



REPUBLIC OF KENYA

**REMARKS BY HIS EXCELLENCY DR. WILLIAM  
SAMOEI RUTO, PH.D., C.G.H., PRESIDENT OF THE  
REPUBLIC OF KENYA AND COMMANDER-IN-  
CHIEF OF THE DEFENCE FORCES DURING THE  
OFFICIAL OPENING OF 2023 KENYA  
INNOVATION WEEK COMMONWEALTH EDITION**

**NOVEMBER 27TH, 2023**

**THE COLLEGE OF INSURANCE KENYA, NAIROBI**

## **Distinguished Guests;**

1. I am delighted to welcome you all to the Kenya Innovation Week- Commonwealth Edition, a significant upgrade of our already ambitious annual national innovation week. It is an honour for us as a country to host all of our friends from all over the Commonwealth and the world over as we congregate around a matter whose relevance and significance for national transformation will never diminish. Your presence here testifies to your commitment to a vision of ambitious expansion of possibilities for productivity, growth and development driven by new approaches that magnify the value of outputs from existing factors.
2. This third Kenya National Innovation Week is a tremendous achievement which exhibits, through many platforms, the ways and speed at which our national innovation policy is succeeding in entrenching a national culture of innovation. It highlights the importance that our society has come to attach to innovation, underscores the growth in the government's commitment to the promotion of innovation and demonstrates the interest of stakeholders in our country, region, continent and beyond, in our maturing innovation ecosystem.



3. We are well underway in delivering the most ambitious package of strategic interventions aimed at transforming Kenya's economy into a highly productive, inclusive, dynamic and sustainable system of opportunities in order to feed the nation, keep it healthy, create jobs, promote entrepreneurship, support creativity and innovation, thereby increasing employment, creating wealth, reducing poverty and inequality.
  
4. We are committed to deliver all the commitments in this ambitious agenda using existing national resources which, as everyone knows, are always limited. Innovation is a mindset which facilitates the transformation of limited resources and opportunities into maximum or exponential value, enabling us to push the uttermost reaches of our productive possibilities. In other words, we understand that often, failure to optimize existing opportunities can be a result of resource constraints but may also be due to something much more basic: a failure of imagination. Embracing a culture of innovation liberates us from such basic limitations and failures.
  
5. We are determined to implement the Bottom-Up Economic Transformation Agenda in a manner consistent with its ambition by integrating innovation into every dimension of policy, programme and project delivery. The Kenya Innovation Week therefore reminds us of our increasing capacity to transform our economy.



6. A year ago, I pledged to mobilise government to transform the Kenya Innovation Week into an international festival, which attracts global participation. Subsequently, we placed a successful bid to host the Commonwealth Edition under the theme of Innovating to Unlock Our Common Wealth. I am immensely grateful to the Secretary General of the Commonwealth, the Rt. Hon. Patricia Scotland for her consideration, support and facilitation in organizing this event.
  
7. By definition, innovation is transformative. It radically enhances our capacity to solve problems and achieve goals. It empowers entrepreneurship and solidifies the promise of success in tackling climate change, job creation, efficiency, mobility, food security, education and trade.
  
8. Besides, we are now firmly in the age of artificial intelligence, machine learning, cloud computing, nanotechnology and digital transformation, in which capacity for innovation will continue to separate those destined for success from those who will struggle in futility to stay the same. We all must choose our sides and it is clear that all of us here today have cast our lot with innovation.



9. Innovation has been identified in our national economic development blueprint as a cross-cutting element of our economic transformation. Consequently, the Kenya National Vision2030 mandates our institutions of higher learning to increase the quantity, quality and relevance of their research output in order to produce such innovations and creations that will transform Kenya into a knowledge-based economy.
  
10. Our programmes to establish and accelerate the commercialization of research has accordingly taken off, with the establishment of the network of entrepreneurial institutions of learning providing a bold signal of our intent in this respect. This initiative shall also be accompanied by endeavours to enhancing inclusivity in innovation by facilitating access to quality infrastructure, financing and training for youth in both urban and rural Kenya.
  
11. The youth continue to sustain innovation in our economy, with youth-driven startups securing \$700 million last year, making Kenya a top African investment hub. The youth are also the overwhelming majority of the millions of unemployed Kenyans who are relying on our Plan to unlock employment opportunities. As a young nation with a vision of an economically secure posterity, we have no choice except to recognize innovation as a highly promising instrument for unlocking the doors of unprecedented opportunity.



12. Owing to the role of innovation in economic transformation, it is important to scale up our funding for the commercialization of innovation to reflect our commitment. We are therefore taking measures to enhance the funding of our national innovation agenda from 0.8% of the GDP to 2%.
  
13. It is only appropriate that today, the public sector is demonstrating a high capacity to complement private sector and market-driven initiatives through tomorrow's Ministerial Roundtable on Science, Technology and Innovation and the launch, today, of the Kenya National Innovation Masterplan, a 10-year programme to aggressively promote the achievement of innovation, value creation and competitive advantage as integral components of our development strategy.
  
14. To achieve these objectives, the master plan therefore focuses on policy enhancement, infrastructure upgrades, the enhancement of skills, market growth and a start-up ecosystem.
  
15. As pertains to policy enhancement, the Masterplan itself, as well as the establishment of the Kenya National Innovation Agency, are flagship endeavours to entrench innovation into Kenya's policy landscape.



16. We are very intentional in promoting the innovative mindset, especially in science, technology, engineering and mathematics, from an early age through the competence-based curriculum, all the way to mainstreaming innovative thinking and intellectual property rights at the higher education level. The objective is to facilitate the rapid development of a sustainable pipeline of globally competitive innovators.
  
17. As a matter of policy, we are also entrenching a culture of service delivery innovation in the public sector in order to improve the uptake of modern tools and approaches, including design thinking, behavioural science and data-driven strategies to promote excellence and leverage modern tools to promote public sector effectiveness and efficiency.
  
18. To build a globally competitive start-up ecosystem, we have resolved to eliminate barriers to innovative entrepreneurship and replace them with clear incentives, simplified processes and support in order to attract investors and venture capital to our startups and innovators as well as promote private sector investment in research and development.



19. Kenya is a regional leader in broadband connectivity, which has intensified our geostrategic role as a gateway. ICT contributes 7% to our GDP by way of IT-enabled services. We recognize ICT as a frontier that is yet to yield its full promise, and through the Masterplan, the Digital Economy Blueprint, and the Kenya National Broadband Strategy, we are scaling up government investment in necessary infrastructure to \$132 million for the 2022-2023 Financial Year in order to catalyse the necessary transformation.
  
20. We have not walked this road alone. I acknowledge with tremendous appreciation the support of various partners over the years. The Kenya National Innovations Agency is coordinating the establishment of the Kenya Entrepreneurship Programme, with the aim of mobilizing \$ 3 million to enable startups scale up and attract investors. Local and foreign investors are encouraged to participate in this exciting opportunity.
  
21. On the other hand, the Green Digital Innovation Hub will be launched tomorrow, to advance green and digital transitions in agriculture, ICT and energy. The centre is powered by artificial intelligence, the internet of things and cloud computing, and is aimed at supporting the micro, small and medium-sized enterprises sector, the lifeblood of our economy. I thank the GIZ Digital Transformation Centre for bringing cutting-edge innovation to the Hustler Nation.





22. In partnership with the UK's AI Safety Institute and the US AI Safety body, we are collaborating in establishing a strong capacity for the Emerging Technologies Institute and Action Lab, which is a multi-stakeholder initiative between the government, the private sector and our innovators to promote governance of the AI space.
  
23. I also appreciate the work that Huawei Technologies continue to do in building digital skills and promoting innovations throughout the country from the grassroots. Their DigiTruck programme is a truly bottom-up intervention to promote the development of sound innovative capacity through the provision of technology, the internet and mentorship.
  
24. I express deep gratitude to the British Council and the Foreign and Commonwealth Development Office, who have complemented our endeavour to strengthen the capacity of our institutions of higher learning in promoting entrepreneurial potential through the Kenya Network of Entrepreneurial Institutions.
  
25. Our commitment to promote innovation seamlessly integrates the provision of ICT infrastructures, comprehensive education, skills and capacity development, policy and institutional interventions and the mobilization of diverse stakeholders in pursuing our ambitious strategy to transform Kenya into a



globally competitive knowledge-based economy driven by innovation.

26. To focus our discourse, ambitions and strategies on innovation as a developmental imperative, the government has inaugurated the Presidential Innovation Award, which will recognize the most promising innovations during the Jamhuri Day celebrations. This year's edition will be the pilot phase of the award, and will consider submissions from all counties in the areas of food security and agriculture, digital transformation, healthcare, entertainment and gaming, climate action and green energy. I encourage innovators to participate and wish everyone success in their development and pitching. See you on Jamhuri Day.

27. As you can see, Kenya has a busy vibrant innovation scene, which promises great rewards for entrepreneurs and investors with a keen eye for opportunity. There is a Kiswahili saying, "Mgaa gaa na upwa hali wali mkavu": A person who hangs around the beach in the low tide will not eat plain rice. I encourage angel investors and venture capital funds: pay close attention to Kenya.

**I declare the Kenya Innovation Week 2023- The Commonwealth Edition officially opened.**

**Thank you.**

**God bless you.**

**God bless Kenya.**

