



REPUBLIC OF KENYA

**MADARAKA DAY ADDRESS BY HIS EXCELLENCY HON.
WILLIAM SAMOEI RUTO, PhD, C.G.H., PRESIDENT OF
THE REPUBLIC OF KENYA AND COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF
OF THE DEFENCE FORCES, DURING THE 63RD
MADARAKA DAY CELEBRATIONS**

JUNE 1, 2026

WAJIR STADIUM



1. This is Wajir County. This is Kenya. This is Bottom-Up. This is what we meant when we said we would leave no one behind.

**The great people of Wajir and Kenya,
Distinguished leaders,
Ladies and gentlemen,**

2. Today, we make history.
3. For the first time in 63 years of self-rule, a national celebration - Madaraka Day - is being hosted here in Wajir in the heart of Northern Kenya.
4. This is not a mere ceremonial gesture. It is a national declaration. It is a momentous affirmation that Madaraka - our freedom, our dignity, our self-determination - was never meant for some Kenyans and not for others.
5. It was never meant for some regions and withheld from others. Madaraka belonged, still belongs, and will forever belong equally to every single Kenyan.

Fellow Citizens,

6. On Madaraka Day in 1963, our freedom fighters did something consequential. They secured the transfer of political authority from colonial hands into African hands.
7. But self-rule was never simply about changing who holds power. It was about beginning the long, but necessary journey of building a nation worthy of the sacrifices that secured its freedom.
8. That promise, that work in progress, is the reason we are here today.



9. Decades after independence, this region was left behind through neglect, marginalisation, discrimination, and policy failures.
10. Sessional Paper No. 10 of 1965 entrenched a development paradigm that concentrated development in the so-called “high potential” areas. Vast regions like the former North Eastern Province were classified as marginal. As lesser. And as undeserving.
11. The consequences were devastating and long-lasting. Decades without adequate roads, water, healthcare, or schools. Communities pushed to the fringes of their own Republic. Their patriotism questioned. Their citizenship doubted. Their aspirations undermined.
12. For too long, some said this region was too difficult, too dry, too remote, and too insecure to deserve any investment.
13. That was wrong then, it is wrong now and it will forever remain wrong. But we are dismantling that legacy of exclusion, one road, one health facility, one school, one water project, and one opportunity at a time.
14. Fellow citizens, today, as I stand here as President and leader of our great nation, I wish to address the people of northern Kenya. On behalf of the people and the Republic of Kenya, I offer my sincere apology for the marginalisation that you have endured over the years. *Poleni sana, ndugu zetu*. It was never meant to be this way.



Fellow citizens,

15. I want to tell you the story of Bakaja Ibrahim Osman.
16. He was born in Wajir East in this county in the early 1960s. His parents were born here. But for years, every time Osman went to apply for an identity card - the most basic document of citizenship - he was treated not as a Kenyan but as a suspect, an illegal alien.
17. Every time, he was asked for extra documents, subjected to additional vetting, and sent from office to office. Year after year.
18. Osman was not alone. For more than six decades, this was the lived experience of hundreds of thousands of Kenyans in Northern Kenya. Citizens were forced to prove they belong through a system built on suspicion, ethnic profiling, and bureaucratic humiliation. How could Osman and countless others like him be expected to pursue their dreams and build their future?
19. The Constitution of Kenya says clearly: Every Kenyan, regardless of ethnicity, religion or geography, deserves equal protection, equal dignity, and equal treatment under the law.
20. That is why, in February 2025, right here at Orahey Grounds in Wajir Town, I signed the Presidential Proclamation on the Registration and Issuance of IDs and Birth certificates in Northern Kenya and other border counties, ending that system of discrimination.



21. The results are already being felt. Citizens like Abdirahman Ali Osman and Maryam Isaak Mohamed, both born in 2007 here in Wajir County, were among thousands of young Kenyans who turned 18 last year and walked away with their national identity cards. No extra hurdles. No extra documentation. No discrimination. No humiliation. Just their rightful document, in their hands, on time. That is how it should work. That is how it must work. That is how it will work for every Kenyan in every part of Kenya.
22. But let me be direct about what that decision was not. It was not an invitation for foreigners to acquire Kenyan documents illegally. Kenyan identity cards will only be issued to legitimate citizens of this Republic. Our commitment to justice and inclusion goes hand in hand with our duty to protect the integrity of our national identity and the security of our country.
23. We did not abolish the verification of citizenship. We abolished the discrimination. We abolished the targeting of entire communities simply because of their ethnicity or place of birth.
24. A strong nation does not choose between security and justice. A strong nation protects both. That is exactly what we are doing.
25. Today, people like Osman and Maryam no longer feel like strangers in their own country. They feel seen, and heard. They feel recognised. They matter, and they belong.



Ladies and gentlemen,

26. Yet we know that inclusion does not end with recognition. It must be reflected in people's daily lives; in the education their children receive, the healthcare they can access, the opportunities available to their young people, and the roads they travel on.
27. That is why the Bottom-Up Economic Transformation Agenda was conceived not merely as an economic programme, but as a deliberate strategy for inclusion.
28. This administration has deliberately invested in Northern Kenya and other historically marginalised regions of our Republic.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

29. Of all the investments we are making in Northern Kenya, none is more important than education; which is also the theme of this year's Madaraka Day - "Education, Skills and the Future."
30. Of all the tools a nation possesses, education is the most potent. It is the bridge between promise and possibility. Between poverty and prosperity. Between exclusion and belonging.
31. Unlike in 1963, the next frontier of Kenya's liberation will not be fought on conventional battlefields. It will be won in the classrooms, laboratories, workshops, and innovation hubs.



32. The nation's leading the world today earned that position. South Korea invested in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) education and became a technology powerhouse. Singapore turned its people into the greatest national resource. Finland built a knowledge economy through sustained investment in learning.
33. Kenya is decisively moving in that direction. The Competency-Based Education and Training system is transforming what learning means in Kenya. It is equipping our children not merely to pass examinations, but to think critically, solve problems, innovate, and compete on the global stage. It is designed around a simple but powerful belief: every child has unique abilities and talents worth discovering, nurturing, and unleashing.
34. What particularly encourages me is that 52% of learners in the first-ever Grade 10 cohort have chosen the STEM pathway. This tells us that a new generation is rising, one that will drive Kenya's industrial transformation, power our technological advancement, and build the innovation economy that will define our nation's next chapter.
35. That is why this administration has made education not just a priority, but the foundation of our future. No nation can rise above the knowledge, the capabilities, and the skills of its citizens.
36. Our education budget has grown from KSh500 billion in 2022 to over KSh702 billion today. We have hired more than 100,000 teachers in just three years, with 20,000 more set to be hired this year, making it one of the most ambitious teacher recruitment drives in our nation's history.



37. Most importantly, and as a source of pride for the people and leaders of Northern Kenya, three years ago we agreed that the lasting solution to teacher shortages in this region was to train more local teachers. That is why we operationalised the Wajir, Kotulo, and Mandera Teachers Training Colleges to complement Garissa TTC. Today, through this affirmative action programme, a record 1,800 local teachers from the three counties of Wajir, Mandera, and Garissa have been employed and will be deployed in the region. Additionally, 4,616 young people from this region are enrolled in teacher training colleges; the highest number in our history. This is how lasting solutions are built: by investing in people.
38. On infrastructure development, we have built 23,000 classrooms, and a further 1,600 laboratories are under construction, many of them in ASAL regions that have waited far too long for modern learning facilities. At the same time, more than 850,000 young Kenyans are enrolled in TVET institutions, acquiring the skills, tools, and confidence needed to build this nation with their own hands from the bottom up.
39. Here in Wajir and across Northern Kenya, our commitment is this: no child will be denied the opportunity to learn because of geography or historical neglect. School feeding programmes are already supporting 2.4 million learners in arid regions, while we continue to deploy teachers, build infrastructure and expand digital connectivity across the region.
40. Yet, some children in Northern Kenya and other marginalised regions remain outside the formal education system because certain alternative learning pathways have not been adequately recognised or accommodated within our education framework.



41. This challenge is particularly evident in the absence of a clear framework to recognise and integrate Duksi, Madrassa, and the Programme for Pastoral Instruction into the national education system.
42. I direct the Cabinet Secretary for Education to engage all relevant stakeholders and take the necessary measures under the Basic Education Act, to consult widely and recommend appropriate measures for the formal integration of the same.
43. This will ensure that every child, regardless of background or circumstance, has a recognised pathway into learning, skills, and opportunity. Every child deserves a door into learning. It is our duty to open every door.
44. Yet opening the door to opportunity is only part of the journey. Inclusion must also mean access to quality healthcare, dignity, and well-being for every citizen.
45. Today, of the 31.5 million Kenyans registered with the Social Health Authority about 800,000 are residents of Wajir, Garissa, and Mandera counties representing one of the most significant expansions of healthcare inclusion since independence. To date, SHA has paid Ksh 8.1 billion in claims for services provided in these three counties, demonstrating the transformative impact of this reform on access to quality healthcare.
46. Beyond healthcare, inclusion must translate into opportunity for our young people.



47. Already, more than 2,500 youth across all 30 wards of Wajir County have benefited from the NYOTA Programme through business capital, training, and mentorship. Across Wajir, Garissa, and Mandera counties, more than 7,200 young people have benefited.
48. We are also investing in Jitume Digital Hubs, ICT centres, digital skills programmes, and digital infrastructure so that a young person in Wajir can compete with any young person in Kenya and the world. Through the Labour Mobility Programme, we are opening pathways to jobs, skills, and international experience.
49. Our message to the youth of Northern Kenya is simple: your future will not be defined by geography. It will be defined by your talent, your skills, and your determination.
50. But talent and determination flourish where opportunity is accessible and infrastructure is strong. That is why we are investing not only in people, but also the foundations of economic transformation.
51. Today, in Wajir county, through our Affordable Housing Programme, we have invested Ksh 15.6 billion in the development of 4,600 housing units at various stages of procurement and construction. This is the largest housing development Wajir has witnessed since independence. One of these projects, located just three kilometres from here, stands as a visible symbol of our commitment to ensuring that development, opportunity, and decent living are not reserved for only a few regions. These projects are creating jobs for our young people and generating opportunities for local enterprises.



52. But this is only one part of a much larger transformation. Across Wajir, Garissa, and Mandera counties, projects valued at approximately Ksh 38.5 billion are currently at various stages of implementation. These investments are delivering affordable housing, student accommodation, modern markets, police housing, classrooms, and other supporting infrastructure that will improve lives, expand economic opportunity, and accelerate the region's development.
53. Alongside housing and other social investments, we are investing in the infrastructure that connects communities to opportunity. That is why connectivity remains central to Northern Kenya's transformation.
54. For decades, distance was used to justify exclusion. Today, we are defeating distance. With the **Ksh 100 billion, 750-kilometre Northern Kenya Gateway Corridor** linking Isiolo, Wajir and Mandera, we are undertaking the most significant road investment in this region since independence and connecting communities that were once isolated from markets, investment, essential services, and economic opportunity.
55. Yes. This is more than a road project. It is a bridge between exclusion and opportunity, between neglect and investment, and between the Kenya that was and the Kenya we are building.
56. And then there is livestock.
57. Here in Wajir and across Northern Kenya, livestock is more than an economic activity. It pays school fees, feeds families, creates jobs, drives trade and, in difficult times, sustains entire communities.



58. The sector contributes about 12 percent of Kenya's GDP and 42 percent of agricultural GDP. In the ASAL counties, it accounts for more than 90 percent of employment and nearly 95 percent of household income. Yet for decades, pastoralism was regarded as one of Kenya's most valuable economic assets while receiving limited support in animal health, markets, infrastructure, and financing.
59. We are changing that. Through one of the most significant livestock restocking programmes in recent years, we have distributed more than 52,000 sheep, goats, and cattle to over 10,000 households across 16 ASAL counties, helping families rebuild livestock wealth lost through drought and other shocks.
60. To strengthen pastoral livelihoods, we have vaccinated more than 10 million animals, expanded local vaccine production to over 123 million doses, established feedlots and hay storage facilities, restored more than 305,000 hectares of degraded rangelands, expanded breeding programmes, and strengthened livestock training, marketing, and market infrastructure, including here in Wajir.
61. Today, we are also deploying an additional 2,000 agripreneurs for our ASAL counties, who are with us here in this stadium. They will provide last-mile agricultural advisory services, connect pastoralist communities to markets and finance, and support the transition to climate-smart agro-pastoralism and more resilient livelihoods. Together with the 5,000 already in place, we now have 7,000 agripreneurs driving agricultural transformation across the country.



62. The results of these deliberate interventions are already visible. Meat exports have increased by 84 per cent, from Ksh 8.9 billion in 2022 to Ksh 16.4 billion in 2025. Milk production has increased from 4.6 billion litres to 5.3 billion litres, while dairy exports have grown from Ksh 4.9 billion to Ksh 14.2 billion. These gains are translating into higher incomes for livestock and pastoral families, stronger markets for producers, and greater confidence in the future of the pastoral economy.
63. But this is only the beginning. Just as crop farmers receive deliberate government support, pastoralists too deserve support for the assets upon which their livelihoods depend, because livestock is agriculture and pastoralists are farmers.
64. That is why we will expand livestock support programmes through a new phase of strategic restocking, enhanced vaccination campaigns, improved breeding programmes, drought resilience interventions, and additional feedlots.
65. Our vision, however, goes beyond production. Just as tea farmers own their factories through KTDA and dairy farmers own their cooperatives, pastoralists too must own and control the businesses built around their livestock.
66. That is why we are establishing a Ksh 5 billion County Livestock Investment Company initiative to support more than 350,000 pastoralists across 21 ASAL counties to form and own livestock investment companies. Through these enterprises, they will gain access to markets, finance, insurance, and value-addition opportunities. In Phase One alone, the initiative will improve the livelihoods of more than two million household members. I have directed the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock Development, in partnership with county governments, to begin immediate registration of these companies across all 21 ASAL counties.



67. We will also operationalise the Livestock Enterprise Development Fund, establish a National Strategic Fodder Reserve, strengthen pastoral cooperatives, fully roll out the Animal Identification and Traceability System (ANITRAC), and invest in the infrastructure needed to unlock premium export markets across Africa, the Middle East and beyond. We must move beyond live animal exports to higher-value products such as meat, leather, and dairy.
68. For too long, many looked at livestock and saw subsistence. We look at livestock and see enterprise. We see exports. We see jobs. We see wealth. And we see Northern Kenya becoming the gateway of Africa's livestock trade to the Middle East and the wider world.
69. This is what inclusion looks like. This is what dignity looks like. And this is what we meant when we said we would leave no one behind.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

70. As we look to the future, we must also ask ourselves a bigger question: What will define the next chapter of Kenya's journey?
71. For sixty-three years, we have worked to expand freedom, deepen inclusion, and strengthen our democracy. Today, our focus is equally clear: to transform Kenya into a prosperous, productive, and globally competitive nation.



72. That is the roadmap before us: a Kenya that feeds itself and exports surplus to the world; a Kenya that manufactures more of what it consumes; a Kenya that creates jobs and opportunities for its young people; and a Kenya that competes confidently in the regional and global economy. Northern Kenya is not peripheral to that vision; it is central to it.
73. For too long, Northern Kenya was viewed through the lens of scarcity. Today, we recognise its immense potential in renewable energy, livestock production, irrigated agriculture, trade, logistics and regional commerce.
74. Its strategic location at the crossroads of Kenya, Ethiopia, and Somalia places it at the heart of regional connectivity and economic opportunity. Positioned along the LAPSSET Corridor and between the Lamu and Turkana oil frontiers, Northern Kenya serves as a gateway to regional and global markets. Its people possess the resilience, enterprise, and determination that have sustained communities through some of the most challenging conditions imaginable.
75. The future of Kenya's growth lies in unlocking the full potential of every part of our Republic. That is why we are investing deliberately in Northern Kenya.

Fellow Kenyans,

76. If we are to unlock that potential, one resource will be fundamental: water. Water means irrigation, food production, industry, resilience, and opportunity.



77. That is why this administration has set the ambition to build 50 mega dams across the country, 200 medium and small dams, and thousands of micro-dams — projects that will bring 2.5 million additional acres under irrigation within the next five to seven years.
78. These dams, many in Northern Kenya, include Isiolo Dam on the Ewaso Nyiro basin. The High Grand Falls Dam on Tana River. The mega dam on River Dawa in Mandera. Bute Dam in Wajir North. The Sigly Canal in Garissa. Lowaat in Turkana. Narosura in Narok and Arror in Elgeyo-Marakwet, among many others.
79. Each of these dams is a statement that no county is too remote to deserve investment, and no river too far to be harnessed for the good of Kenya.
80. What was once called remote will become strategic, and what was once neglected will become indispensable to our food security, our prosperity, and the future we are building together.

Fellow Citizens,

81. Sixty-three years ago, our founding generation secured political freedom. Our responsibility is to ensure that every Kenyan experiences the full promise of that freedom. Freedom from exclusion, from neglect, from discrimination and freedom to learn, work, and build a better future for themselves and their families.
82. For decades, some parts of our country were told they were too distant, too dry, too difficult, or too marginal to matter. Today, from Wajir, Kenya, rejects that thinking.



83. We affirm that no community is peripheral to our national story. No child is too far away to deserve opportunity. No citizen is too distant to deserve dignity. No county is too remote to deserve development. From Busia to Mandera, from Turkana to Kwale, and from Kisumu to Mombasa, every corner of this Republic matters because every Kenyan matters.
84. Wajir is not the edge of Kenya. Wajir is Kenya. North Eastern is Kenya and Kenya belongs to all of us.

God bless you all. Bless Kenya. I thank you.

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