



REPUBLIC OF KENYA

**SPEECH BY HIS EXCELLENCY HON. WILLIAM SAMOEI
RUTO, PhD, C.G.H., PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF
KENYA, COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF OF THE DEFENCE
FORCES, AND PATRON OF THE PRESIDENT'S AWARD-
KENYA, DURING THE GOLD AWARD PRESENTATION
CEREMONY**

JANUARY 21, 2026

STATE HOUSE, NAIROBI

**Our Esteemed Gold Awardees,
The young people of our nation,
Distinguished guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen;**

1. My faith in the ability of Kenya's young people to transform our nation is as deep as it is unshakeable.
2. When I articulated our ambitious vision to elevate Kenya to a first-world status within our lifetime, I did so with absolute confidence in the extraordinary potential of the young people of this nation.
3. I am confident that our youth possesses the capability, the energy, and the resolve to turn that grand ambition into reality.
4. As I have said before, and I repeat it here with conviction: Kenya's youth rank among the very best in the world in terms of human capital. You have the skills, the aptitude, the competence, and the expertise to excel wherever duty calls - whether here at home or on the global stage.
5. It is for this reason that I am especially pleased to welcome you to this year's Gold Award Presentation under The President's Award-Kenya.
6. As patron, I am deeply honored to stand with you to celebrate extraordinary milestones in the lives of these young men and women - the recipients of the Gold Award.



7. Today, we are giving more than an award; we are recognizing effort, sacrifice, and grit. We are celebrating young Kenyans who stayed the course when it seemed insurmountable; who showed up when it would have been easier to walk away; and who chose to do the right things when no one was watching.

Ladies and gentlemen,

8. The theme of today's ceremony, "Shaping Young People's Character and Encouraging Purposeful Volunteerism", goes to the very core of what the President's Award stands for.
9. It reminds us that education does not end in the classroom, and that knowledge alone is not enough. What ultimately matters is the character we build, the values we uphold, and the willingness to serve what is greater than ourselves.
10. One of the most tangible ways to demonstrate character is through service to others. Volunteerism is a powerful act of hope and support. Purposeful volunteerism involves recognizing that you are part of something bigger than yourself. It means understanding that your abilities and talents should be shared, and that your community's well-being is tied to your own.

Ladies and gentlemen,

11. As I mentioned earlier, education and youth empowerment are central to the government's development agenda. That is why we have identified education as a central pillar in Kenya's transformation to first-world status.



12. Over the past three years, we have completed the transition to a Competency-Based Education, recruited 100,000 teachers, and built more than 23,000 new classrooms across the country to expand access and improve learning outcomes.
13. We have also introduced a student-centered funding model that not only ensures support is allocated on the basis of merit and need, but has also stabilized our public universities - many of which were previously on the brink of financial collapse.
14. In addition, we have committed to scaling up our national research funding to 2% of GDP because no nation can achieve sustained prosperity without investing in knowledge, innovation, and human capital development.
15. For our young people, this means stronger foundations in literacy, numeracy, science, and digital skills supported by improved teacher quality. It also means a modernized curriculum, expanded TVET opportunities, stronger leadership and entrepreneurship pathways.

Ladies and gentlemen,

16. I am continually inspired by the stories emerging from the President's Award Programme, and allow me to highlight just a few that capture its transformative power.
17. In May 2025, Vivian Kinya was selected as one of only eight International Youth Representatives from nearly 300 applicants worldwide, giving Kenya a voice at the International Council of the Duke of Edinburgh's Award.



A Gold Awardee, who has progressed through all levels of the Programme and now serves as a volunteer assessor, Vivian exemplifies leadership rooted in service and excellence.

18. Another powerful example is Mohamed Hassan Omar, a student at Garissa University. Having joined the Programme at Alliance High School, Omar chose beekeeping for his Silver Award project, starting with just 10 hives. Today, he manages over 120 modern hives in Wajir, is self-employed, and has created opportunities for other young people in his community.
19. Equally impressive is the journey of Sheldan Nduta, whom I met in 2024 while she was an Award participant at Kamae Borstal Institution. Through the Programme, her life has transformed. Today, she is fully reformed and thriving as a second-year student at Kiambu National Polytechnic, pursuing a diploma in Business Management.
20. These stories remind us that leadership is not defined by titles but by service; that success is not measured by personal gain alone, but by the change we create; and that with guidance, discipline, and opportunity, young Kenyans can rise from any circumstance and shape a better future for themselves and for our nation.
21. To the organizations and stakeholders supporting this prestigious Award, thank you for your unremitting commitment. Your partnership is crucial in sustaining and enhancing the impact of this transformative journey.



22. Finally, I want to say this to the young people of our nation: Your future is not determined by where you come from, but by what you choose to do with your opportunities. I firmly believe that with discipline, hard work, and perseverance, success is achievable.
23. I also urge you to believe in your country. Do not allow yourselves to be consumed by the pessimism that afflicts some voices in our public life. Optimistic people see opportunity in every challenge, while pessimists see only obstacles in every opportunity. Kenya's future belongs to those who choose hope, effort, and purpose.
24. Congratulations to all the Gold Awardees and Life members of the Award Holders Alumni. May you continue to shine brightly, and may your light illuminate the path for many others.

I thank You!

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