



REPUBLIC OF KENYA

**SPEECH BY HIS EXCELLENCY HON. WILLIAM SAMOEI
RUTO, PhD, C.G.H., PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF
KENYA AND COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF OF THE DEFENCE
FORCES, AT THE OFFICIAL OPENING OF THE 25TH EAST
AFRICAN COMMUNITY MICRO, SMALL AND MEDIUM
ENTERPRISES TRADE FAIR**

NOVEMBER 11, 2025

UHURU GARDENS, NAIROBI

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

1. I am honoured to welcome you to Nairobi, the heart of our region's enterprise, for the 25th East African Community Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) Trade Fair.
2. This gathering is a compelling validation that micro, small and medium enterprises remain the pillar of our economies: They are the engines of job creation, drivers of innovation, anchors of industrial growth, and the driving force of our shared prosperity.
3. Today, we pay tribute to the visionary leadership of three distinguished patriots of our region - His Excellency Yoweri Kaguta Museveni, President of the Republic of Uganda, the late Daniel Toroitich arap Moi of Kenya, the Second President of Kenya and the late Benjamin Mkapa, the Third President of the United Republic of Tanzania - who, 25 years ago in Arusha, reinvigorated the East African Community through the signing of its founding treaty.
4. Alongside this historic milestone, the Jua Kali-Nguvu Kazi Exhibition was launched, showcasing the ingenuity of MSMEs in our partner States. Their Excellencies resolved that this exhibition would be held annually, on a rotational basis, to deepen socio-economic integration, expand market access, and narrow technological and knowledge disparities across our nations.



5. A quarter-century later, the EAC has blossomed into a powerful bloc of eight Partner States, representing over 300 million citizens and making East Africa one of the world's most dynamic and rapidly emerging markets.
6. This trade fair has equally evolved and is no longer merely a marketplace for goods, but a strategic platform for skills exchange, innovation, partnership, and structured dialogue aimed at dismantling barriers to trade and movement of people.
7. As we commemorate this Silver Jubilee, we are mindful of the defining forces shaping our world today: A rapidly growing population, the rise of a youthful generation, accelerated technological disruption, climate change pressures, unemployment, and shifting geopolitical realignments that continue to reshape global supply chains.
8. These forces carry challenges, but even greater opportunities if we harness them. Our young population, in particular, positions the region to lead through digital innovation, creative enterprise, and a thriving knowledge economy.
9. I am encouraged that the conversations shaping the trade fair are ambitious, forward-looking, and action-oriented, giving priority to digital transformation, equitable access to finance, expanded markets, and sustainable green enterprise to support MSMEs to grow, scale up, and generate lasting wealth.



10. In Kenya, the Bottom-Up Economic Transformation Agenda places MSMEs at the core of our development framework alongside agriculture, universal healthcare, affordable housing, and the digital and creative economy.
11. We have prioritised strategic high-growth value chains, including leather, dairy, textiles and apparel, edible oils, and rice. Others are tea, building and construction, the blue economy, natural resources, and artisanal mining.
12. Our choice to subsidise agricultural production rather than consumption was initially met with scepticism, but the results speak for themselves today. National yields have surged, and this season, Kenya is on course to harvest 75 million bags of maize, doubling our production in just two years.
13. To expand financial inclusion, we launched the Financial Inclusion Fund, popularly known as the Hustler Fund, which has so far disbursed over KSh80 billion to 26.7 million Kenyans since November 2022. The fund has provided dignified credit to those previously excluded from formal lending.
14. Through digital lending, borrowers are building credit histories that have crystallised into credit scores, improving visibility to lenders, reducing risk perception, and expanding financial opportunity.
15. We are now advancing efforts to securitise this credit score, recognising it as collateral to unlock financing for millions, especially young people and women who lack traditional assets such as property or formal payslips.



16. To strengthen market access, Kenya is establishing County Aggregation and Industrial Parks in all the 47 counties to support agro-processing, consolidate local value chains, and expand commercial reach for our MSMEs.
17. We have also commissioned new special economic zones in Busia-Nasewa, Naivasha, Eldoret, Kirinyaga, and Dongo Kundu in Mombasa to attract greater Foreign Direct Investment, stimulate industrialisation, and expand regional trade.
18. Our Affordable Housing Programme, beyond transforming urban areas, has created jobs for young people and ring-fenced billions of shillings for the Jua Kali sector in the manufacture of doors, windows, hinges, and fittings.
19. To accelerate digital commerce, we are building 100,000km of digital superhighway, expanding connectivity and enabling commerce. Public Wi-Fi will reach markets in the village, and digital hubs will be established in each of Kenya's 1,450 wards. Already, 30,000km of the digital superhighway are complete, complemented by national digital literacy training.
20. The digitisation of government, now exceeding 22,000 services on the e-Citizen platform, has streamlined access, reduced costs, eliminated inefficiencies, and simplified business registration to spur entrepreneurship.



21. We are investing in the entrepreneurs of tomorrow through the National Youth Opportunities Towards Advancement (NYOTA) initiative, which we launched last week. This programme will support 110,000 young entrepreneurs through training, mentorship, and start-up capital.
22. These initiatives demonstrate our commitment. But as a region, we must also elevate this trade fair by fully leveraging continental frameworks, including the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA).
23. The AfCFTA Protocol on Women and Youth in Trade must be fully domesticated across Partner States to ensure inclusion in economic opportunity. I commend the insights shared yesterday by AfCFTA Secretary-General Wamkele Mene during Kenya Day.
24. Today, we also celebrate the establishment of the International Trade Centre's Regional Hub in Nairobi. We express our sincere gratitude to Executive Director Pamela Coke-Hamilton and the larger United Nations system for this honour.
25. This milestone is not Kenya's alone; it belongs to East Africa, bringing global markets within closer reach of our producers and value chains.
26. As I conclude, I wish to reaffirm the commitment of EAC Heads of State to resolve persistent non-tariff barriers that continue to constrain cross-border trade. This trade fair offers an invaluable opportunity to elevate these realities ahead of the upcoming EAC Summit.



27. It is now my singular honour to declare the 25th East African Community MSMEs Trade Fair officially open.

I thank you.

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