



REPUBLIC OF KENYA

**REMARKS 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, DURING THE 13TH SESSION OF THE WORLD
URBAN FORUM**

MAY 18, 2026

BAKU, AZERBAIJAN

**His Excellency Ilham Aliyev, President of the Republic of Azerbaijan,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

1. The first World Urban Forum was convened in Nairobi, Kenya, in 2002 in recognition of the growing reality that rapid urbanisation would become one of the defining challenges of our time.
2. Only last month, Nairobi hosted leaders, policymakers and urban stakeholders at the Second Africa Urban Forum, where we renewed our commitment to adequate and affordable housing, sustainable urbanisation and the transformation of human settlements as catalysts for economic growth and social progress.
3. It is in this context that we gather here today in Baku for another consequential global engagement, a defining moment that speaks directly to one of the greatest development and human dignity challenges this century.

Excellencies,

4. Today, nearly three billion people across the world are affected by inadequate housing. More than one billion live in slums and informal settlements, while over 300 million remain entirely homeless.
5. By 2050, nearly 70% of humanity will live and work in urban areas, with the greatest demand concentrated in Africa and Asia. Our cities are expanding faster than infrastructure can support, faster than governance systems can adapt, and much faster than climate resilience can respond.



6. The question before us, therefore, is no longer whether urbanisation will happen. That debate has already been overtaken by reality. The real question is whether our cities will become catalysts of inclusion, productivity and resilience, or whether they will continue to deepen inequality, exclusion and climate vulnerability. That is why this forum in Baku is both urgent and consequential.

Excellencies,

7. Article 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights affirms the right of every human being to an adequate standard of living, including housing. In Kenya, our Constitution expressly guarantees every citizen the right to accessible and adequate housing.
8. For us, therefore, affordable housing is not merely a construction programme. It is a constitutional imperative, a nation-building undertaking, and a powerful instrument of social transformation.
9. In 2022, Kenya faced an annual housing deficit of approximately 200,000 units. Urbanisation was accelerating, informal settlements were expanding, and millions of hardworking citizens were locked out of decent and affordable housing.
10. That is why we made affordable housing a central pillar of our ambition to deliver 200,000 housing units every year.
11. Today, I can confidently state that Kenya's housing programme stands among the most ambitious urban transformation initiatives on the African continent.
12. More than 273,000 housing units are currently under construction across Kenya, with nearly 9,000 already completed and 55000 to be completed before the end of the year. This programme is enabling Kenyans to access decent homes through flexible monthly payments starting from less than \$40 a month.



13. Beyond the numbers, however, our focus is to build complete and integrated communities supported by essential social infrastructure, including schools, health facilities, roads, commercial facilities, green spaces and digital connectivity.
14. Importantly, the housing programme has become a major driver of Industrialisation, enterprise development and inclusive economic growth. So far, it has created more than 640,000 jobs and is on course to deliver at least one million employment opportunities as it scales up.

Excellencies,

15. One important lesson from Kenya's experience is that sustainably addressing housing challenges requires affordable and reliable financing. To achieve this, Kenya established the Affordable Housing Fund, leveraging locally mobilised resources to create a stable financing mechanism that has already supported over \$5 billion in signed and ongoing projects while stimulating wider enterprise and industrial growth.
16. This progress demonstrates the power of political will and innovative approaches to development financing. While the journey was not without scepticism and resistance, today the impact and opportunities being created are starkly evident across Kenya.

Excellencies,

17. We recognise that cities now stand at the centre of the climate crisis. But cities can, and must, stand at the frontline of climate solutions.
18. That is why Kenya, together with Brazil, is co-leading the Building Climate Resilience with the Urban Poor initiative aimed at strengthening resilience through sustainable planning and inclusive urban development.



19. Across our Affordable Housing Programme, we are embedding climate resilience and sustainable urban planning into the design of our communities by integrating green spaces, environmental restoration and urban regeneration initiatives.
20. This approach reflects our broader commitment to building cities that are not only livable and inclusive, but also resilient, sustainable and responsive to the needs of future generations.
21. Yet as we pursue these ambitions, developing countries continue to face a difficult reality. Many countries in Africa and across the Global South remain constrained by limited fiscal space, rising debt burdens, and limited access to affordable climate and development finance.
22. African countries continue to borrow at disproportionately high costs despite possessing strong growth prospects with expanding markets and abundant resources. This is neither fair nor sustainable.
23. That is why we are increasingly focused on strengthening our own African multilateral financial architecture. Africa must increasingly finance Africa. Our continent holds over US \$ 4 trillion in domestic capital through pension funds, insurance assets, sovereign reserves and private capital pools.
24. The challenge is not the absence of liquidity. The challenge is the absence of sufficient risk mitigation mechanisms capable of channelling African capital into African development at scale.

Excellencies,

25. We acknowledge the measures being advanced by both the Bretton Wood Institutions - the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank - to strengthen financial resilience and support sustainable development pathways.



26. However, while these interventions represent important and progressive steps in the right direction, they remain insufficient to fully bridge the scale of the development financing gap and the resources required to meet the growing needs and aspirations of African countries and other emerging economies.
27. Africa welcomes the ongoing reforms within the international multilateral financial institutions that are increasingly responding to the realities of climate-induced fiscal pressures and the resultant debt burdens facing many countries on the continent.
28. Kenya, therefore, strongly supports the strengthening of African multilateral financial institutions as strategic instruments for mobilising domestic African capital at scale and speed to mobilise resources that will accelerate transformative investment across the continent.
29. Institutions such as the African Development Bank, African Export-Import Bank, Africa Finance Corporation, Shelter Afrique Development Bank and Africa50 are strengthening Africa's capacity to finance housing, infrastructure, energy, industrialisation and regional integration. Beyond being financing institutions, they represent important instruments of African agency, strategic autonomy and collective self-determination.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

30. At the same time, the global multilateral system must evolve to reflect the realities of our world today. I have consistently made this point in many global forums, and I will repeat it here today: The time to reform the multilateral system is now. Not an undefined date in the future. NOW.



31. There is an urgent need to accelerate reforms of the international financial architecture to deliver more concessional and long-term financing at the scale and speed required to address the pressing development priorities of countries across the Global South, particularly in Africa.
32. At the same time, there is an equally urgent need for reform of the United Nations system, particularly the Security Council, to make it more representative, more inclusive, and more responsive to the aspirations and realities of all humanity.
33. The world we live in today is neither bipolar nor unipolar. It is a multi-polar, multi-centric and multi-cultural. Our global institutions must evolve with this reality, or risk becoming increasingly disconnected from the people they seek to serve.
34. We do not advocate these reforms to diminish any nation. We advance them because the vulnerabilities of the many will ultimately undermine the prosperity of all. No wall is high enough, and no nation is powerful enough to shield itself from the consequences of deepening global inequality.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

35. The New Urban Agenda challenged the world to rethink the future of human settlements. We must now move from declarations to delivery. We must build cities that are inclusive, connected, productive, sustainable and climate-resilient. Cities where growth does not create exclusion. Cities where modernisation does not deepen inequality. Cities where sustainability is not a privilege for the wealthy few, but a right accessible to all.
36. Ultimately, the true measure of progress in urban development will not be the height of our skyscrapers only, but the quality of human life they sustain. It will be measured by whether ordinary citizens can live in dignity, with security and hope; whether they can access opportunity; and whether they can realise their God-given potential.



37. Let the 13th Session of the World Urban Forum mark a turning point from fragmented urbanisation to integrated development; from exclusion to equity; from vulnerability to resilient communities; and from endless discussion to meaningful action.
38. History has afforded us a rare opportunity to shape the cities that will define the next civilisation. When future generations look back on our time, may they say we rose to the challenge, matched vision with action, and proved equal to the demands of our moment.

I thank you.

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