

REPUBLIC OF KENYA
KITUI COUNTY ASSEMBLY
THIRD ASSEMBLY- THIRD SESSION
OFFICIAL REPORT
(THE HANSARD)

Wednesday 14th February, 2024

The County Assembly met at 2:43 p. m in the County Assembly Chambers

[The Speaker (Hon. Kevin K. Katisya)] in the Chair

PRAYERS

COMMUNICATION FROM THE CHAIR

COMMUNICATION IN RELATION TO THE STATE OF THE COUNTY ADDRESS

BY H.E, DR. JULIUS MAKAU MALOMBE; GOVERNOR, KITUI COUNTY

Hon. Members, allow me to issue a communication from the chair as relates to the state of the County address by H.E, Dr. Julius Makau Malombe; Governor, Kitui County.

Your Excellency, Dr. Julius Makau Malombe; Governor, Kitui County, Your Excellency, Augustine Wambua Kanani; Deputy Governor, Kitui County, H.E. Augustine Wambua Kanani, the Deputy Governor, Kitui County, Members of the Judiciary; and I will recognize them. Those that are present kindly stand and wave if you won't mind:

1. Hon. Justice R. Limo - the Presiding Judge -Kitui Law Courts
2. Hon. Lady Justice L. G. Kimani - Judge Environment and Lands Court, Kitui High Court
3. Hon. David Mburu - Senior Principal Magistrate, Kitui Law Courts
4. Hon. Elizabeth Karani - Deputy Registrar, Kitui Law Courts
5. LSK Kitui Branch - c/o J.K Mwalimu

And all lawyers present; Thank you.

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Members of the Clergy;

1. Bishop Gideon Muneeni Nzoka, ACK-Kitui
2. Bishop Joseph Nganda - Evangelical Alliance of Kenya
3. Bishop Peter Mwangangi - Holy Ghost Celebrations Church
4. Dr. Raphael Nzuki Kituva - Archbishop, Good News Church of Africa
5. Pst. Henry Ndeli Nzoka

Any other member of Clergy that I have not mentioned, kindly stand up.

(Members of the Clergy in the public gallery rose and waved)

Thank you.

We also have the security team led by new County Commissioner,

1. Mr. Kipchumba Rutto - County Commissioner
2. Madam Leah Kithi Ngutu- County Kenya Police Service Commander
3. Samuel Bett- County Criminal Investigations Officer (C.C.I.O)
4. Mr. David Kitulu- County National Intelligence Service Officer

If there is any other security officer, kindly let them stand up and wave. Thank you.

I also invited all your CECMs and all the Chief officers as well as members of the County Public Service Board. Let me start with CECMs. Kindly stand up please and wave.

(The CECMs stood in their places and waved)

The County Secretary, I can see you. You can stand up and wave. Chief Officers present, also wave. Almost 90% of them are here.

(The Chief Officers stood in their places and waved)

The Chair County Public Service Board and the Board Members. Thank you very much. I also invited members of the Sand task force. I don't know where they are. I saw Mr. Muthwike somewhere. I can see them. Thank you very much. We also invited our two municipal managers; Job Muisyo and Alex Mutemi. Thank you very much. Allow me to also recognize our two external board members, Ruth Nzambi Joseph and Mr. Muange Musyoka. Please rise up and wave. Thank you very much for honouring our invite and for coming to be with us as we host our Governor.

Your Excellence the Governor, allow me to issue this short communication before I invite you because today is your day. It gives me great pleasure to welcome you all to this sitting of the Third Session of this Assembly. You all reckon that this day is indeed of great importance to us all. Today's sitting is informed by the Kitui County Assembly Standing Order No. 18 which states that *"The Governor shall address a special sitting of the Assembly once every year and may address the Assembly at any other time within the convenience of the County Assembly."*

Your Excellency, this Assembly eagerly anticipates your address, marking the second of such occasion since the inception of this Third Assembly. Your willingness to engage with us

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underscores the pivotal role this Assembly plays in your agenda of the ‘*Kitui Promise*’, and that you are ready to continue working with us in order to realize the gains of devolution. We are indeed honoured to host you once again.

Your Excellency, being approximately a year and a half since the inception of your administration, it is an opportune time to reflect on the direction, progress, challenges, and achievements we have collectively encountered. County Assembly of Kitui like other Assemblies across the republic has not been devoid of its own experiences so far. We have encountered numerous challenges, for instance, lack of proper facilities and structures, inadequate office space for committees and employees, and inadequate funds.

Your Excellency, your government will be held accountable for its commitment to implementing the Constitution and other policies, including the Kitui County Integrated Development Plan 2022-2027, which serves as the blueprint for sustainable development. The Assembly stands ready to support the effective implementation of these policies and plans. My clarion call is for the Executive and the Assembly to continue collaborating and being the glue that holds the great people of Kitui together, to constantly work on long term cohesion and to see that the marginalized and the poorest of the poor in our society can see hope in our governance.

Your Excellency, I want to assure you that this County Assembly shall continue working together in mutual respect and cooperation with the County Executive. We trust that your government will continue to accord the necessary support to the County Assembly and I assure you, we will do the same without compromising our roles.

The Assembly appreciates the support you have extended to our legislative work, including the assent to Budget Appropriations Bills. We are committed to finalizing pending matters, such as the Kitui County River Basins Sand Utilization Policy and Bill, 2023 and I urge the relevant committees to expedite their consideration of these legislations for tabling in the Assembly as discussed and agreed during our joint engagement in Mutomo as from 6th to 8th February, 2024.

Your Excellency, I appeal for your support in addressing critical infrastructure needs of the Assembly. As earlier mentioned, the Assembly lacks adequate facilities and structures which are key in aiding to the realization of our mandate. I call upon your support and appropriation in achieving this.

Your excellency, allow me to talk off the script and also say that this day being what may people call Valentine’s Day which is the day which you chose to come and address the County Government of Kitui is Symbolic that you love the people of Kitui County who overwhelmingly voted for you. The same people also voted for the MCAs that we have here. So, we are grateful that you chose this day to come and address our people. The Hon. Members are very happy to host you as you have seen since you arrived and I am sure your presence in these Assembly precincts will be of value to our people. Allow me your Excellency to recognize the Assembly leadership who will say a word on behalf of the other members of the County Assembly to welcome you. I

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will start the Honourable Minority Leader and then we proceed for one minute each. Hon. Minority Leader, Alex Nganga.

Hon. Alex Nganga (Leader of the Minority Party): Thank you Mr. Speaker Sir, my colleague members, Your Excellency the Governor of Kitui County, your accompanying members of the County Executive, the Speaker's invited guests, my name is Hon. Alex Nganga, MCA representing Miambani Ward in Kitui County and the Minority Leader of the County Assembly in other words the leader of the alternative Government. Your Excellency, I won't say much because today is your day and we cannot anticipate or speculate. It is your day. We are ready to listen to you and not only us the people's representatives but also the great people of Kitui County who elected you, have faith in you and they have continued to trust you. Hon. Speaker, let me just leave it at that. You've got an history with this magnificent chamber. Indeed, it was your first big project in terms of housing infrastructure in Kitui County Assembly. You remember the Chamber was done when you were the Governor, the most beautiful, magnificent of all the 47 County Assembly Chambers. Your Excellency, welcome and address your people. Thank you, Hon. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Kelvin K. Katisya): Thank you Hon. Minority Leader. Hon. Majority Leader.

Hon. Maluki (Leader of the Majority Party): Thank you Hon. Speaker for this opportunity. Your Excellency the Governor, Kitui County, Your Excellency the Deputy Governor, Members of the Clergy and all invited guests. My name is Harrison Maluki. I'm here representing the great people of Migwani and I am the Majority Leader in the Kitui County Assembly. Hon. Speaker it is my noble duty to welcome our Governor to the County Assembly of Kitui on behalf of my colleagues. The people of Kitui have witnessed what you have done and today is a great day and I know their ears are wide open to listen to the plans you have for them. It is my noble duty to welcome you to address the great people of Kitui who overwhelmingly elected you. Thank you Mr. Speaker Sir.

The Speaker (Hon. Kelvin K. Katisya): Thank you, Hon. Majority Leader. I will also request our Deputy Speaker to join our two colleagues in welcoming our Governor and our guests. Deputy Speaker please.

Hon Nzilu (Deputy Speaker): Thank you Mr. Speaker Sir. My name is Christopher Nzilu Nzioka representing the great people of Kyangwithya West Ward and also the Deputy Speaker of the County Assembly of Kitui. Your Excellency, I don't have much to say, mine is to welcome you. You are the CEO of the County Government of Kitui which is comprised of the Executive and the County Assembly. Today is an historical day because I know the whole of Kitui County is at stand still as people are eagerly waiting to hear from you to know what has been done, what is being done and what will be done. So, your Excellency, *karibu sana* as you address your people, the people of Kitui County. Welcome.

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The Speaker (Hon. Kelvin K. Katisya): Thank you, very much Hon. Members. I know you are eager to listen to our Governor. Kindly allow me I had forgotten to introduce our Deputy Governor. Kindly stand and wave. That is our Deputy Governor, His Excellency Augustine Wambua Kanani. Thank you, your Excellency, for also joining us. I had also forgotten to mention some few friends who were my competitors in the Speakership, Hon. Dr. Kyalo Muli, the Chairperson of the Anzauni clan. You can see he is fully ... the County Commissioner was saying he is looking like King Mswati. Thank you, Kyalo Muli. I also saw the former immediate MCA, Kanyangi Ward, thank you. Katula is here. Thank you very much all of us and members of the public who I'm also sure are with us. Those following in the social media I know we are live in Athiani F.M and several other media houses because this is a very great day for the whole of Kitui County. Your Excellency without much ado, allow me Hon. Members to welcome our Governor, His Excellency Dr. Julius Makau Malombe to Address the County Assembly. Your Excellency *karibu sana*. Allow me Your Excellency, there is an House protocol I skipped, we have to follow these colonial protocols. Clerk, next order...

(The order was read)

Your Excellency, welcome, you may now address the people of County Government of Kitui and the people of Kitui County. Thank you, Sir, welcome.

(The Governor took the floor)

Hon. Julius Makau Malombe (The Governor, County Government of Kitui): The Speaker of the County Assembly, Honourable Members of the County Assembly, the great people of Kitui, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, good afternoon! Hamjambo! I am this afternoon grateful for the opportunity to deliver the State of the County Address to the great people of Kitui from the Kitui County Assembly Chambers.

My address will focus on three areas: Firstly, a recap on the state of the County when we took over after our election in August 2022. Secondly, I will outline the key achievements of my government since I assumed office in August 2022 to date. This development achieved underscores the priorities that we undertook to deliver in our election Manifesto – The Kitui Promise and the Kitui County Integrated Development Plan (CIDP) 2023-2027. Finally, I will briefly state what we plan to accomplish going forward and conclude with a rallying call for us all to keep our eyes on the ball.

Honourable Speaker and Honourable Members, when I addressed this August House on 11th October 2022 during the Opening of the 3rd Kitui County Assembly, I observed that the Great People of Kitui were looking upon us to offer solutions to the myriad of challenges that they faced. Our people held great expectations that we, their leaders, would rejuvenate their hopes and aspirations

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by spurring development and progress. I expressed confidence that the two arms of the County Government of Kitui – the Assembly and the Executive – would cultivate a mutual working relationship that would result in concerted efforts to unlock the potential of our Great County.

I am glad to note that we are on the right track in our cooperation and consultations geared towards achieving our Vision: to be a prosperous county with vibrant rural and urban economies whose people enjoy a high quality of life, as well as our Mission, which is: to provide effective county services and an enabling environment for inclusive and sustainable socio-economic development and improved livelihoods for all.

Mr. Speaker and Honourable Members, Mr. Speaker, in this regard, I am reminded of the words of Warren G. Bennis, an American scholar, who once said: “Leadership is the capacity to translate vision into reality.”

Mr. Speaker and Honourable Members, we inherited a County whose people had apparently lost hope on the contribution of the County Government to their socio-economic needs. The people complained of inequitable development, food insecurity, lack of access to clean and safe water, a failing healthcare system where drugs and other commodities were unavailable, access to industrial oxygen to inpatients was not assured and indifference to educational issues affecting our children.

Other complaints involved rural roads that were hardly graded or maintained, main urban areas with no street and security lighting, market spaces that were rarely cleaned, a county where youth, sports and ICT were neglected, environmental degradation occasioned by unsustainable sand harvesting and deforestation, and lack of policy frameworks for the conservation and utilization of the county’s natural and mineral resources.

Further, the people raised concerns about a moribund county economy where money was not circulating, suppliers and contractors were not being paid on time, and lack of collaborative national and county government interventions to address insecurity particularly in Wards bordering neighbouring counties.

The Boda Boda transport sector was neglected and was characterized by lack of operators’ database, a cooperative empowerment framework, lack of training on road safety, licences and protective gear. Moreover, many local contractors lacked exposure in the use of IFMIS, e-tendering as well as project and financial management and lost competitive tenders to non-locals.

The annual Kitui Agricultural Show and Trade Fair had collapsed for five years since 2017, denying the residents the opportunity to learn about the best agricultural practices and business linkages. The County also lacked clear plans for promoting tourism and hospitality resulting in unexplored tourism opportunities.

Mr. Speaker and Honourable Members, we inherited eight insolvent County investment entities namely; the Kitui County Textile Centers (KICOTEC) in Syongila, Mutomo and Mwingi, Kitui Stone Crusher at Kwa Kilui in Yatta/Kwa Vonza Ward, the Kitui County Youth Development Centers in Manyenyoni and Kanyonyoo, Kitui Leather Industry in Manyenyoni within Township Ward, Kitui Pharma Industries in Kitui County Referral Hospital, Kitui Food Industries in ATC, Kitui County Empowerment Fund and Kitui livestock carrier trucks. For example, the Report of the Auditor General on KICOTEC for the year ending June 2022, indicated an operating loss of Kshs.90,902,130. The Auditor General concluded and I quote: “In the circumstances, going concern of the Centre is in doubt.”

In addition, low morale and lack of motivation were prevalent among the County staff due to delayed payment of salaries and work-related allowances, lack of promotions and job stagnation, ECDE teachers who served on casual and temporary terms of service, insufficient staff training and capacity building, inadequate office space, working tools and equipment. There were no performance management frameworks and set performance targets resulting in a scenario where assessment of achievements could not be evaluated objectively.

Mr. Speaker and Honourable Members, during my Inauguration Speech on August 25, 2022, I committed to undertake initiatives that we would adopt to salvage the situation. These include but not limited to: revamping the healthcare system, enhancing accountable revenue generation, responsible planning, budgeting and expenditure, equitable development across the county, rationalization of staff with a view to reducing the unsustainably huge wage bill, inculcating efficiency through institutionalizing performance contracting, the culture of integrity and zero-tolerance to corruption in service delivery, prompt payment to contracted services and works, strategic partnerships with the National Government and development partners, as well as conducting structured and meaningful public participation, to get and infuse our people’s perspectives in our development projects and programs.

Mr. Speaker and Honourable Members, today, I can affirm that, for the 16-month period we have been in office, we have made remarkable progress in achieving the life-transforming initiatives as outlined in the 16-Sector development priorities, “The Kitui Promise”. Mr. Speaker and Honourable Members, allow me now to present an overview of the Key Achievements that have been realised for the period we have been in office.

Mr. Speaker and Honourable Members, when I assumed office in August 2022, I appointed four committees to carry out various tasks and advise the County Government accordingly. These committees were: the Kitui County Pending Bills Committee, 2022; the Kitui County Human Resource Audit and Rationalization Committee, 2022; the Kitui County Government Motor Vehicles, Plant and Determination, Assessment and Evaluation Committee, 2022 and the Kitui County Sand Harvesting and Management Taskforce, 2023.

The Kitui County Pending Bills Review Committee, 2022 was established to advise and guide the County Government on the settlement of genuine pending bills while the Kitui County Human Resource Audit and Rationalization Committee, 2022 was to carry out an audit of the

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current human resource status and advise on the optimal staffing levels for permanent, contractual and casual staff.

The Kitui County Government Motor Vehicles, Plant and Determination, Assessment and Evaluation Committee, 2022, on the other hand, was to establish the County Government's current number and location of motor vehicles, plant and equipment in the county ministries and departments and to advise on their mechanical conditions, their serviceability and those the County Government should dispose in line with the Public Procurement and Asset Disposal Act, 2015.

Finally, the Kitui County Sand Harvesting and Management Taskforce, 2023 was to review and evaluate the current sand harvesting and management practices, including public participation, transportation, revenue collection and environmental matters and to develop drafts for both the Kitui County Sand Harvesting Management Policy and Bill.

Mr. Speaker and Honourable Members, With the world facing adverse effects of climate change, food and nutrition security remains a key challenge to many of our people. Cognizant of the fact that Kitui is an arid and semiarid county, we have initiated mitigation strategies and initiatives in the Agriculture Sector to address food and nutrition security. Agriculture generates 87 per cent of our rural household incomes. (Source: Climate Change, Agriculture and Food Security (CCAFS, 2021).

In our efforts to support agriculture, the County Government has facilitated 84,137 smallholder farmers across the 40 Wards with 168.3 Metric Tonnes of assorted Certified Drought Tolerant Crops (DTCs) with an estimated yield of 14,400 Metric Tonnes; and have supported 524 livestock farmers in all the 40 Wards with 3.23 Metric tonnes of assorted certified pasture seeds to improve livestock feeds and vaccinated 186,298 animals benefitting 16,774 farmers across the 40 Wards. Additionally, we have supported 2,261 horticultural farmers across the county with 0.35 Metric Tonnes of assorted certified seeds with an estimated yield of 912 Metric Tonnes for increased production.

In furthering our commitment to disseminate appropriate agricultural technologies to our farmers, we have successfully reached 214,055 farmers with various messages on the information and tools they need to improve food production.

Mr. Speaker and Honourable Members, in collaboration with the National Government, we carried out a comprehensive farmer profiling in the County and generated a database of 229,076 farmers in all the 40 Wards for provision of enhanced extension services and various forms of support.

Further, the County Government developed irrigation infrastructure for nine micro-irrigation schemes in collaboration with the Small Irrigation Value Addition Project (SIVAP) in four Wards (Kauwi, Nguutani, Kyome/Thaana and Mutonguni) benefitting 460 farmers to increase food production. Three Sustainable Land Management (SLM) sites were also developed in Itulu in Kisasi, Katwenye in Kyuso and Syokaai in Nuu Wards through construction of 101.5Km of terraces as well as 42 farm ponds and supply of 2,690 agroforestry seedlings, benefitting 1,350 farmers.

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We have supported 320 farmers in five apiculture and honey producer organizations in five Wards - Tharaka, Mwingi Central, Kiomo/Kyethani, Mutitu/Kaliku and Athi - with 1,200 modern beehives. The County Government has also repaired 10 heavy earth moving machinery and 18 farm tractors to provide subsidized ploughing services to 646 farmers across the County. A total of 1,148.3 acres were ploughed during the last rain season. We also collaborated with the National Government to provide value addition equipment including four feed mixers, 14 threshers and three green gram cleaning and destoning machines to 1,611 farmers in 17 Wards - Kyangwithya West, Mutonguni, Nguutani, Waita, Mutomo/Kibwea, Mutha, Ikutha, Endau/Malalani, Chuluni, Yatta/Kwa Vonza, Kwa Mutonga/Kithumula, Kyome/Thaana, Kiomo/Kyethani, Mumoni, Kyuso, Zombe/Mwitika and Mui.

Mr. Speaker and Honourable Members, to provide a platform for exhibition and networking that spurs development in agriculture, trade and allied sectors, the County Government revived the Kitui Agricultural Show and Trade Fair in July 2023 after a five-year hiatus. The Fair attracted over 70 exhibitors and over 30,000 show-goers.

Mr. Speaker and Honourable Members, water remains a scarce resource in Kitui County. Our ultimate goal is to ensure accessibility to adequate, safe and clean water to all Kitui residents within a distance of two kilometers or 45 minutes turn-around.

Under the Water Sector, the County Government has undertaken completion of the flagship Kangu Kangu Water Project in Kitui South and parts of Kitui Rural. This has entailed rehabilitating the pipeline (Kamutei - Mutomo main gravity line, Mutomo – Syunguni – Kandae – Syuma Nzeke - Makongoni return line, Mutomo - Ikutha line and Mutomo – Mutha line), installation of valves and construction of water kiosks to serve over 120,000 people; construction of Mwitasyano - Kwa Kilui – Matulani - Kwa Kilya sump well water supply in Yatta/Kwa Vonza Ward that is serving an estimated 12,000 people.

In addition, we have extended a total of 97kms of water pipelines across the County, including Kithayoni water pipeline in Tseikuru Ward, Thua-Nduluni-Waani-Kisiuni water pipeline in Voo/Kyamatu Ward, Thua-Zombe water pipeline in Zombe/Mwitika Ward, Kwa Watia borehole pipeline in Kanziku/Simisi Ward, Kisasi water pipeline in Kisasi Ward and Kisayani-Manyenyoni water pipeline in Township Ward to serve over 30,000 people.

The County Government has rehabilitated 43 boreholes. These include Ikuusya in Waita Ward, Musavani in Tseikuru Ward, Thitani in Kyome/Thaana Ward, Ilooi in Kyangwithya West Ward, Kabati in Kauwi Ward, Kavoo in Kanyangi Ward, Vutu in Kanziku/Simisi Ward, Kairungu in Kiomo/Kyethani Ward, Kalambani in Mutha Ward, Lundi in Mui Ward, Ngomano in Zombe/Mwitika Ward, Kanzinwa in Mumoni Ward, Wangwui in Mui Ward, Miambani in Miambani Ward, Kolyani B in Kiomo/Kyethani Ward, Kyambo in Migwani Ward, Muvitha in Yatta/Kwa Vonza Ward, Kasang'u in Voo/Kyamatu Ward and Kilonzo in Nzambani Ward, all in all increasing water accessibility to an estimated 20,000 people. We have also drilled two boreholes in Waita Secondary School and Ithookwe Showground and solarized Kwa Sendi borehole in Kisasi Ward serving an estimated 2,000 people.

In our continued effort to increase access to water for domestic use, livestock and irrigated agriculture, the County Government has embarked on implementation of a program that targets construction of 2,400 sand dams across the County. Last financial year, we constructed an additional 120 sand dams across the 40 Wards and 10 on-farm ponds in Chuluni, Voo/Kyamatu, Athi, Yatta/Kwa Vonza, Kivou, Mwingi Central and Kithumula/Kwa Mutonga Wards. Additionally, eight earth dams have been desilted at Kwa Kameta in Kyangwithya West Ward, Kakea in Kivou Ward and Kwa Mbiti in Kyuso Ward, among others, serving over 10,000 people.

Mr. Speaker and Honourable Members, A healthy population is a productive population. according to the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Health is Goal No. 3. Similarly, the County Government of Kitui has prioritized health as one of the key pillars in our development agenda, focusing on promotive, preventive, curative and rehabilitative healthcare services to the people of Kitui.

In the Health Sector, we have reinstated, trained and commissioned 2,470 Community Health Promoters (CHPs) to provide promotive and preventive healthcare services to our people. We have established and commissioned the Phangisile Mtshali Cancer Centre at the Kitui County Referral Hospital (KCRH), bringing services closer to the people of Kitui who previously sought these services outside the County.

To reduce maternal and child mortality cases, we have completed and renovated stalled maternity units in various health facilities such as Kyuso Sub-County Hospital, Ikanga, Nguni and Malalani Health Centres. We also established three New Born Units (NBUs) at Ikanga, Ikutha and Tseikuru Sub-County hospitals increasing the number to seven. This has reduced infant mortality rates from 47 to 21 per 1,000 live births. We operationalized Mutomo SubCounty Hospital's Maternal and Child Health (MCH) Unit to serve 12,549 people, and constructed two wards (female and male) in Yatta Health Centre in Yatta/Kwa Vonza Ward to enhance curative healthcare services.

In order to offer affordable and reliable diagnostic services to our people, we reinstated the Computed Tomography (CT) Scan services at the Kitui County Referral Hospital. To improve the supply of oxygen in our facilities, in partnership with USAID, we installed and commissioned an Oxygen Plant including 300 gas cylinders at the Mwingi Level IV Hospital serving 58,493 people within Mwingi and adjoining areas. We have installed oxygen piping in essential sections at the Kitui County Referral Hospital to serve 67,242 people.

At the Kitui County Referral Hospital, we have operationalized two Intensive Care Unit (ICU) beds and a High Dependency Unit (HDU) bed for critical care services, and fully operationalized the new outpatient block to decongest the old block, thus increasing efficiency in service delivery at the County Referral Hospital.

To ensure uninterrupted provision of healthcare services in our hospitals, regular restocking of pharmaceuticals and non-pharmaceuticals has been enhanced through timely procurement and supply of medical commodities.

The County Government has also repaired and operationalized **eight (8) ambulances** and **two (2) utility vehicles** to effectively respond to emergency cases and save lives. The Orthopaedic Department at the Kitui County Referral Hospital made and availed to patients **236 orthopaedic assistive devices** which include shoes raising, crutches, knee ankle foot orthosis and walking frames.

Mr. Speaker and Honourable Members, on Education - we remain faithful to our clarion call, *'kisomo nokyo!'* An educated society is an empowered society. At the advent of Devolution, pre-primary education and vocational training were devolved. Pursuant to this mandate, the County Government of Kitui has designed projects and programs tailored towards promoting Early Childhood Development Education (ECDE) and vocational skills development targeting mainly our youth.

In this regard, the County Government has employed and converted into Permanent and Pensionable (P&P) terms 1,688 ECDE teachers, boosting their morale, improving their livelihoods and spurring, re-energizing rural economies through their expenditure of their enhanced incomes within their localities. At this juncture, I take this opportunity to thank you Honourable Members for approving the budget that enabled us to undertake this noble initiative with effect from February 2023. To provide a conducive learning environment, we have constructed 85 ECDE classrooms across the County. Just to mention a few, in Mwingi North Sub-County we constructed ECDE classrooms in Katumbi, Manguu, Katama, Nguvui and Twathi primary schools.

In Mwingi Central Sub-County, we constructed in Kaai, Kyandoa, Ivuusya, Kiviuni and Thitha ECDE classrooms. In Mwingi West Sub-County, we constructed Kairungu, Kyome, Mathiani, Ilalambyu and Kavuni primary schools. We also constructed ECDE classrooms in Kwa Kaungu, AIC Kololo, Kiseveni, Manzi Itumo and Kyondoni primary schools in Kitui West Sub-County. In Kitui South Sub-County, my government constructed ECDE classrooms in Muamba, Yaathi, St. Peter's, Muambani and Matikoni primary schools. In Kitui Central Sub-County, we constructed ECDE classrooms in ACK Tungu, Maviani, Mulutu, Mboo and Kavutini primary schools. We have also constructed ECDE classrooms in Kitaama, Kyenze, Mbananga, Masoka and Ulungu primary schools In Kitui Rural Sub-County. Further, we constructed ECDE classrooms in Kiongwe and Kalalani primary schools in Kitui East SubCounty. The County Government also provided teaching and learning materials to the various ECDE centers.

We further established a new Vocational Training Centre (VTC) at Mwakini/Katothya in Yatta/Kwa Vonza Ward and completed the stalled Information Communication Technology (ICT) Workshop at Mutonguni VTC as well as the twin workshop and toilet blocks at Syou VTC in Endau/Malalani Ward.

Mr. Speaker and Honourable Members, I now turn to our Urban Development interventions. Mr. Speaker, urban areas have always been centers of development and growth, often leading a nation into progress. Urbanization in Kitui County is on an upward trajectory as people continue to migrate to our fast-growing urban centers in search of business and employment opportunities, resulting to growth in urban population. This in turn leads to changes in land use, economic activity and culture.

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Effective urban planning, therefore, ensures that these opportunities are created and catered for in our towns and creates a brighter future, healthier and conducive environment for the communities who live in them. To ensure sustainable urban development in our towns, the County Government has upgraded to bitumen standards the 500-Metre St. Ursula Tungutu Girls' High School – Ithookwe Showground Road and constructed cabro-paved walkways and storm water drainage channels. In addition, we have constructed cabro-paved walkways and drainage channels from Catholic Church Cathedral to Magunas Supermarket, and Kalundu Trading Center from Kalundu Market entrance to Riverside Hotel within Kitui Municipality.

To enhance road connectivity within our urban centers, we graded the 2.2KM-long Agricultural Mechanization Services (AMS) – South Eastern Kenya University (SEKU) – Manyenyoni – Majengo Road in Kitui Municipality and Beth-El Academy – Kathonzweni Secondary School Road in Mwingi Municipality.

In our efforts to enhance waste management in Kitui and Mwingi Municipalities, we procured a skip loader, a dump truck, six fabricated skip bins and constructed a perimeter wall around the Mwingi Town dumpsite. The County Government has also drilled and equipped Mwingi Slaughterhouse borehole serving the abattoir and the surrounding community.

Further, to enhance security and spur a 24-hour economy in our County, we installed, repaired and maintained street lights in Kitui and Mwingi Municipalities and upcoming urban areas across the County (Mutomo, Kanyangi, Kabati, Nu, Tulia, Ikutha, Kyuso and Kakongo).

In addition, for appropriate urban planning, we prepared and verified eight market layouts for Kanziko, Mutito/Kaliku, Mutonguni, Kisasi, Waita, Nzambani, Kyangithya West and Kyome/Thaana. Moreover, the County Government facilitated land adjudication in preparation for titling of Mwakini Settlement Scheme in Yatta/Kwa-Vonza Ward targeting more than 2,000 people.

Mr. Speaker and Honourable Members, let me now share our Road network interventions. Mr. Speaker, roads are prime communication links between all economic sectors. Indeed, roads account for over 80 per cent of Kenya's total passenger and freight transportation. An efficient transport system reduces logistics and trade costs, promotes competitiveness and integration and generates socio-economic growth and spatial development.

To improve our road network, my government has graded a total of **1,311kms** of roads including Katse-Musosya Road in Mumoni Ward, Thaana Nzau – Kithyoko River Road in Kyome/Thaana Ward, Kombu Primary - Kilonzi Mwanzia - Kinaa Makau - Kauwi River through John Mutemwa Road in Kwa Mutonga Ward, Mutula-Kwa Wewa-Junction to Kilingile Road in Miambani Ward, Miambani-Kiongwe-Kanguu-Inyuu Road in Chuluni Ward, Mbitini/Voo Road Junction - Kinakoni Market Road in Voo/Kyamatu Ward, among others.

We have also opened/widened a total of 192.6kms of roads including Karangeni-KanyengyaNthangani Road in Tharaka Ward, Membau–Mbakoni-Yolomuni Road in Athi Ward, Kanyongonyo–Kangukangu Road in Kanyangi Ward and Kwa Kyenza-Kithome Nziana through Ngethwa River-Kunikila Primary School in Matinyani Ward, among others, and gravelled 6.8 kms of roads across Kitui including Inyuu–Kyaango Junction Road traversing Zombe/Mwitika,

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Voo/Kyamatu and Chuluni Wards, besides maintaining 3.8kms of paved roads. We have constructed a total of 775 metres of drifts including the Katse Drift along KatseMusosya Road in Mumoni Ward, Ngunga Drift along Kisayani–Kilui Road in Mutomo/Kibwea Ward, Kithyoko River Drift along Thaana Nzau to Kithyoko River Road in Kyome/Thaana Ward, Kisiiyo Drift along Inyuu–Katumbu Road in Chuluni Ward, Thua Drift along Kiangini -Kivwauni Road in Voo/Kyamatu Ward, and Thua River Drift along River Thua-Kavuvuu-Mutula Road in Miambani Ward.

In addition, we have built a total of 3,151 metres of concrete slabs along Mutula-Kilingile Road in Miambani Ward, Kamaembe-Mukungo-Itiko Road in Mutito/Kaliku and Chuluni Wards, and at Museve Shrine along Kitui-Museve-Miambani Road, among others.

To improve road drainage, we have also constructed a total of 1,938 metres of culverts across the County. Mr. Speaker, to enhance the skills and capacity of our contractors in public procurement processes and give them a competitive edge in tendering and contract management, the County Government of Kitui collaborated with the National Construction Authority (NCA) to train and capacity-build 4,000 contractors from all the 40 Wards. The County Government also repaired and operationalized road machinery including four graders, three tippers, a backhoe loader, a bulldozer, a shovel and eight vehicles to enhance inhouse road grading and opening.

Mr. Speaker and Honourable Members, employing over 20,000 youth in Kitui, the Boda Boda Sector is one of the fastest growing sectors in the County. The County Government has rolled out programs aimed at streamlining and strengthening the sector through formation of proper regulations and capacity-building frameworks in order to harness its huge potential for the benefit of the residents. We have mapped Boda Boda operators and sensitized them on road safety and the need to form at least one Savings and Credit Cooperative Society (SACCO) in each of the 40 Wards.

Mr. Speaker and Honourable Members, Trade and Investment are powerful engines that drive economic growth and reduce poverty. To spur Kitui's economic growth and operationalize the County's Six Economic and Investment Zones (EIZs), we have undertaken various initiatives geared towards guaranteeing traders and investors an enabling business environment. Some of these initiatives include the reinstatement of the Kitui Agricultural Show and Trade Fair and initiation of the review of the Kitui Vision for Economic and Social Transformation 1 (KIVEST I) and the development of KIVEST II. The County Government has also linked and exposed various MSMEs to international and local markets through forums and events like the 3rd Kenya International Investment Conference 2023 held in Nairobi and the Biennial Devolution Conference 2023 in Uasin Gishu County. During the Devolution Conference, Kitui Stand that showcased products by six exhibitors from the County was ranked the 2nd Best Overall County. The ranking was based on innovation, the 2023 Devolution Conference theme interpretation and quality of products and services displayed.

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Mr. Speaker and Honourable Members, Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) create jobs in rural and urban areas of the county, enabling many people to access economic opportunities they would otherwise not have.

To facilitate economic growth in Kitui, the County Government has continued to support MSMEs through construction of seven market sheds at Katothya in Yatta/Kwa Vonza Ward, Wii in Mulango Ward, Kamaembe in Chuluni Ward, Thaana Nzau in Kyome/Thaana Ward, Itiva Nzou in Kyuso Ward, Kalamba Muyo in Mumoni Ward and Maliku in Kisasi Ward.

To boost trade and promote a 24-hour economy in our County, we have installed solar security lights in various market centers across the County such as Ndiini in Mutomo/Kibwea Ward, Kitoani in Kanyangi Ward, Maliku in Kisasi Ward, Syongila in Township Ward, Kyandoa in Waita Ward and Lundi in Mui Ward.

Mr. Speaker, in order to empower and expose the youth in business innovations, we implemented the Plug Mtaani-Vijana2Invest Program in collaboration with the National Government, where 200 youths participated and 135 were shortlisted to compete.

Mr. Speaker and Honourable Members, Cooperative Societies serve common interests of people for mutual benefit. They promote members' interests and their socio-economic welfare. To support formation and strengthening of cooperative societies in various sectors, we facilitated registration of 61 new cooperative societies across the County. They include Thagicu Farmers, Utu Wema, Aithi Farmers, Mathima Livestock Marketing, Misokani Farmers, Kicopo Poultry Producer and Marketing as well as Zomwita Farmers Cooperative Societies. We also trained 9,762 Cooperators on governance of Cooperative Societies, and conducted an audit on 66 Cooperative Societies for compliance.

Mr. Speaker and Honourable Members, Kitui is a potential top tourist and hospitality destination in Kenya. Our County hosts an assortment of tourist attractions, among them the Tsavo East National Park, South Kitui Game Reserve, the mystical Nzambani Rock, the scenic Ikoo Valley, Muumoni hills, Kora National Park and Mutomo Reptile Park. To tap into the Tourism Sector's huge economic potential, we sensitized and trained 200 Kitui youth in November, 2023 on tourism opportunities including tourism circuits, hospitality and tour guiding. This was done in collaboration with the Kenya Tourism Board (KTB) and the Kenya Utalii College. We also solarized Kalalani Game Rangers Camp borehole in the South Kitui Game Reserve.

Mr. Speaker and Honourable Members, Women are the backbone of families and communities. The youth, on the other hand, are the future of our nation. People with disabilities are abled differently. To foster an inclusive society whose Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities are socially, economically and politically empowered, the County Government has trained and sensitized 160 women groups, 400 youth, and 40 PWDs groups on Access to Government Procurement Opportunities (AGPO) across the eight Sub-Counties.

To enhance sports and nurture talents, the County Government of Kitui has renovated and upgraded the Kitui Stadium to increase the capacity to host 5,000 people and upgraded six playgrounds (Vutu Secondary School in Kanziku/Simisi Ward, Mukameni Primary School in Kisasi Ward, Ithumula Primary School in Chuluni Ward, Kathungi Primary School in Mulango

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Ward, Yumbe Primary School in Waita Ward and Katuka Primary School in Mumoni Ward) to benefit over 15,000 youth. In addition, we have issued assorted sports equipment and kits to benefit an estimated 5,000 youth across the 40 Wards; facilitated participation of a basketball team in the Kenya Youth Inter-County Sports Association (KYISA) Games. A total of 22 players participated in the KYISA Games, out of which three were scouted for training at the Kenya Academy of Sports.

We also trained 285 coaches and referees to increase efficiency in coaching and officiating of sporting activities, and facilitated 200 athletes/sportsmen to register with the AntiDoping Agency to enable national and international participation in sports.

Mr. Speaker and Honourable Members, Conservation of the Environment and sustainable utilization of natural resources are vital in building the resilience of our communities against the negative effects of Climate Change. To enhance environmental conservation, the County Government has facilitated growing of 26,350 trees across the County through the “Nyumba Moja Miti Ishirini” and the Urban Greening Initiative of “Duka Moja Miti Tatu”. We have also rehabilitated riparian land through growing of 1,000 bamboo seedlings along Kalundu River in Township Ward. To conserve our river basins and to streamline sustainable harvesting of sand in our rivers, we developed the Kitui County River Basins Sand Utilization and Conservation Policy and Bill which are before this Honourable House for consideration. Once enacted, the legislation will set out guidelines for sustainable sand utilization, emphasizing on the protection and conservation of our river basins.

In regard to Mining, we have conducted a geological assessment and mapping of mineral resources in Tharaka and Tseikuru Wards in Mwingi North. The assessment has unveiled substantial copper deposits within Tharaka Ward. We have further established and gazetted the Kitui County Artisanal Mining Committee in collaboration with the State Department of Mining. The Committee is tasked with issuing artisanal mining permits for the artisanal miners operating in the County.

Similarly, on matters Climate Change, we have developed the Kitui County Climate Change Action Plan 2023-2027 and established the Climate Change Unit, the County Climate Change Technical Team and Ward Climate Change Planning Teams in all 40 Wards.

Mr. Speaker and Honourable Members, in efforts to promote the adoption of green and renewable Energy, improve security and provide traders with a conducive business environment, the County Government has installed 87 solar security lights, and repaired 79 faulty solar security lights in trading and market centers across the 40 Wards. We have also supplied and commissioned 11.88Kilowatt solar system for water pumping at Kwa Muinde Borehole in Matinyani serving 250 households, and installed electricity at Thitani Dispensary in Kyome/Thaana Ward, serving the facility and the neighbouring community.

Mr. Speaker and Honourable Members Information Communication Technology (ICT) is a catalyst for increasing productivity, reaching global customers, and improving access to technology around the world. It has empowered marginalized communities, giving them a voice

to influence the decisions that affect their enterprises and their livelihoods. To improve access to County e-government services, we have redesigned the Kitui County website to integrate the myCountyApp service. The application was developed in collaboration with Safaricom PLC.

Moreover, to increase mobile telephony connectivity from 83 per cent to 95 per cent, my government collaborated with Mobile Network Operators (MNOs) including Safaricom PLC and American Tower Corporation (ATC Kenya) to install new Base Transmission Stations (BTSs) and optimize the existing ones.

Mr. Speaker and Honourable Members, Security is key for human existence. Safety and security in local communities are crucial for development as they contribute to stability, social cohesion and the overall well-being of residents. In order to offer a long-lasting solution to the insecurity challenges along our North and Eastern borders, we have collaborated with the National Government in order to establish eight (8) police stations to enhance security patrols in Kanziku/Simisi, Mutha, Voo/Kyamatu, Endau/Malalani, Nuu, Nguni, Ngomeni and Tseikuru Wards. This collaboration is in line with Article 189 (1) (b) of the Constitution of Kenya (CoK) 2010 that allows the two levels of government to assist, support, consult and as appropriate, implement the legislation of the other level of government. Currently, two police stations i.e. Mandongoi in Ngomeni and Kona Kaliti in Mutha are complete, while Twambui in Endau/Malalani and Imuumba in Voo/Kyamatu are ongoing. We have also installed street lights in various towns, market centers and other public facilities to enhance security.

Mr. Speaker and Honourable Members, to ensure equitable development in all the 40 Wards, we have been implementing the Community Level Infrastructure Development Program (CLIDP). So far, the County Government of Kitui has undertaken 333 CLIDP projects cutting across various sectors such as education, roads, water, health and security. To increase the rate of access, transition and retention of learners from financially disadvantaged backgrounds and improve the performance of the education sector, my government has supported 23,733 learners with bursaries totaling to Kshs.172.8 Million through the Pro-Poor Fee Support component of the Pro-Poor Support Program. It is important for this Honourable House and the Great People of Kitui to note that my government increased the program's budgetary allocation from Kshs.40 Million to Kshs.120 Million.

We are also undertaking Pro-Poor infrastructural projects worth Kshs.60 Million. These include construction of a two-floor administration block at Matinyani Secondary School, a dining hall at Tiva VTC, a four-door pit latrine at Mui VTC and completion of eight stalled classrooms at Ithiani VTC.

Mr. Speaker and Honourable Members, On Payment of Pending Bills and guided by the Public Finance Management Act (PFMA) Regulations, 2015 (Counties) Section 41 (2) which requires that debt service payments be a first charge on the County Revenue Fund, the County Government has paid Kshs.901,046,920 of the total Kshs. 1,431,226,007 bills approved by the Pending Bills Review Committee. My government commits to clear the eligible unpaid bills totalling Kshs. 530,179,087 in the subsequent financial years.

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On Own Source Revenue, the County Government recorded an above-target revenue performance after exceeding the fiscal year target of Kshs.420 million to collect Kshs. 464.35 million during the 2022/2023 Financial year. This is the first time the County has surpassed its target since the onset of Devolution. The stellar performance is as a result of aggressive revenue collection and enhancement of related strategies including enforcement of the use of the automated County Revenue Collection System, staff training and retooling, performance-based contracting and resource allocation for optimal employee performance. Kitui was ranked by the Office of the Controller of Budget (OCoB) as the Best Overall County nationally in achieving the highest performance in raising her own revenue at 84 per cent during the FY2022/2023.

In fulfilment of Section 108 (1) of the County Governments Act, 2012, we prepared and launched the Kitui County Integrated Development Plan (CIDP) 2023-2027, a fiveyear development blueprint capturing the aspirations and priorities of Kitui citizens which the County Government of Kitui will strive to progressively implement by 2027.

On Budget Absorption, the approved County budget for the FY2022/2023 was Kshs.12,306,052,565 comprising 70 per cent recurrent (Kshs.8,662,902,604) and 30 per cent development (Kshs.3,643,149,961). Total expenditure for the year ending 30th June 2023 amounted to Kshs.10,349,868,747; representing gross absorption of 84.1 per cent, up from 82.95 in FY2021/22 due to disbursement of all monthly equitable share for the County.

Concerning Procurement, we have put in place mechanisms to adhere to Access to Government Procurement Opportunities (AGPO) requirements by ensuring 30 per cent of all County procurements are reserved for youths, women and People with Disabilities (PWDs).

Mr. Speaker, on Personal Emoluments, the County Government has put in place measures for timely processing of staff salaries and remittance of all statutory obligations and commitments.

We have also established the County Budget & Economic Forum (CBEF) as provided for in Section 137 of the Public Finance Management (PFM) Act 2012 for County budget consultation process.

Mr. Speaker and Honourable Members, what gets measured gets done. To improve performance and service delivery in the County Ministries and Departments, my government re-institutionalized Performance Contracting in the last Quarter of FY2022/2023.

Mr. Speaker and Honourable Members, to enable our people to reap maximum benefits as far as development is concerned, we resolved to work closely with the National Government and other Development Partners so as to deliver transformative and sustainable development

The County Government of Kitui in collaboration with the Water Sector Trust Fund (WSTF) is implementing two large water projects. These are Ilimukuyu Dam Water Supply Scheme in Endau, Endau/Malalani Ward in Kitui East Sub-County and Kyuso Rock Catchment Water Supply Scheme in Kyuso Town, Mwingi North Sub-County. The Ilimukuyu Dam Water Supply Scheme is designed to provide water for 17,971 people and 54,237 heads of livestock. Further, the project will support small-scale household level irrigated agriculture, thus promoting food security, while the Kyuso Rock Catchment Water Supply Scheme will supply water to

16,120 persons in Kyuso and its environs. This will be a transformational model of providing high quality water harnessed from rainfall through the rock catchment.

Mr. Speaker, our water companies – the Kitui Water and Sanitation Company (KITWASCO) and the Kiambere-Mwingi Water and Sanitation Company (KIMWASCO) - are supported by the County Government of Kitui to pay the high electricity bills incurred through pumping water from Masinga and Kiambere Dams. This is mainly because their water tariffs are subsidised. The companies are, however, in the process of reviewing their tariffs which were last reviewed in 2011. Further, the companies are faced with other challenges including an old depreciated pumping system and pipeline network. However, this is being addressed through partnerships with the National Government for Kiambere Phase II for KIMWASCO and the Masinga Dam Water Intake Development Project for KITWASCO. We lobbied the National Government to revive the stalled Umaa Dam in Kyangwithya East Ward. The National Government has already contracted China Jiangxi International Cooperation to undertake the completion of the project at a cost of Kshs.2 Billion. Once complete, the dam will have a capacity to provide 3,975 Cubic Meters of water per day.

Further, we have also negotiated for the establishment of a construction site for the contractor in Tharaka Ward for the proposed Kshs.425 Billion High Grand Falls Multipurpose Dam located along the Kitui-Tharaka Nithi border along River Tana. This will in turn spur the local economy through creation of job opportunities and utilization of local construction materials.

Thwake Dam, whose benefits will be shared by the three Counties of Kitui, Machakos and Makeni, is another major product of the cooperation between the South Eastern Kenya Economic Bloc (SEKEB) and the National Government. Phase one of this project is at 89 per cent completion.

We also implemented the Syomisyi-Mesilya-Enzou-Kisayani Water Project in Ikanga/Kyatune Ward in partnership with the Catholic Medical Mission Board (CMMB) benefitting an estimated 3,000 people.

In partnership with the Welt-Hunger Hilfe (WHH), a German NGO, we implemented the Yongela Borehole Water Supply Project in Ikanga/Kyatune Ward benefitting an estimated 2,000 people and the Mbusyani Water Supply Project in Athi Ward that is serving an estimated 2,500 people.

In the Health Sector, the County Government collaborated with the United States International Development Agency (USAID) to install the Kshs.27.7 Million Oxygen Generating Plant at Mwingi Level Four Hospital in May 2023. In addition, we have initiated the establishment of the Kshs.500 Million Kitui County Aggregation and Industrial Parks (CAIPs) in collaboration with the National Government through a 50/50 Matching Fund. The CAIPs facility, to be established at Kanyonyoo along the Thika-Mwingi-Garissa Highway, will serve as a hub for

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collection, sorting, grading, cleaning, processing and packaging of agricultural products with a strong emphasis on value addition.

Moreover, the County Government, in collaboration with development partners, has prioritized five key value chains namely, green grams, mango, sorghum, tomatoes, and local poultry to promote agribusiness.

Other initiatives include facilitation of formation of 40 Savings and Credit Cooperative Organizations (SACCOs), one per ward, to empower our farmers financially and foster a culture of saving and investment, development of seven small-scale infrastructure investments for primary aggregation and value addition, establishment of 80 demonstration farms and learning sites across the county and establishment of eight farmer-led irrigation projects with a total area of 800 acres with a view to promote irrigated agriculture. These collaborative interventions will benefit an estimated 40,000 farmers in the 40 Wards. My government has partnered with the Walk About Foundation for the distribution of wheelchairs to person with mobility disability. The organization has donated 113 wheelchairs which have improved mobility of our people.

Mr. Speaker and Honourable Members, despite our achievements, we have encountered a number of challenges in the implementation of our Manifesto and Annual Development Plans (ADPs). First and foremost, we have experienced frequent delays in disbursement of funds from the Exchequer. This has affected timely implementation of projects and programmes. It has, on occasions, also affected prompt payments to our contractors and suppliers. However, this challenge is not unique to Kitui County but cuts across the 47 counties. To address this issue, the County Governments, through the Council of Governors and other Constitutional institutions, are actively engaged in consultations with the National Government to streamline the disbursement of funds to counties.

As you are aware, we inherited pending bills totalling Kshs.2,560,718,638.82. Out of these Kshs.1,431,226,009.65 was cleared for payment by the Pending Bills Review Committee. The balance of Kshs.1,129,492,629.17 was not cleared for payment subject to verification, valuation and validation. Given that the Regulation 42 (1)(a) of the Public Finance Management, 2015 (Counties) requires that debt service payment shall be a first charge of the County budget, we have prioritized payment of pending bills in our budgets. This has eaten into our budget for new projects and programs for the last two Financial Years. Going forward, we intend to clear all pending bills in the subsequent Financial Years so that we can dedicate our financial resources to our development priorities. Additionally, to avoid future upsurge of pending bills, we have committed to set realistic own source revenue targets.

Mr. Speaker and Honourable Members, when we assumed office, we found a bloated wage bill. Our current budget for the FY2023/2024 of Kshs.13.988 billion comprises personnel emoluments totalling Kshs.5.417 Billion which is 39 per cent of the total budget. This contravenes the fiscal responsibility principle as outlined in Section 107 (2) of the Public Finance Management Act, 2012 requires that County expenditure on wages benefits shall not exceed 35 per cent of a County's budget. To address this challenge, we have resolved to freeze recruitment of new staff

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save for essential and technical officers. We will also endeavour to put in place strategies of raising our own source revenue in order to comply with the law.

Mr. Speaker and Honourable Members, going forward, my government will continue to focus on the implementation of key projects and programs aimed at transforming the livelihoods of our people.

In the Agriculture Sector, we plan to intensify training and support to our farmers in adopting modern farming technologies through recruitment of more agricultural extension officers and animal health assistants. In addition, we will improve and modernize the Kitui Agricultural Training Centre (ATC), transforming it into a hub of learning and innovation by improving the demonstration farms, conference and accommodation facilities. We will also construct a borehole at the facility to enhance access to water.

Additionally, we will continue to offer subsidized tractor ploughing services and repair the remaining faulty 22 farm tractors ensuring that all the 40 farm tractors are operational to serve over 10,000 farmers annually. In our efforts to enhance access to clean and safe water for our people, my government will construct eight sump-wells, one in each Sub-County, to serve an average of 40,000 people, solarize 20 boreholes across the County through use of solar-powered as opposed to diesel-powered water pumping systems to increase efficiency and cut down on operation costs, drill more boreholes in suitable sites with high water yield across Kitui, construct at least 20 (Twenty) 100-cubic meter small dams in various Wards.

In Health, my government will focus on initiation of construction of the Nzamba Kitonga Memorial Hospital in Mutitu/Kaliku Ward, continue construction of the South Eastern Kenya Renal Centre at the Kitui County Referral Hospital, upgrade the Kanziko, Tiva, Endau, Kyuso, Katse, Sosoma, Mbitini, Tharaka and Miambani Health Centres to Level 3B and install Integrated Health Information System in the remaining 12 Level 4 hospitals across the County.

Mr. Speaker, other projects in the Health Sector will include construction of a general theatre and a kitchen at Kyuso Sub-County Hospital, completion and operationalization of a kitchen at Migwani Sub-County Hospital, completion of the stalled female ward at the Mwingi Level IV Hospital and completion of Mutomo Health Center's Outpatient Department (OPD) Block.

Mr. Speaker, concerning our dispensaries, we plan to construct and operationalize Katumbi, Ngwate, Gatoroni, Kilimu, Kimela, Nguutani, Katuyu, Mukauni, Kangondi, Nzunguni-Kasang'o, Kathithu, Thitha, Kamanyi, Tuvaani, Kwa Song'e, Musovo, Thua, Kimangao and Masavi dispensaries. We will also complete and equip the Kitui County Referral and Mwingi Level IV Hospitals mortuaries and purchase two coolers for Kyuso Sub-County Hospital mortuary.

Mr. Speaker and Honourable Members, my government will equip and operationalize 13 completed maternity units in Kyuso Sub-County Hospital, Malalani, Yanzuu, Miambani, Nguni and Kauma health centres as well as Tiva, Endau, Mui, Mivukoni, Itongolani, Kiseuni and Katilini

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dispensaries. In addition, we will purchase medical equipment for Rehabilitation Departments at the Kitui County Referral Hospital, the Mwingi Level IV Hospital, Ikutha, Migwani, Kanyangi, Mutitu, Kyuso and Kauwi Sub-County Hospitals for occupational therapy and physiotherapy.

To boost the Education Sector, my government will continue to increase funds allocated to the Pro-Poor Fee Support Program, including enhancement of the infrastructure component of the program, improve learning environment through construction of more modern ECDE classrooms and provision of teaching and learning materials.

In regard to vocational training and skills development, we will continue to improve our existing Vocational Training Centers (VTCs) and capacity-build VTC instructors in line with the new Competency Based Education and Training (CBET) and Curriculum Development Assessment and Certification Council (CDACC) guidelines, among other initiatives.

In our efforts to improve urban infrastructure, we will upgrade to bitumen standards our urban roads within Kyusyuni and Migwani towns through the Dustless Program, install and maintain integrated solar energy streetlights and high-mast flood lights in the various upcoming urban areas, construct storm water drainage channels in Zombe, Migwani, Mutomo and Kwa Vonza urban areas, construct cabro-paved pedestrian walkways in Migwani, Kwa Vonza, Mutomo and Kabati towns.

In the Roads Sector, my government will, under the Inhouse Grading Programme, grade a total of 1,600km of the County roads, that is, 40km in every Ward and open 280km of roads across the County under the Dozing Programme. We will also tarmac the 1.4km ATC-SEKU Kitui Campus to Bypass Road and install street lights for the same. Further, my government will continue to periodically rehabilitate and maintain all our roads as well as construct drifts, concrete slabs, culverts, repair potholes, surface resealing and gravelling, among other works.

In the Boda Boda Sector, my government will develop the Kitui County Boda Boda Policy to address the key challenges, promote sustainable practices, and contribute to the overall development of the Boda Boda industry. In addition, we will train 2,000 Boda Boda riders, 50 from each Ward, and facilitate issuance of Smart Driving Licenses and 2,000 pieces of Safety Riding Gears by the end of this financial year. Boda Boda operators will also be sensitized on road safety and proper use of personal protective equipment (PPES) e.g., helmets and reflector jackets. Further, to ensure that Boda Boda Riders work in a conducive environment free from adverse environmental conditions like direct sunlight, rain and wind, my government will construct 40 Boda Boda Sheds, one in each Ward. To boost Trade and Investments in our County, my government, in collaboration with the National Government, will complete and brand the Kitui County Aggregation and Industrial Park (KCAIP) which will be popularized during the planned October 2024 Investors Conference. In our efforts to strengthen the Cooperatives Societies Sector, my government will facilitate registration of 20 new cooperatives, capacity-building of 85 cooperative societies, revival of 20 dormant cooperatives and carry out audits on 60 cooperative societies.

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Mr. Speaker, my government has acquired a 7-acre land for construction of stadia in Kivou and Waita Wards in Mwingi Central and Kyoani in Kitui South. We will also roll out the Kazi Kwa Vijana Program to boost youth employment and wealth creation across the County.

In Tourism and Hospitality, my government will strive to promote the County tourism circuit that connects the beach tourism at the Coastal Region to the wildlife tourism at the South Kitui Game Reserve which lies within the Tsavo Conservation Area, taking advantage of the tarmacked Kibwezi –Mutomo – Kitui - Migwani Road that connects to Mwingi - Tseikuru Road, and eventually to the Mt. Kenya Tourism Circuit via Mwingi National Reserve which borders Meru National Park.

We will also seek to rehabilitate both South Kitui and Mwingi game Reserves as well as enhance Wildlife Conservation through establishing conservancies, in conjunction with the Kenya Wildlife Services.

We will also complete and operationalize Mutomo Reptile Park in collaboration with the National Museums of Kenya and the Kenya Wildlife Service. The Reptile Park features a display of various species of snakes and other reptiles. The site will also serve as a center for research, breeding and snake venom harvesting.

In addition, we will organize three tourism hospitality stakeholders' forums to sensitize and train them on investment and quality services. We will also embark on marketing of key touristic attraction sites including Ikoo Valley, Museve shrine, Nzambani Rock, Yanzuu rock retreat centre and Important Bird Areas (IBAs) of Mumoni and Mutitu hills.

On Environment, we plan to grow trees in hills, markets and riverine areas, establish ward tree growing nurseries, rehabilitate Nuu and Mutitu catchment ecosystems, capacity build ward climate change planning teams and reengineer operations at the Kitui town dumpsite. On Energy, we will undertake rural electrification of institutions by utilizing existing high voltage infrastructure for maximization of electricity connectivity to 20 institutions and 1000 households. This will be done through installation of transformers and low voltage lines in partnership with the Rural Electrification and Renewable Energy Corporation (REREC) and Kenya Power. We will continue to install and maintain solar security lights in upcoming markets in all the 40 Wards.

On Minerals, we will construct and equip of one central mineral value addition and gemology laboratory to enhance marketability of County minerals and gemstones. On Security, we will construct four Police Stations comprising administration block, OCS quarters, Deputy OCS quarters, junior staff quarters, chain link fencing and gate, pit latrine and solar lighting in Kanziku/Simisi, Nuu, Nguni and Tseikuru Wards. Moreover, my government will gradually increase funding of the Community Level Infrastructure Development Program (CLIDP) to ensure equitable distribution of priority projects across the 247 County villages. This year, for instance, we increased the CLIDP budgetary allocation from Kshs.412 Million to Kshs.690 Million.

To boost the morale and performance of our county staff, we will endeavour to institute measures aimed at capacity-building and training, budgeting and timely promotion of deserving

officers. We have already promoted 363 County staff and we intend to promote County specialists, medical doctors, pharmacists and dentists by 1st April 2024. We are also in the process of addressing any backlog of staff stagnation across all other County Ministries/Departments. Further, we intend to construct 2 two-floor office blocks to provide more office space for our staff in the next financial year.

Mr. Speaker, on the County investment entities, we have constituted an internal team to re-assess the viability of these entities and advise accordingly. Mr. Speaker, owing to the unsustainability of such ventures, the County Executive Committee/Cabinet has resolved that, going forward, the County Government of Kitui will not engage in commercial business. Our role, as captured in our Mission, is to provide an enabling environment for investors but not to compete with the citizens in the provision of goods and services.

We are focused and committed to ensure that, by the end of the calendar year of our term, every citizen of this county will have experienced tangible development in all sectors may it be in health, roads, water, education, agriculture, trade, cooperatives, energy, urbanization, among others, which will change their livelihoods.

Mr. Speaker and Honourable Members,
In conclusion, let me thank you for the steadfast unity and cooperation you have exhibited as we endeavour to deliver quality and timely services to our people. The responsibility of delivering development to the people of Kitui is squarely on the shoulders of both the County Executive and the County Assembly. The former US President Henry Ford said and I quote: “Keeping together is progress. Working together is success.”

Mr. Speaker and Honourable Members, another renown leader, the former Prime Minister of the United Kingdom Winston Churchill observed and I quote: “When there is no enemy within, the enemies outside cannot hurt you.” We must remain united and focused in our journey to deliver on our pledges to the Great People of Kitui. We should not allow detractors to derail our efforts to meet the development needs of our people.

I need not belabour the point on the importance of pulling in one direction as the County Government of Kitui. If there was a time the County Executive and the County Assembly ever needed cooperation and unity of purpose, then that moment is now. Even as Members of Kitui County Assembly continue to play their key roles of legislation, representation and oversight, we should always bear in mind that those we represent are yearning for prosperity and development before anything else. These can only be achieved within an environment of consultation, cooperation, unity and cohesion. Therefore, in whatever we do, we should all strive to ensure that our people get their best bargain for the immense trust they bestowed upon us to lead them. We must and should not let them down.

Mr. Speaker and Honourable Members, Lee Kuan Yew, the first Prime Minister of Singapore, credited with leading his country from Third to First World status, once said: “A nation is great not by its size alone. It is the will, the cohesion, the stamina, the discipline of its people

and the quality of their leaders which ensure it an honourable place in history.” These words of wisdom equally apply to our County.

My Great People of Kitui, I sincerely thank you for your continued support, goodwill and patience as we strive to deliver what we promised in our Campaign Manifesto. Your steadfast trust in our commitment and ability to serve you has been a great motivation for us to work even harder to deliver quality services that improve the livelihoods and standards of living of you all. To quote American actress and songwriter Sabrina Bryan: “You can do anything as long as you have the passion, the drive, the focus and the support.” We have the passion. We have the drive. And we have the focus. But to deliver development, we need the undivided support of you all. Mr. Speaker and Honourable Members, elections were held in August 2022 and the people of Kitui exercised their democratic right by electing leaders of their choice. This is time for service delivery and therefore, there is no room for premature politicking.

In his final speech, the former Singaporean Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew told his countrymen to be wary of the kind of people they elect and emphasized on the need to entrust leadership to the best they have, and warned them against charlatans with the gift of gab.

Mr. Speaker and Honourable Members, we – the County Executive and the County Assembly – as well as all the residents and well-wishers of this Great County, are one people sharing a common destiny. We must not squander this chance to make Kitui one of the most vibrant counties in Kenya. Let me end by paraphrasing Ghanaian author Lailah Gifty Akita, who said: “There is power in unity. We must be united in heart and mind.” And I add: “ONE KITUI, ONE PEOPLE!” Thank you. God Bless Kenya! God Bless Kitui!

The Speaker: Thank you very much Your Excellency, the Governor for your State of the County address. Indeed, I’m very grateful for your address which the Members were eagerly waiting for. I read their mood and I could see that they were not tired; even if you continued, they would have listened to you because your address was on point and it focused on every aspect of our County Government, especially in your concluding remarks and the quotes on the need for unity of purpose and the need for quality leadership and I can assure you your Excellency that as the Speaker of the Assembly of Kitui, the people of Kitui County elected quality leaders led by yourself and all the MCAs.

Hon. Members as per Standing Order no.20(5), all of you will have an opportunity to debate and give input on the Governor’s address. Our standing orders give us utmost 4 sittings to debate on the Governor’s Address and I’m sure we shall do so. Your Excellency, I can also confirm to our government; which you lead that now the Assembly, after resuming from the December recess has approved today the House Business Committee. So, all the agendas of the Government will be properly scheduled before this House and already the Schedule for next week has been read where the first agenda would be on the Sand Policy which will be done next week and I want to congratulate the Members of the Assembly for prioritizing on the Sand policy. Thereafter we shall also schedule for the Sand Bill. After that, we can now focus on the Governor’s

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Address plus any other Government agenda which comes before us. Hon. Members, once again thank you because no Governor's agenda has ever stalled in this Assembly because we are all committed to serve our people and I believe, with our unity of purpose between the County Assembly and the executive we shall do so. So, once again your Excellency thank you very much. Next order...

(The order on the adjournment of the House was read)

Before we adjourn the House, our guests thank you very much for honoring our invitations and participating in this very important day to our people. After this House is adjourned, I humbly invite all of you to the Speaker's luncheon in honour of our Governor which will be at Parkside Hotel, Kitui. All of us are invited so that we continue with in this collaboration because I believe if we keep on talking amongst ourselves, we get more united and also serve our people better as we interact with members of the National Government and the Judiciary and also in the executive wing led by the County Commissioner. That collaboration is very important as we serve our people. So, Members I urge you I know it could be late whether we call it lunch or early dinner or we can call it Valentine's dinner because today we are celebrating that important day in lovers' hearts. I can see Mheshimiwa Fridah Maua is properly dressed. There will be no time for you to go and change. After here, let's go straight to Park side Villa so that we can continue with the informal part of this address.

ADJOURNMENT

The Speaker: With those few remarks, Hon. Members, our Governor and all our guests, please let us be upstanding so that we adjourn the House. The House now stands adjourned until Tuesday 20th February 2024 at 9.00 a.m.

The County Assembly rose at 4:48 p.m.