



REPUBLIC OF KENYA

**REMARKS BY HIS EXCELLENCY HON. DR.  
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PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF KENYA AND  
COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF OF THE KENYA DEFENCE  
FORCES, DURING THE NATIONAL YOUTH  
SERVICE RECRUITS PASSING OUT PARADE**

**DECEMBER 8TH, 2023**

**THE NATIONAL YOUTH SERVICE PARAMILITARY  
ACADEMY, GILGIL**

## **Distinguished Guests; Graduands;**

1. I am glad to be here as we celebrate the achievements of our youth in their preparation to serve their nation and mark another important milestone for the National Youth Service community who have made this event possible.
2. An event like this is particularly important because of its role in reminding us of the substantial reasons we have, as the people of Kenya, to be hopeful about the future despite challenges we face.
3. Old and familiar threats of war, conflict and insecurity and underdevelopment, famine, diseases and crime, have been joined and intensified by terrorism and transnational organized crime, pandemics and climate change. Consequently, states around the world are combating these threats to a great extent, with an increasing number struggling at an enormous cost on livelihoods and economic development.
4. Under these conditions, high rates of population growth have not only increased the number of citizens overall, many national populations of the developing countries grow younger by the decade. Our continent now has the world's youngest population with a median age of 19, and 25 countries with the youngest median age are African.
5. What this means is that the youth are no longer just an indispensable component of the society, they define the basic character of our nations and determine the direction and speed of our journey into the future. Depending on the effectiveness of the measures taken to prepare for the present and future, young people are likely to inherit the problems that bedeviled older generations and struggle under their worsening impact.



6. This is the essence of the two contrary perspectives of Africa's youth phenomenon. On one hand, there are opinions which see, in the population explosion, the threat of serious instability on account of having too many young people who are unemployed and vulnerable to various socioeconomic, health, security and climatic shocks. To this school of thought, the youth represent a ticking time bomb which will explode sooner or later into myriad acute socioeconomic and political problems.
7. On the other hand, there are perspectives which see in the youth a stronger capacity for effective harnessing globalization, innovation and leadership in newer, more positive directions. Contrary to the 'youth time bomb' perspective, this standpoint perceives the runaway budding of our population as a singular opportunity to harness a 'demographic dividend' by utilizing the youth as agents of harmony and stability, frontline actors in combating various threats, drivers of greater productivity and intensified competitiveness.
8. Both perspectives are right. If we carry on with business as usual, and neglect the imperative of taking extraordinary measures to transform our economies in order to give millions of young people a better chance to build stronger nations, we will definitely have a serious crisis on our hands. The difference between the two scenarios depends on how intentional, ambitious, urgent and futuristic the development agenda is.
9. It is clearly evident that for a few decades now, Kenya has been firmly and emphatically committed in investing significantly in a future that will exploit the demographic dividend to drive the national development agenda. This is for a while now, primary education has been free of charge, with huge subsidies in secondary school and even university education under the Bottom-up Economic Transformation Agenda.



10. The Bottom-up Economic Transformation Agenda will not implement itself. On the contrary, our best chance of actualizing the Kenya We Want in social, economic, political and even cultural terms, is by wasting no opportunity in equipping our young people with the skills and capabilities that are not only competitive and relevant in the current global market, but also firmly aligned with the imperatives of the radical transformation of our economy.
11. Our review of the CBC, increase of teachers, infrastructural expansion of learning facilities, development of technical and vocational education and training institutions throughout Kenya represent one side of the positive interventions aimed at securing the greatest share of the youth dividend to power national growth.
12. The other component of these measures are strategic interventions set out in the Bottom-up Economic Transformation Agenda in order to significantly enhance the productivity of labour across five priority sectors, create millions of jobs for our young people over the next 10 years, provide necessary infrastructure and support for them to engage in innovation and creation as well as other forms of employment in the digital economy.
13. The National Youth Service is not just a witness and participant of our bold intent to enlist the youth as the leaders and drivers of Kenya's transformation, it is an example of a dedicated programme for empowering our youth for a lifetime of service across all sectors. This organization has re-emerged to become a highly trusted incubator of disciplined, self-motivated, skilled and productive youth who continue to make significant contributions to the success of various entities in both the public and private sectors.



14. Thanks to the dynamism of the NYS, the graduates of this institution are much admired effective workers in every field, from agriculture to national security and administration, as well as building and construction, research, development and innovation. Because of the rationalization of learning pathways in tertiary education, a number are also finding themselves on their way to careers in highly competitive domains.
15. Recognising the place of youth in national transformation in general, and that of the NYS in powering the Plan in particular, we have embarked on a strategic re-engineering of the NYS to enhance the capacity of the institution to take up greater numbers of trainees, position it on the path of financial sustainability through revenue generation, thereby creating the conditions to support the expansion of enrolment to 100,000 young people annually.
16. The strategic plan covering 2023-2028 identifies the appropriate business model and governing framework to deliver the ambitious objectives of the re-engineering framework that was developed by the NYS leadership in conjunction with a multi-disciplinary team of experts led by the University of Nairobi. It is important that the NYS doesn't just offer theoretical and practical training within its campuses, but that it also tests its outputs in the marketplace in order to constantly improve its relevance and competitiveness while generating revenues to sustain its programmes.
17. Already, the NYS re-engineering blueprint is bearing fruit. The service has already expanded the acreage under food cultivation to support the food and nutrition security component of our agenda, from 1,600 to 2,500. The national mechanization programme under the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock Development is an opportunity to enhance the activity in the Mavoloni and Athi River Field Units after the completion of mega



dams intended to supply a total of one billion litres of water for irrigation, among other uses.

18. Similarly, it is commendable that the infrastructural expansion of the NYS itself is relying on its internal skills and capacities. The construction in the Yatta Field Unit will, for instance, use over 80,000 interlocking building blocks in building six new classrooms by February 2024. As a result, the Advanced Building School will be able to relocate from this campus to Yatta, thereby creating space for additional new recruits.
19. I congratulate the NYS for completing the development of infrastructure which had remained stalled for many years. Barracks with capacity of 700 people, together with classrooms which accommodate 150 trainees each have now been completed and, with the fabrication of 10,000 beds by the NYS Engineering Institute, the service will now be able to increase recruitment from 10,00 to 15,000 at the next intake, as we embark on the journey to ultimately recruit 100,000 every year.
20. For its part, the NYS Mechanical and Transport branch continues to drive self-reliance through the promotion of efficiency in the management of vehicles, plant and equipment to profitably serve trainees and other stakeholders. For example, trucks and excavators have been leased out to the East African Portland Cement Company to support mining operation, and similar arrangements have been implemented in Machakos, Makueni and Elgeiyo Marakwet counties.
21. I take this opportunity to also highlight the outstanding contribution of the service to the National Tree Planting and Landscape Restoration campaign by propagating 35 million seedlings in various field units across the country, planting 10 million of these and making the balance of 25 million available for sale to various public and private sector entities. It is commendable that the service has committed the revenues



generated from this exercises to the propagation of three tons of seed of assorted species, to the tune of 50 million seedlings by June 2024.

22. Elsewhere, the NYS is collaborating with the State Department of the Interior to desilt the tributaries of River Nyando and clean canals connected to it in order to prevent flooding during heavy rains. This programme has now been extended to Nyakach, where dykes are under construction with the same objective.
23. Further, the service has now developed a mature and effective collaboration with the National Police Service in crowd control, securing strategic installations, the provision of emergency response services, including at the Integrated Communication Command and Control Centre.
24. These examples demonstrate how busy the NYS is in meeting the great demand for its capacities in many sectors, and, therefore, its emerging role in taking our young men and women to the centre of productive involvement in national transformation.
25. The NYS therefore provides eloquent answers to how Kenya has approached the youth question: we are systematic, intentional and determined to succeed in equipping our nation's young people with capacities and capabilities to contribute effectively to the radical socioeconomic transformation of our country, by developing their knowledge, skills talents and abilities to make sure that not only is every single Kenyan youth productive, but that they are competitive enough to hold their own anywhere in the world.





26. Every day, through consistent investment, robust strategy and deliberate implementation, we bring the nation closer to the abundant fruits of our youth dividend. With our youth, our investment in the future is secure and our capacity to confront the daunting challenges of today and tomorrow is strong.
27. The NYS is therefore an iconic institution whose entire identity represents the power of our national values in action, the promise of re-imagining Kenya's nationhood irrevocably anchored in our national values and our capacity to face a complicated and uncertain future with confidence.
28. This graduation is, therefore, a milestone in NYS' journey to mobilise young Kenyan men and women to make their full contribution to the transformation of our economy, and a compelling demonstration of Kenya's limitless promise when the youth are equipped to lead the way into the future.
29. I congratulate the NYS community in its entirety for this achievement and, especially the tutors and parents who have engaged the trainees directly and continuously, motivating and supporting them to stay the course and do their best. I also commend and congratulate the graduands for completing their courses and taking a major step in getting ready to make Kenya a shining example of youth-driven transformation. I wish you great success and God's abundant blessings in the journey ahead, as you proceed to forge a winning path for yourself, your families, your communities and Kenya.

**Thank you.**

**God bless you.**

