



REPUBLIC OF KENYA

**TALKING NOTES FOR H.E. DR WILLIAM SAMOEI
RUTO, CGH, PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF
KENYA AND COMMANDER IN CHIEF OF KENYA
DEFENCE FORCES, DURING THE 7TH EDITION OF
THE TURKANA CULTURAL AND TOURISM
FESTIVAL, (TOBONG'U LORE)**

OCTOBER 12TH, 2023

LODWAR, TURKANA COUNTY

- **Visiting Dignitaries;**
- **Distinguished guests;**

1. It is my pleasure to join you for this beautiful cultural celebration. I thank the County Government of Turkana for organizing this magnificent and colourful festival, the Tobong'ú Lore, a celebration of community, identity and humanity.
2. It is, therefore, a festival with regional dimensions and benefits specifically the celebration of our diversity and enhancement of peace in this region.
3. Peace is enhanced by interaction, by accentuating similarities and this festival is unique in this regard. It strengthens the bonds between various communities and builds a sense of oneness that weakens the impulses of conflict and division.
4. The foundation of our nation's strength and the primary driver of its economic robustness and social coherence is our people.
5. The people of Kenya are not only bold and enterprising go-getters, they are warm, kind, compassionate and philanthropic. Regardless of where one goes in our country, from Migori to Mandera, Lokichogio to Lamu, or Moyale to Magadi, Kenyans bear a shared, distinctive character that is unmistakable to our neighbours or friends abroad.
6. At the same time, Kenya is renowned for its ethnic and cultural diversity, with over 45 distinct groups that can be identified through their unique set of languages, traditions and practices.



7. There is no contradiction between our diversity on the one hand and our unmistakable shared identity on the other hand. The free expression of ethnic cultures and identities has enabled the people of Kenya to enjoy the abundant blessings of diversity and, through continuous interaction, convergence upon a robust ethos, which defines our modes of social, economic and cultural expression.
8. In other words, we have a distinct way of not only seeing things but also of understanding and expressing them as well. It is based on a common identity synthesized from the free and vigorous interactions between and among our peoples and their ways of life.
9. Our cultures have enabled us to express our diverse identities and to formulate a unifying national culture that is defined by strong values, including love of freedom, justice, inclusion, unity as well as faith, courage and enterprise. They inspired us to fight for freedom and build a thriving, respected nation of winners.
10. Culture serves as a critical repository of identity, knowledge, skills and practices, including sustainable solutions to the pressing challenges of our time. The timeless wisdom of elders maintains the social fabric through alternative dispute resolution, while sustainable practices provide a benchmark for innovative responses to climate change in terms of resilience, adaptation and mitigation. Culture also provides inspiration for arts and crafts and the foundation of the creative economy.
11. The Constitution expresses our pride in our ethnic, cultural and religious diversity, together with our determination to live together in peace and unity as one indivisible, sovereign nation.



12. In Article 11, the Constitution recognizes culture as the foundation of our nation and the cumulative civilization of the Kenyan people and nation. Therefore, the state is mandated to promote all forms of national and cultural expression in various forms, including traditional celebrations.
13. I, therefore, commend the county government of Turkana for providing this magnificent opportunity for the people of Turkana, together with their ateker, who include the Jie, Karamoja, Toposa, Nyangatom and Teso and the people of Kenya and East Africa at large, to take part in the Tobong'u Lore cultural festival and celebrate a wonderful and rich cultural tradition.
14. Archaeologists have determined that the East African savannah was the location where the earliest human ancestors evolved. Kenya is recognized by experts of pre-history, including palaeontologists, to be the cradle of humankind. Specifically, the Lake Turkana basin is the site where the oldest remains of human ancestors have been discovered. Here, therefore, is humanity's original home.
15. "Tobong'u Lore: Welcome Home", convenes people who share a common ancestry, customs, traditions, language and other cultural features to celebrate the unity, vitality and optimism of their community. It also speaks to the world in general, summoning every person on this planet to remember and honour the home of all human beings.
16. This festival is therefore an important platform for the celebration of unity and diversity, the promotion of peace and security, the advancement of harmony and cohesion and the deepening of regional integration and cooperation through cultural expression.



17. We recognize the contribution of this festival, together with other events and modalities cultural expression, to our economy. The bottom-up economic transformation agenda identifies the creative economy as well as culture and heritage to be highly promising drivers of transformation and employment creation.
18. This is why we have facilitated the establishment of a strong institutional framework for the implementation of the constitutional mandates under Article 11, and our commitments under the bottom-up economic transformation agenda. Last week, the Cabinet approved the Culture Bill while others, like the Creative Economy Framework, National Kiswahili Council of Kenya Bill, the Kenya Film Bill, the National Heritage and Museums Bill, are currently being developed.
19. At the international level, we have ratified the 1972 UNESCO World Heritage Convention, the 2003 UNESCO Convention on the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage and the 2005 Convention on the Protection and Promotion of Cultural Diversity.
20. To establish a sound basis for protecting, promoting and reclaiming cultural assets and heritage, we are also in the process of ratifying the UNESCO Convention on the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict, the Convention on the Means of Prohibiting the Illicit Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property, and the 2001 Convention on the Protection of Underwater Cultural Heritage.
21. As exemplified by this festival, culture is the anchor of identity and engine of cohesion and integration. It is also a catalyst of economic transformation through the cultural



industries, creative economy and artistic economy as well as tourism.

22. Tobong'u Lore is a local festival, a national event, a regional celebration and a call to all humanity, to come home and experience the beauty of culture. Tobong'u Lore, in the language spoken at the cradle of humanity, means "welcome home". We really mean this. That is why we have committed to facilitating people all over the world to come home, by providing visas free of charge to everyone coming into our country. Welcome home means welcome home.

The 2023 Tobong'u Lore Turkana Cultural and Tourism Festival is officially opened.

Thank you.
God bless you.

