



REPUBLIC OF KENYA

REMARKS BY HIS EXCELLENCY DR. WILLIAM SAMOEI RUTO, PHD, CGH, PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF KENYA AND COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF OF THE DEFENCE FORCES DURING THE OFFICIAL OPENING OF THE YOUTH CONNEKT AFRICA SUMMIT

DECEMBER 9TH, 2023

KENYATTA INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION CENTRE, NAIROBI

Excellencies Heads of State and Government;
Delegations from across Africa and beyond;
Our Youth from various countries participating in the Summit;
Distinguished Guests;

1. On behalf of the people of Kenya, it is my pleasure and privilege to welcome you to our Capital, Nairobi, a city defined by opportunity, creativity, technology and innovation.
2. I stand here today to state my unwavering and total belief that Africa is in the midst of great change, a social and economic transformation that will rewrite the African narrative for this generation and many more.
3. Most importantly a change, a renaissance that will largely benefit the young people of Africa who will provide the energy and dynamism to sustain it and make it our new reality.
4. I believe this change is coming because the old Africa, the one that defined itself by challenges, the one that glorified its problems and sought external solutions is fading away.
5. We are in the process of creating a new Africa, one that is founded on a rock-solid belief in our own capacity; that is driven by our relentless pursuit of progress and that is committed to developing solutions to obliterate the challenges we face.
6. At the heart of this revitalization sits the most talented, innovative and dynamic generation of Africans there has ever lived; a wireless generation, a borderless generation and more importantly, a relentless generation.



7. I came here to interact with this remarkable group: to engage and listen to you.
8. We are, in this moment, living in an Africa where the only thing that matters is the creation of opportunity. This is the agenda, this is our objective, this is the conversation. The youth are at the center of this moment, this agenda and this conversation.
9. I invite you to believe like I do that Africa is changing and to work hard to make sure that you participate in the definition and exploitation of the opportunities that come with this change.
10. I invite you to focus your energies on the creation of opportunities, the identification of value and the pursuit of prosperity. I invite you to stare down the challenges of today with your intelligence, creativity and capacity for innovation. I invite you to play a leading role in the transformation of Africa, to ensure your voice is heard, your effort is counted and participation assured.
11. As we gather for this 6th Summit dubbed "Youth Innovating a Borderless African Renaissance," I am convinced that we are at the dawn of a new Africa where innovation will cross boundaries, where creativity will flourish without constraints and where the dreams of our youth will take route.
12. I wish to thank the Republic of Rwanda and my brother President Paul Kagame for conceiving the Youth Connekt platform and for hosting four of the first five Editions of the Summit. I echo the words of President Kagame during the 5th Edition in Kigali in October 2022, "the youth of Africa are the leaders of today. They are the driving force behind our continent's transformation, the innovators who are reimagining our industries, the entrepreneurs who are creating jobs, and the activists who are advocating for a better future."



13. I join President Kagame in affirming the game-changing capacity of the African youth. This 6th Edition of the Youth Connekt Africa Summit is premised on Seven Key Focus areas. I wish to briefly delve into each one of them:

I. Sustainable Green Livelihoods, Climate Adaptation, and Resilience

14. Our planet is in a crisis, and Africa is unfortunately bearing the brunt of the effects of climate change. This means that the continent must lead in the development of sustainable solutions.

15. The youth of Africa must become champions of environmental stewardship, fostering innovative practices that protect our planet while ensuring sustainable livelihoods for future generations. They must get into renewable energy, promoting sustainable agriculture and developing climate-resilient infrastructure. This issue will define our future and the young people of Africa cannot be on the margins of this conversation.

16. In September this year, the Government of Kenya and the African Union co-hosted the inaugural Africa Climate Summit to discuss African-led sustainable solutions to global climate challenges under the theme "Driving Green Growth and Climate Finance Solutions for Africa and the World." This conference culminated in the Nairobi declaration; an 11-point call to action with a rallying call to overhaul the global financial system to facilitate climate action financing.

17. Kenya has developed a National Climate Change Adaptation Strategy, which is bolstering the country's resilience against the impacts of global warming.



18. Perhaps our key initiative is the 15 billion trees restoration project that will increase Kenya's forest cover from 12% to 30% by 2032. We have recruited a 4,000-strong youth Green Army to support this programme. We are escalating this to a national One Million Youth Green Army for Climate Adaptation, a movement that must spread across the whole of Africa.

II. The Renaissance of the African Dream

19. Africa has a rich heritage of statesmen, Kwame Nkrumah, Julius Nyerere, Jomo Kenyatta, Thomas Sankara, and Patrice Lumumba; leaders who decades ago foresaw the unstoppable power of a united Africa.

20. We must rekindle this dream because now more than ever, we are in a position to make it a reality. You are now the custodians of this dream, this idea envisaged by our forefathers. With the technology available to us today it is very possible to build one African market. It is possible for an idea to rise in Nairobi, arrive in Lagos by Midday and Cape Town by sundown or vice versa.

21. It is possible to develop, respect and appreciate our various cultures through social media. We can exchange ideas and learn from each other every day. This is what our forefathers wanted for us.

III. Leveraging Innovation and the Digital Era

22. Innovation is critical to achieving our development goals. To grow fast, we must deliberately focus on innovation to create fresh opportunities through the creation of new products, models and partnerships. Africa's youth must drive this digital revolution.

23. We must not be afraid of our ideas, especially when they are big. We must not hide our ideas because we do not know how to resource them.



24. Kenya is a renowned trailblazer in innovation. We recently launched the first green digital innovation hub to accelerate new ideas and products.
25. The Green Digital Innovation Hub targets foundational sectors such as Agriculture, Information and Communication Technologies (ICT), and Energy, incorporating cutting-edge technologies like Automation (AI, IoT/Sensor Networks), Cyber/IT Security, Cloud Computing and Smart Cities. The hub anticipates playing a pivotal role in leading the digital and green transition in the region.
26. The global job market is increasingly shifting towards virtual and technology-driven roles, necessitating an alignment of our education system with this reality.
27. To this end, the Ministry of Education, in collaboration with global tech giant Google and the Ministry of ICT and Digital Economy, is launching a comprehensive coding programme in primary and secondary schools nationwide.
28. Google has generously offered to create a job pipeline for programme participants, providing access to digital gigs with earning potential of up to USD 3000.
29. We must expand access to broadband connectivity and increase digital literacy for innovation to flourish.
30. Kenya has launched an innovation master plan that charts a road map for long-term value creation and bets big on innovation dividends.
31. Additionally, the Government of Kenya has provided affordable access to technology through initiatives such as the Ajira Digital Skills Initiative, equipping young people with the digital skills necessary for success in the modern economy. We are currently



rolling out 100,000 kilometres of Fiber Optic Backbone Infrastructure that is targeting health facilities, schools and the Judiciary, among other public institutions; Alongside this, we are rolling out 25,000 public WIFI hotspots, that are targeting markets, bus parks and other public spaces. We are also building 1450 village digital hubs, to spur e-commerce, creativity and the digital economy and are also training the youth in digital technology and connecting them with jobs from around the world. To foster innovation, Kenya has established the Kenya National Innovation Agency (KENIA), providing support and resources to startups and innovators. Kenya recently hosted the first ever Kenya Innovation Week 2023 - Commonwealth Edition as a show of our commitment, towards supporting innovation. On December 12, we will unveil Winners of the inaugural Presidential Innovation Challenge as we celebrate Kenya@60.

IV. Sustainable Peace, Security, and Reconciliation

32. A peaceful and secure Africa is a prerequisite for the realisation of sustainable development as outlined under the Global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The SDG No. 16: (Need to "Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels") calls for Governments to empower the youth to become ambassadors of peace, cohesion, reconciliation fostering dialogue, promoting tolerance and building bridges of understanding across borders. As leaders, we can support peacebuilding initiatives, promote civic education and foster inter and intra-faith dialogue.
33. We must teach our youth to see brotherhood and sisterhood in their peers across Africa, and to realize that we have more in common than what divides us.



V. Enterprise Development: The Future of Africa's Borderless Commerce

34. Entrepreneurship is the biggest creator of value and opportunity in the world. With their increasing levels of education and skills, Africa's youth can drive economic growth by embracing entrepreneurship. African governments have to make supporting SMEs a key priority, pairing financial support with advisory services. We must foster a conducive environment for entrepreneurship by providing young people with access to capital, mentorship and opportunities to transform their ideas into thriving cross-border businesses. This can be achieved by simplifying business regulations, facilitating access to finance and promoting regional economic integration.
35. Kenya is championing entrepreneurship by creating an enabling environment for young people to start their own businesses. We have facilitated access to finance for young entrepreneurs through affirmative action funds namely the Hustler Fund, Youth Enterprise Development Fund (YEDF), Uwezo Fund, Women Enterprise Development Fund (WEDF) and the National Government Affirmative Action Fund (NGAAF). The Hustler Fund has enabled more than 21.7 million Kenyans access resources to establish and progress their enterprises especially those at the lowest echelons of the socio-economic ladder.
36. To further boost economic integration, Kenya fully supports the establishment of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), which seeks to create a borderless market for African businesses. Kenya is in the process of eliminating visa requirements for African Countries as we strive to ensure the attainment of Africa's Borderless Commerce.



VI. Youth Mental, Sexual and Reproductive Health

37. The total well-being of our youth is paramount for the attainment of our socio-economic aspirations. In this regard, we must invest in youth-friendly healthcare services, promotion of preventive measures and address the vulnerabilities that exist around mental, sexual and reproductive health. By expanding access to mental health services, providing comprehensive sexual education, and promoting gender equality in healthcare among other initiatives, we will improve the complete wellness of our youth, allowing them the energy and freedom to focus on socio-economic development.
38. Kenya has expanded access to mental health services through initiatives such as the Mental Health Atlas of Kenya, ensuring that young people have access to the support they need. Additionally, Kenya has provided comprehensive sexual education through initiatives like the Life Skills Education Programme, empowering young people to make informed decisions about their health.

VII. Reimagining Business for Africa's Creative Industry, Sports, and Culture

39. Africa's creative industry, sports and culture are untapped reservoirs of immense potential.
40. The potential contribution of sports and creative industries to investment and economic development is staggering.
41. We must empower our youth to drive innovation, entrepreneurship and job creation within these sectors. This includes investing in promoting cultural tourism and supporting the development of creative industries.



42. Kenya has invested in arts and culture infrastructure, through the construction of new museums and theatres, providing platforms for artists and performers to showcase their talents. Additionally, we have promoted cultural tourism through initiatives like the Magical Kenya Tourism Campaign, attracting visitors from around the world to experience the country's rich cultural heritage. Moreover, the Government has supported the development of creative industries through initiatives like the Kenya Creative Industries Development Authority (KCIDA), providing resources and mentorship to creative entrepreneurs to expand their businesses and reach a global audience. In June this year, the Government launched the master plan to identify, recruit, nurture, reward and monetise our creative, arts and sports industries dubbed TalantaHela Initiative. The Government also unveiled the TalantaHela App in October where talented, creative and sporty Kenyans can upload their videos to be assessed by a team of experts for linkage to nurturing, mentorship and monetization.
43. We are also committed to deploying sports as the magnet for integration, with this dream best exemplified by the successful East Africa Pamoja Bid under which Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania will be hosting the Africa Cup of Nations in 2027, our continent's premier sporting event.
44. As we explore these thematic areas, let us prioritize concrete actions and tangible outcomes. It is my expectation that this 6th Edition of the Youth Connekt Africa Summit will develop a Roadmap outlining Solutions to the issues facing the African Youth.
45. To the young people of Africa here today: You inspire me and you challenge me. Your energy is unbelievable, you are the embodiment of Africa's potential and resilience, the source of our continent's ingenuity and the driving force behind our collective socio-economic and political development.



46. Embrace your potential, unleash your creativity and fearlessly pursue your dreams. The world is ready for what you have to offer.
47. I take this opportunity to recognize the team of young people who organized this summit, made it a success and launch the Youth Connekt Kenya Chapter. Well done.

This is your time, this is your moment. Take the lead.

48. You are what Africa needs: Aspiration No. 6 of the Agenda 2063 of the African Union (AU) on "An Africa whose development is people-driven, relying on the potential of African people, especially its youth".
49. You are welcome to stay and explore Nairobi, which is the only city in the world with a National Park within its borders. Please, visit the Bomas of Kenya, The National Museum among others.
- 50. It is now my honour to declare the HEADS OF STATES SESSION of the 6th Edition of the Youth Connekt Africa Summit 2023, officially open.**

**Thank you.
God Bless You.**

