



REPUBLIC OF KENYA

**ADDRESS BY H.E. DR. WILLIAM SAMOEI RUTO,
C.G.H., PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF KENYA
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DEFENCE FORCES, DURING THE HIGHLEVEL
WORLD OF WORK SUMMIT SOCIAL JUSTICE FOR
ALL**

JUNE 15TH, 2023

GENEVA, SWITZERLAND

- **Heads of State and Government present,**
 - **Honorable Ministers,**
 - **Director General,**
 - **Distinguished delegates,**

 - **Ladies and Gentlemen,**
1. I am privileged to have this opportunity to participate in this critical event, which exhibits the power of social dialogue at work on a global scale as we convene to address the defining issues of our time, from extremely important standpoint of social justice for all. Kenya appreciates the honour of your invitation, welcome and hospitality, as well as the opportunity to make her input to this Summit's agenda.

 2. At the onset, I must express Kenya's appreciation of the function and role of the labour movement in the advancement of freedom, social justice, fundamental rights, equity, fairness and equal opportunity for all. Labour movement leaders and organisers are among the valiant freedom fighters who not only recognised that colonial domination and exploitation was unjust, they also did something about it.

 3. As a result, the Kenyan people joined the global community of free people, and Kenya emerged as a sovereign republic. The values imparted by the labour movement during the freedom struggle defined our early days of nation building and have fundamentally influenced our national spirit to date. We have benefited tremendously from having a social, political and economic system defined by work and



the contribution of workers. At the heart of our progressive constitution are national values and principles of governance, with social justice and all its dimensions firmly at the core.

4. As Kenyans, we find no problem whatsoever in accepting that social justice provides solutions for the most urgent and pressing issues of our time.
5. I am delighted to note that this Summit has not been shy to confront even uncomfortable subjects, including the need to make significant progress in democratising the ILO as part of enhancing social justice all the way from the workplace to international relations, as well as the urgent matter of just transition to give the world a better chance of actualising the global aspiration of a better future of Work. I commend you for recognising the importance of these matters and addressing them in a committed, serious and solution-oriented manner. It is on this note that I stand to add a few contributions.
6. The social dialogue envisaged by the ILO framework and which we are relying upon to deliver equitable and sustainable solutions to the challenges we face, is based on the traditional engagement to apportion rights, obligations and share of the output of production between workers (what is a fair wage), employers (are we profitable?) and government (level of taxes and public goods). Much progress has been made under this model of social dialogue.
7. I suggest, however, that the time has come to reconsider our del of social dialogue in order to enhance its capacity



to achieve social justice in its processes as well as its outcomes. The ILO system is worker-oriented in that it primarily represents workers' interests. Yet labour rights are affected by both employment and unemployment. It should concern us very deeply that unemployment rates in Africa are some of the world's highest, with many countries reporting between a quarter and a third of their populations not engaged in secure, productive employment.

8. As we speak about matters pertaining to work, we must also speak about the millions of jobless people whose voices cannot be heard at conferences like this. The aspirations of the unemployed matter, and should be seen to matter, for ILO. Social Justice For All makes it imperative to expand the social dialogue, from the tripartite model to a four-sided forum of workers, the employers, government and the under-employed.
9. Governments, employers and workers must be equally concerned about the unemployment crisis, and committed to finding sustainable solutions to it, in order to bring the majority of the world's population into the ILO's traditional constituency. Majority of the world's unemployed people live in the Global south, especially in the continent I call home.
10. On average, Africa invests 30% of its BUDGET, or 150 Billion dollars, on educating and training its youth. Only 30% of them join the workforce, and 70% stay unemployed. What a waste! This perennial waste of human capital and productive opportunity must squarely form part of the most urgent concerns for workers, employers as well as government.



11. Traditionally, it has always been a concern of the unemployed and government. I believe we will score serious breakthroughs when we incorporate unemployment and the unemployment into the social dialogue, and therefore suggest that for **social justice** to become a reality, and for this **World of Work Summit** to live up to its description, we must expand the scope of **social dialogue** to bring these millions of jobless people to work. (Debate salaries and taxes)
12. An immediate advantage of including the unemployed in the social dialogue paradigm is that it defines the most critical contemporary crisis facing workers and work: technological change and the future of work. In particular, automation, has disrupted the employment market, rendering many people jobless and eliciting profound concern that machines are going to drive humanity out of work and into poverty.
13. We have to find clarity on the question of whether technology promotes, or undermines employment and job creation. We must exploit the opportunity of social dialogue to deepen and enrich our collective understanding on this matter, and to reconcile our diverse positions on the implications of technological disruption in the workplace.
14. In this regard, this forum provides the perfect platform to mobilise the best ideas into the development of policies and programmes that promote new occupations and frontier jobs the digital economy. I would like to illustrate the immensity of the promise of this second social dialogue moment by using the example of Kenya.



15. To implement our bottom-up economic transformation agenda, we have committed significant investments to the development of **100,000 km** of last-mile fibre-optic connectivity under the **Digital Superhighway** pillar. Additionally, we have entered a partnership to develop necessary infrastructure to provide **25,000 wi-fi hotspots** at market centres throughout the country. Further, we are in the process of constructing **1,450 ICT hubs**, so that every county assembly ward in the country will become a centre of digital learning, business transaction and work. We are committed to empowering Kenyans to tap into the emerging opportunities of the digital economy, and to connect and engage globally, from the convenience of their villages.
16. Faced with an increasingly uncertain future which unfolds with relentless complexity, it is our duty, as government and employers, to do all we can to increase the number of people represented in conferences like this as workers. **Social Justice for All** is never going to be free of charge, or famously cheap; and we happened to have settled the most important unasked question of this summit: who bears **the burden** of Social Justice For All?
17. The answer is that for social justice for all to translate into meaningful transformation of the condition of work, and for the World of Work Summit to fully articulate the aspirations of the constituencies represented here, we have to urgently invest in ambitious ways of getting millions of unemployed people in the Global south to work, and to take bold institutional measures to deliberately create opportunities for them.



18. In Africa, we are now making serious moves in precisely this very direction. As matters stand, Africa contributes only **3%** of world trade, even though it is home to **17%** of the global population. Intra-African trade presently stands at only **15%**. Our continent's trading profile suggests that we have not started performing at a level commensurate with our potential, and this undermines our capacity to actualise **Agenda 2063** and the **sustainable development goals**.
19. At the same time, it is abundantly clear to all of us in this room that Africa has a vast opportunity to radically transform economic productivity, thereby creating employment on an unprecedented scale.
20. The most visible doorway to this opportunity is continental economic integration. We are consolidating the African market through the implementation of the **Africa Continental Free Trade Area**, the world's largest free trade area, with a population of **1.4** billion. The objective of AfCFTA is to increase intra-Africa trade to **40-50%**, and enhance our contribution to global trade to a level commensurate with greater productivity of our population.
21. In answering the question of how governments and employers bear the burden of social justice for all, it is important to note that in many cases, the most effective interventions take the form of economic dimensions of national, regional and multilateral policy. The drive towards African **economic integration** is a fundamental **social justice intervention** insofar as it increases access and inclusion in terms of productive opportunities, by which



more Africans become more eligible for representation at ILO forums like this. I hope that I have persuaded you that there lies a tremendous Social Justice For All moment in Africa's continental economic integration.

22. It gives me no pleasure to set off the alarm bells. However, it is important for each one of us in this place to remain mindful of the fact, that as matters presently stand, not only are our dearest values and most cherished aspirations in grave jeopardy; human existence itself is under immense threat from a new, disruptive and universal variable.
23. The magnitude and frequency of devastation arising worldwide due to extreme weather events is unprecedented. It can no longer be denied that these events are evidence of climate change caused by rising global temperatures, primarily driven by the emission of greenhouse gases. Since the industrial revolution, global temperatures have been rising . The fastest rise, however, occurred after 1970, with two-thirds of global warming taking place after 1975. and the ensuing climate change has unleashed adverse weather phenomena to wreak havoc in different parts of the world, on a biblical scale.
24. An average of **189 million** people annually are affected by extreme weather related events in developing countries. The latest UN climate report indicates that the daily lives of at least **3.3 billion** people are considered to be highly vulnerable to climate change. People are now **15 times** more likely to die from extreme weather than in years past. There could be **1.2 billion** climate refugees by **2050 according to international think-tanks.**



25. Floods, storms, wild fires and extreme temperatures have become more frequent and widespread. Parts of western Europe, including **Germany, Belgium, Luxembourg** and the **Netherlands** received up to 2 months of rainfall in only 2 days, resulting in catastrophic flooding in 2021. Hundreds of people were killed, trapped or went missing in the disaster.
26. Early this year, a single event, tropical cyclone Freddy wreaked havoc throughout southern Africa, leading to floods which killed hundreds and displaced tens of thousands of people in **Malawi, Mozambique, South Africa and South Africa**. In West Africa, floods affected **3.5 million** people, with **800** deaths, and destroyed over **600,000 hectares** of farmland.
27. In the **Horn of Africa**, the a drought o f unprecedented intensity, following 5 consecutive seasons of failed rain, led to extreme food scarcity and water stress which caused the deaths of millions of livestock and wild animals, seriously set back economic growth trajectory.
28. Social justice for all, as an ideal, and even the very possibility of convening such summits in future, are therefore under serious danger from the climate emergency, which constitutes a grave existential threat to all humankind, whether from the Global North or South, employed or unemployed, wealthy or poor.
29. This is a time for the entire world to implement solutions to climate change with radical determination, on a global scale. It is time to seriously invest in mechanisms to mitigate the adverse impacts on climate change and build



resilience in vulnerable communities, economies and regions.

30. Climate change offers us extremely limited choices, making it urgent for humanity to reconfigure global production and consumption technologies. In so doing, it also provides us with a singular opportunity to chart a new path of global productivity, and build a new momentum for global development.
31. Without a doubt, we must now retire for good the old toxic conversation between the Global North and South, and embrace new approaches to climate change. Blame games, pity and charity, and hegemonic dynamics which do nothing to address urgent problems, must finally give way to a new all-inclusive, win-win discourse around clean, green development paradigm.
32. The Global South and Africa in particular, is endowed with renewable energy assets that can drive global growth on an unprecedented scale while **decarbonising** global **manufacturing** and **greening global industrialisation** as a pathway to sustainable development and the **net-zero** global goal.
33. Efficiency demands that global production, under a net-zero-conscious paradigm, must shift to **Africa** and the **Global South**. This also offers us the irresistible opportunity to reverse the climate emergency and make Africa the green factory of the world, transforming the world's largest unemployed population into highly productive constituents of the ILO movement.



34. This is the conversation we shall be having **next week in Paris**, during the **Global Stocktake**. It is the discussion that we shall be refining in **Nairobi** at the **Africa Climate Summit** on **September 4-6, 2023**. Hopefully, it is the discourse we shall finally conclude at **COP28** in **Dubai**, in December. (Explain).
35. To actualise the new paradigm shift in global growth and development, a new development financing architecture is imperative. It is not tenable and, in fact, I daresay that it is fairly absurd, to confront a threat of the magnitude of climate change without a financial mechanism that directs resources on the scale, and with the urgency and consistency demanded by this existential moment. We can, and must realign our international financing framework to provide us with a strong fighting chance in the war on climate change.
36. What I propose is neither wishful nor unheard of in terms of nature, scope or speed of necessary change. The existing financial system, which has been in place for **78 years**, was crafted out of a series of meetings that took place in Bretton Woods in the United States, over the course of only one month, July 1945.
37. In 1989, after the fall of the Berlin Wall, it took European leaders only **6 months** to set up the **European Bank for Reconstruction and Development**.
38. More recently, in June 2022, less than **4 months** after the beginning of the war in Ukraine, Germany modified its fundamental law to enable it raise 110 billion dollars to strengthen its defences in **a matter of days**. These serious



crises were addressed through quick resolute action by western powers. This is evidence of what can be done when stakes are high enough. The stakes have never been as high as now, in the existential crisis; there is no reason why setting up appropriate financial mechanisms should take as long as it has taken us.

39. Between now and **COP28**, we have more than enough to design and implement a new architecture of international development financing institutions that is responsive to the urgent needs of the moment. Effective climate action, which depends on decarbonising global manufacturing and greening global industrialisation, which in turn also relies on the actualisation of a greater role for the Global South and Africa, is a **social justice for all moment** that must not be wasted.
40. I encourage us to remain focused, be more determined and inspired to use this momentous forum for social dialogue to make **social justice for all** a reality by making our existential crisis, the unrepresented or under-represented regions of the world, and the entire community of the unemployed **visible** and **relevant** to our discussions. **Social Justice For All** is a matter that we cannot afford to neglect, underrate or avoid.
41. On this grand global stage, at this momentous summit, we are at the right place, at the right time. What remains is for us to rally strongly and make a collective resolution to do the right thing. For this moment, right refers to our decision, its timing and expeditious implementation. The right decision must effectively respond to the



existential emergency confronting us, and must fully take into account the five social justice moments I have outlined: unemployment and the unemployed, opportunities in just transition and new age digital economy, climate action and the overdue reform of international financial architecture.

Thank you.

