



REPUBLIC OF KENYA

**STATEMENT 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 64TH KENYA
NATIONAL DRAMA AND FILM FESTIVAL STATE
CONCERT**

APRIL 17, 2026

STATE HOUSE, NAIROBI



**Distinguished participants,
Leaders present,
Ladies and Gentlemen,
Good afternoon,**

1. For the past 12 days, culminating in this State Concert, we have witnessed an extraordinary display of talent, imagination, and creativity, an inspiring celebration of culture that reflects the very soul, spirit, and limitless potential of our nation at its best.
2. As you know, storytelling has always been, and continues to be, at the heart of our cultural vibrancy. From the rich oral narratives shared by our ancestors to the performances we see today on our stages and across our screens, stories have defined who we are.
3. They have carried our values from one generation to the next, preserved our heritage, and bound us together as a people, strengthening the fabric of our society.
4. Today, a new generation is carrying this tradition forward by embracing both creativity and technology to project our cultural vitality to the world.
5. But even more critically, across the world, the creative industry, including drama, music and film, is taking on a new and far more powerful meaning. It is no longer just space for artistic expression or entertainment; it has become a formidable source of income and economic opportunity.



6. With the rapid advancement of digital technologies, including artificial intelligence (AI), every individual with access to a phone and the Internet has the world as their stage. From wherever they are, they can create and share their work globally, build influence, and earn a living from their creativity. That is the reality in which we operate today.
7. Creativity is no longer just a hobby as it may have been in the past; it is now one of the fastest-growing sectors of the global economy. By some estimates, the creative economy is today valued at over \$250 billion (KSh32.5 trillion), with projections that it could exceed \$500 billion (KSh65 trillion) by 2030.
8. Across the world, more than 200 million creators are producing content, with platforms such as YouTube hosting tens of millions. Millions of others, including many here in Kenya, are actively using platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, and Facebook not only to create and share content, but also to earn a living from their creativity.
9. This is a tremendous opportunity that young people must be prepared to seize. It is not enough to simply recognise it; we must equip ourselves and step forward with confidence and ambition to fully realise its potential.
10. As a government, we have recognised that drama and film are not merely co-curricular activities; they are integral to holistic development, equipping Kenya's youth with the skills, creativity, and confidence needed to thrive in the opportunities and challenges of the 21st Century.



11. Our commitment to the Competency-Based Education and Training system reinforces this vision. By recognising multiple capabilities and nurturing diverse talents, we are equipping learners with critical thinking, collaboration, communication, and problem-solving skills.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

12. Today, we are taking the drama and film festival into the digital era. SOMA PLAY is not just another online platform; it is where talent meets opportunity, where creativity is not only showcased but also monetised.
13. It will market the incredible work emerging from this festival and connect schools and the Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development (KICD) directly to the creative economy. This year, we piloted it at the national level, and the results have been very encouraging.
14. Next year, we will roll it out to the regional level and, thereafter, to the grassroots. Beyond this, the same model will be extended to sports and the annual Kenya Science and Engineering Fair, ensuring that every talent has a platform to grow.
15. To ensure that those in the creative economy earn their rightful returns, we have also taken a major step by migrating the collection and distribution of music royalties onto e-Citizen. This is a bold and transformative reform.



16. For too long, royalty collection has lacked transparency. In one instance, a Collective Management Organisation collected KSh109 million on behalf of artistes but distributed only KSh13 million. This meant that the rightful beneficiaries received only 12%, while cartels and middlemen took the rest. That is not only unfair, but it is also an injustice.
17. Today, we have put in place a transparent and accountable system to end this exploitation. We are proud to have corrected this imbalance in favour of our artistes. Their hard work will no longer be taken advantage of.
18. I am also pleased to announce that the Public Service Commission has approved the staff structure for the State Department of Creative Economy. Soon, we will be bringing in your talent and expertise into the government to help drive this vision forward.
19. The Creative Economy Bill, 2026, now before Parliament, will anchor the sector, establish a fund to support creatives, expand access to financing, and create institutions to professionalise the industry. It will also enable the government to invest in large-scale productions because telling our own stories at scale is no longer optional; it is necessary.
20. Next month, I will proudly walk the red carpet alongside our creators at the Kalasha Awards, an occasion that celebrates the very best of Kenyan film and storytelling.



21. In recognition of the immense talent we have witnessed here, I have directed the Kenya Film Commission to introduce, at the Kalasha Awards, a dedicated category for student films, particularly those emerging from festivals such as this one so that our young storytellers can be seen, celebrated, and inspired to aim even higher.
22. Equally, Kalasha Awards should extend this recognition to our digital content creators, who are shaping the future of storytelling in our country. Our young creatives deserve recognition at the biggest stages.

Distinguished participants,

23. The government recognises that storytelling is today the most powerful form of communication. That is why I have directed the Ministry of ICT, through the Government Advertising Agency, to work more closely with content creators. To reinforce this effort, I have told the chair and executive committee of this festival to collaborate with my office in exploring ways to attract more Government-themed sponsorship so that these platforms can be better supported and more effectively utilised to communicate with our people.
24. While traditional advertising remains relevant, we must adapt and communicate in ways that are authentic, relatable, and impactful. We have spoken for long about allocating 30% of Government advertising to creatives. This year, I expect measurable progress.



I have directed that monthly reports be submitted and that this commitment be integrated into performance contracts.

25. If we are willing to invest heavily in advertising, then we must do so on platforms that shape minds and culture. We must channel resources into drama and music festivals, and even into branding spaces within our school systems where young people learn, engage, and influence one another.

Ladies and gentlemen,

26. These festivals are living classrooms of creativity, bringing together some of the most gifted young scriptwriters, performers, and storytellers in the country. However, there has been growing tension on how to integrate independent creatives into the system.
27. Some of these individuals - often referred to as "Mamluki" within festival circles because they are not teachers and are not registered by the Teachers Service Commission - have operated in unclear spaces. While this raises legitimate concerns about standards and student welfare, it is equally true that they have significantly enriched the festival.



28. These creatives are, in many ways, the very product of this festival. They have elevated performances, sharpened scripts, and transformed this platform into a vital, seasonal source of employment for many young talents. It would be inconsistent for the festival to invest in training, nurturing, and developing this talent only to leave it without a clear pathway for growth and inclusion.
29. The challenge before us, therefore, is not whether to include them, but how to do so responsibly. We must strike a balance that protects students, upholds standards, and creates pathways for employment and growth.
30. I therefore call upon KICD, the Kenya Cultural Centre, the Festival Executive Committees, and relevant ministries to develop clear guidelines for vetting, accrediting, and engaging these talents. Let us build a system that is both safe and enabling, one that recognises talent, nurtures it, and gives it legitimate space to contribute.
31. As we conclude this festival, I congratulate all the winners for their exceptional performances. You have distinguished yourselves through creativity, excellence, and dedication. I also thank our partners, sponsors, and stakeholders whose support has made this festival possible.



32. Your contribution strengthens Kenya's creative industry, inspires our youth, and positions our nation as a global hub of talent and innovation.

I thank you.

###

