



REPUBLIC OF KENYA

**REMARKS BY HIS EXCELLENCY HON. DR.
WILLIAM SAMOEI RUTO, C.G.H., PRESIDENT AND
COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF OF THE DEFENCE
FORCES, THE CHANCELLOR, DURING THE
INAUGURAL GRADUATION CEREMONY OF
NATIONAL DEFENCE UNIVERSITY-KENYA**

NOVEMBER 17TH, 2023

LANET, NAKURU COUNTY

Distinguished Guests;

Good Afternoon;

1. I am delighted to join you today on this first graduation ceremony of the National Defence University-Kenya. This is a highly remarkable milestone for the entire community gathered here, for our nation and for our regions across our borders and beyond. It has taken tremendous effort and commitment on the part of family, students, faculty, university management and council, as well as the Kenya Defence Forces and our entire education sectors, including government sponsors of the studies and responsible organisations. To that extent, therefore, this is an important occasion, of great pride and tremendous sense of accomplishment for all gathered here to celebrate this success.
2. This accomplishment is a manifestation of the values and principles of the National Defence University and, principally, of the fact that they share in the belief that sound education, quality training and robust skill development are the pillars of a strong and secure nation. This understanding applies to every sector. For a long time, the popular image of security or defence was of a sector that was not only deficient in education but had no time for ideas and certainly averse to higher learning.
3. Today, the National Defence University-Kenya has not only proven such a profile inaccurate, it is also demonstrating that our national defence sector are leaders in scholarship, research, training and innovation. In order for our defence forces to effectively discharge their constitutional mandate of defending our nation, contributing to regional and global peace and security and guarantee sustainable development, our warriors must also be the best thinkers and philosophers in their field of academic interest.



4. The national, regional and international defence landscape of our time has evolved significantly and is now properly understood to be firmly intertwined with every other dimension of sustainable development. This understanding then demands a strong command of all relevant knowledge and analytical skills, and a consistent capacity to continuously define, redefine and refine our strategic vision to take into account and effectively engage with the emergence of novel, complex dynamic and disruptive developments in the operating environment on a constant basis.
5. Further, the definition and understanding of security has expanded far beyond its traditional scope to encompass greater understanding of the citizens' needs, interests and environment. This paradigm therefore recognises that the well-being and safety of the people, which is the essential obligation of all states, extends beyond the defence of territorial borders and the protection from violence and embraces the protection of basic freedoms and fundamental rights in order to make sure that no threat infringes their dignity and well-being.
6. We are therefore called upon to undertake proactive interventions in furtherance of a stronger and broader conception of defence and security, which entails the facilitation of the people's rights to food and nutrition, healthcare, water, education and shelter, as well as general social and economic security. We know that extreme poverty and stark inequality create fertile grounds for the recruitment of embittered and frustrated young people into various forms of lawlessness and that poor access to education keeps people engaged in outdated and repugnant practices that amount to serious crime.



7. In the same vein, ill health and malnutrition destroy people's productivity and diminish their earnings, continuing their descent into poverty and vulnerability to exploitation and crime. Addressing economic disparities, environmental threats, human health are all direct and indirect endeavours to enhance security in its totality.
8. Thus, it is true that the Bottom-up Economic Transformation Agenda is about initiating and driving rapid economic change, and also about the radical enhancement of human security from a holistic, sustainable standpoint. In any event, the security challenges of our time have evolved significantly from traditional threats to cybersecurity challenges and space-based conflict scenarios, from the multiple security-related adverse impacts of climate change and environmental degradation to pandemics and biological weapons and from subversive forms of negative economic competition to threats inherent in unsustainable economic disparities.
9. The purpose of institutions like this is to investigate the nature and causes of these threats, how they are affected by various economic, geopolitical, environmental and even cultural factors, both singly and in combination, and the implications for defence and security strategy. That is a lot of work requiring the considerable capacity to pursue theoretically and practically sound, evidence-based, data-driven, curious and innovative strategic scholarly inquiry.
10. A defence university of this nature is therefore not a vanity project or white elephant; it is a very fundamental requirement for the proper grounding of national defence and security policy in order to guarantee stability, security, well-being and prosperity.



11. The constitutional mandate of our defence forces has therefore been perfected and properly positioned as the bastion of the foundational requirements and necessary conditions for the enhancement of our nations' economic power. In other words, the connection between national defence and the everyday life of citizens is direct and clear.
12. The Bottom-up Economic Transformation Agenda, which is a radical programme to uplift Kenyans in their millions into shared prosperity, rests on five pillars. Each one of these pillars is directly connected to a security imperative. Agriculture to food security, healthcare to the weaponisation of biological assets, digital superhighway and creative economy to cybersecurity and the various scenarios related to the uncontrolled evolution of artificial intelligence, as well as the more traditional security requirements of housing, micro, small and medium-sized enterprises, in terms of sabotage and similar threats.
13. The linkage between our Plan and the security agenda is therefore not imaginary or speculative. Rather, it is real, clear, direct and robust. The National Defence University-Kenya is therefore well-positioned to play a fundamental role in our national transformation by contributing to the development of a formidable critical mass of well-grounded personnel, strategists, leaders and policymakers, as well as researchers, creators and innovators who will imagine effective ways of thriving in constantly transforming security and development paradigms.
14. In particular, this institution provides us with an opportunity to deepen a national culture of addressing our challenges and solving problems with well-developed and sustainable home-grown solutions, which align with the practical demands of our local contexts to deliver high-quality responses and interventions.



15. This event eloquently testifies to the fact that the National Defence University-Kenya has come of age and taken up its rightful position in the higher education and training, scholarship and research ecosystem of our country by occupying a niche, which reinforces the role of the defence sector as a public service and enriches our development strategy by developing special dimensions of security and development.

16. I recognise with tremendous delight the presence of our friends from various countries throughout the world among the graduands assembled here. I trust that your experience at the National defence University Kenya has enhanced your professional capacity and commitment to make a contribution to a peaceful world. It is clear that the National Defence College Kenya is a world-class institution that has already earned the respect of important stakeholders in the national defence sectors throughout the world. This is the scope of the vision that you must continue to embrace: global, diverse, inclusive, innovative, dynamic and committed to excellence and integrity.

17. In consideration of the broad scope of the emerging security mandate, and appreciating the complex and dynamic nature of contemporary security environment, I encourage the University to significantly increase its capacity for world-class research and innovation in order to develop effective solutions to current and emerging security challenges, especially those with a transnational dimension.



18. I have said on previous occasions that research and innovation are the cornerstones of progress because by these means, we acquire the tools to tackle difficult problems, the means of taking informed decisions, and access the opportunity to turn the tide of development in our favour. There is no better foundation on which to establish our defence and security policy and strategy than research and innovation because in so doing, we stay ahead of all our competition, threats and challenges at all times.
19. I am confident that through research undertaken in this university, the ideas developed in its lecture halls and the innovations incubated here, our country's ability to adapt to an increasingly complicated present and future, and resilience to novel adversities, will enable us to keep development safe and secure for shared prosperity.
20. We are proud of our graduates. As I said at the beginning, the foremost purpose of this event is to celebrate your achievement, which you have made through commitment, discipline and dedication to the cause of knowledge and truth. I applaud your success and hasten to remind you that now, even greater responsibility rests on your shoulders, to consider your nation's security as a fundamental imperative for transformative progress.
21. I therefore challenge you to embrace your role as leaders and commanders with a strong sense of purpose, vision, curiosity, inspiration and patriotism. Allow knowledge to lead the way, and let innovation and research inform your steps; you will go far. Whether you are in the field, at a command centre, in the rooms where policy is made, or in lecture theatres, always feed curiosity through debate, reinforce innovation with challenging questions and disrupt productively in order to stay at the cutting edge in a rapidly sharpening world.



22. Most importantly, be courageous enough to embrace emerging approaches and new technologies like artificial intelligence, robotics, quantum computing and innovative cybersecurity strategies in order to protect national interests and critical infrastructures. Deploy data and analytics to anticipate threats and develop effective and efficient solutions. Remain alert to opportunities to collaborate across disciplines and enrich your decisions with input from experts in diverse fields. This is how you build and sustain capacity to prevail in the face of complex challenges.
23. I also hope that you will treasure and grow the friendships that have germinated in the course of your studies. Our nations are friends, and these friendships are important for us. Always do your part to promote the national interest and never hesitate to make your contribution to development. I wish you good luck, great success and God's blessings as you go forth to serve.

Thank you.
God bless you.

