



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 GROUND-
BREAKING CEREMONY FOR THE NAIVASHA-KISUMU-
MALABA STANDARD GAUGE RAILWAY (SGR)**

MARCH 21, 2026

KIBOS, KISUMU COUNTY



**Your Excellency Yoweri Kaguta Museveni, President of
the Republic of Uganda,
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

1. It is in moments such as this, when we gather as a nation and as a region to break ground for infrastructure development that will define generations, that the destinies of our people, our cities, and our nations are shaped.
2. History teaches us this with clarity. Close to 130 years ago, along this very corridor, the British colonial administration conceived what was then known as the Uganda Railway.
3. Its purpose was to link the Indian Ocean at Mombasa to the interior of East Africa, thereby securing territory, controlling movement, and extracting value from the hinterland for the colonial administration.
4. In its original design, the railway would run inland from Mombasa, pass through Nairobi and the Rift Valley, and terminate at Kisumu on the shores of Lake Victoria. From there, goods, officials, and troops would cross the lake by steamer to Uganda through Port Bell and Entebbe.



5. But from the very beginning, the railway did more than move people and goods; it reshaped the geography of our region.
6. Mombasa was reinforced as the gateway of trade. Machakos, once an administrative centre of the British East Africa Protectorate, was bypassed and declined in significance because it lay off the line.
7. And Nairobi, then a swampy, flood-prone rail depot established in 1899 - rose because it sat on the railway. Nairobi became a logistical hub, then an administrative centre, and ultimately the capital of British East Africa. Without the railway, Nairobi, as we know it today, might never have existed.
8. As the line advanced westward to Nakuru and onward to Kisumu in 1901, it opened the Rift Valley and the lake region to trade. Kisumu became a vital inland port, linking rail to lake transport and facilitating movement into Uganda. But the break between rail and water proved slow, costly, and inefficient. And so, the railway advanced again.
9. Beginning in 1920, it was extended inland from Nakuru across the then so-called White Highlands, reaching Eldoret in 1924, and then onward through Malaba to Tororo and Jinja, and finally to Kampala in 1931. In so doing, it became a continuous artery into the heart of East Africa.



10. That extension reshaped our region. Eldoret emerged as an agricultural powerhouse. Jinja became an industrial centre. Kampala, already the political seat of the Buganda Kingdom, was elevated into a stronger administrative and commercial capital, and its influence amplified by direct access to the coast.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

11. That is the lesson of history: That infrastructure development does not just connect places; it often creates them. It determines where opportunity lives, where investment flows, and where prosperity takes root.
12. Unfortunately, the 130-year-old metre gauge railway line, that was once a lifeline of regional commerce, was neglected and gradually fell into disrepair, losing both its vitality and transformative impact.
13. Yet even in decline, the vision of connectivity never faded. In 2008, it is this enduring vision that brought together the late President Mwai Kibaki and His Excellency Yoweri Museveni, who jointly laid the foundation for a modern, high-capacity railway, one that would link Mombasa to Kampala, with strategic branches to Kisumu in Kenya and Pakwach in Uganda.



14. Additionally, the Presidents of Kenya, Uganda and Rwanda not only pronounced themselves on the plan to extend the Standard Gauge Railway (SGR) to Kampala, Kigali, and Juba, but also signed the SGR Protocol and Tripartite Agreement to ensure development and management of a seamless railway system.
15. It is therefore most fitting that our elder statesman, President Museveni, is here with us today to witness this vision taking shape. Thank you, Mzee, for your leadership, your vision, and your steadfast commitment to the unity and integration of our region.
16. Building on that foundation, Kenya took decisive steps in 2014 by breaking ground on Phase 1A of the SGR, stretching 472km from Mombasa to Nairobi. This was later extended inland to Suswa in Narok, covering an additional 120km, further advancing the corridor toward the region's hinterland.
17. Two days ago, we broke ground for the extension of the SGR from Narok to Kisumu, a distance of 264km that forms Phase 2B of this railway network. That line will connect our industrial corridor in Nairobi to the agricultural heartlands of Narok, Bomet, Kericho, and Nyamira, and ultimately Kisumu.
18. Today, here at Kibos in Kisumu, we take yet another decisive and consequential step. We break ground on the 107km Kisumu-Malaba section of the SGR, completing a nearly 1,000km seamless rail link from Mombasa to Malaba and forming a vital connection to the Malaba-Kampala line.



19. Beyond Kenya and Uganda, this railway line will serve our partner States in the region, including Rwanda, Burundi, South Sudan, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and the Central African Republic. It is a powerful statement of regional integration, partnership, and shared ambition.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

20. Our region faces a clear and urgent challenge. Our economies are not generating sufficient opportunities to match the pace of our rapidly growing populations. At the same time, our businesses continue to grapple with high logistics costs that undermine competitiveness.
21. In many cases, transport and related costs account for between 30% and 40% of the final value of goods. Cargo takes, on average, 80 hours to move from Mombasa to Malaba, and more than 100 hours to reach Kampala.
22. We cannot build prosperity on inefficiency. That is why we must invest in modern, efficient transport and connectivity systems not only as transport corridors, but also as economic corridors.
23. Along this Mombasa-Malaba corridor, we will promote the development of industrial parks, logistics hubs, and commercial centres driven by private sector investment and anchored in regional integration. This is a proven model, one that has delivered rapid transformation by aligning infrastructure with industry, trade, and investment.



24. And we have already seen what this investment can deliver. Over the past eight years, the SGR has transported more than 15 million passengers and over 45 million tonnes of freight. It has reduced transport costs, improved efficiency, and contributed significantly to the growth of our economy.
25. With this expansion, we expect even greater impact. Freight costs are projected to decline by at least 40% a tonne a kilometre, while transit times for freight will reduce by nearly 30%. The share of cargo moved by rail will increase, easing pressure on our roads and reducing wear and tear.
26. But beyond the numbers lies something far greater. This railway will connect farmers to markets. It will move livestock and farm produce from Narok to Nairobi and onward to Mombasa for export. Tea from Kericho, dairy from Bomet, grains from the Rift Valley, and fish from Lake Victoria will reach markets faster and more efficiently.
27. It will power industrial growth along the corridor - from Nairobi to Naivasha to Kisumu and beyond - enabling businesses to access inputs more affordably and reaching wider markets. It will create opportunities for our young people across construction, logistics, manufacturing, and services, giving them a stake in the growth of our region.



28. Above all, this railway will bring life to our long-held aspiration for true regional integration. It will enable the seamless movement of people and goods from the port of Mombasa through Nairobi, across Kenya's hinterland, and onward to Kampala and beyond, transforming journeys that once took days into trips measured in hours.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

29. If the railway of the past century shaped the character of our region, then the railway we build today must define its future. Some 100 years from now, when future generations look back on this moment, let them see it as a turning point, the moment when we laid the foundation for their prosperity, strengthened the bonds of regional integration, and set in motion a new era of growth, dignity, and shared opportunity for our region and our continent.

I thank you.

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