in our history grants legal aid in a structured manner. Through *pro bono* legal services, pauper briefs and legal aid clinics, the initiative enhances access to justice and reduces backlogs in the courts. It also promotes Alternative Dispute Resolution mechanisms such as Court Annexed Mediation.

12. Kenya has also pioneered the development of a **National Action Plan on Business and Human Rights**. This is a comprehensive strategy to address human rights violations by businesses. It offers guidelines on the responsibilities of business enterprises to ensure full compliance with human rights in all aspects of their operations.

13. These and other initiatives mean that Kenya is serious about attaining the targets we have set for ourselves. **We still need you to keep pushing us**, sharing with us, and helping us reach our goals. Our people expect nothing less. This is the reason that Kenya is such an ardent supporter of Peer Review Mechanisms, freedom of speech and a free media, as well as **governance that invites citizen participation**.

14. We know that we must be ready for constructive criticism if we are to succeed; and to be open to constructive criticism means that you often have to endure very unconstructive criticism, **but this is the price of forging a free and democratic nation with room for all**.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

15. Free people participating in the governance of their country is as old as Africa. **In the bone and marrow of African peoples throughout our region is a political and governance heritage that was inclusive and participatory.** A good way to judge the state of that heritage today is to consider whether the voices of the youngest or most disadvantaged among us are given a hearing. That is why we are ensuring women, the youth, those with low incomes, and the persons living with disabilities are heard.

16. We have put in place sound legal and policy frameworks that **promote those voices** as part of our commitment to Good Governance.

17. Kenya has a lot to learn from all of you; our officials here need **to listen keenly and with humility to your experiences.** I also hope that you can learn from our experiences and our example. If this is the spirit of the conference, then I believe it will be time well spent.

18. Allow me to conclude by thanking all of you for participating, and the event organizers and facilitators for their

hard work. Even as you spend hours here working on behalf of your people, I encourage you to take time to enjoy Nairobi and make friends in this diverse, open-hearted and fun city

19. Brothers and sisters, we have a great African civilization to build. Citizens whose lives need to be improved and safeguarded. States that need to become more effective in their delivery of services to the people and to this region. There is not a moment to waste. **Our ancestors and citizens are watching, and those yet to be born expect us to deliver.** I wish you fruitful deliberations.

20. Ahsanteni Sana, thank you once again, and God bless you.

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