REPUBLIC OF KENYA

REMARKS BY H.E. DR. WILLIAM SAMOEI RUTO, CGH, PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF KENYA AND COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF OF THE DEFENCE FORCES, DURING THE OFFICIAL OPENING OF THE WORLD CHAMBERS FEDERATION (WCF) AFRICA SUMMIT 2025

APRIL 9, 2025

NAIROBI

Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen;

1. It is my honour, on behalf of the people and Government of Kenya, to welcome you to Nairobi for the 2025 World Chambers Federation Africa Summit. As Patron of the Kenya National Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KNCCI), I am especially pleased to host such a distinguished gathering of business leaders, policymakers, and development partners. It is in forums like this that transformative ideas take root and the seeds of prosperity are planted.

2. We meet at a time of intensifying global disruption and uncertainty. The effects of post-pandemic recovery, shifting geopolitical dynamics, inflation, supply chain disruptions, and climate change are impacting many facets of daily life. Yet, despite these challenges, we are presented with immense opportunities. Africa is becoming more connected, more innovative, and more entrepreneurial. Our success will depend on how prepared and committed we are to embrace this fast-changing future.

3. Among the world's regions, Africa has every reason to be optimistic. Our potential is undeniable. We are the world's youngest continent, home to a growing population of well-educated, highly skilled individuals. Our lands are rich in untapped mineral wealth, including critical resources essential to the global industrial transition. We possess the largest area of uncultivated fertile land and vast reserves of renewable energy.

4. This is a historic opportunity for Africa to become the world's clean industrial hub — and encouragingly, we are rising to the occasion. Accelerating our integration through the reform of the African Union — as well as our regional economic communities and mechanisms, including key institutions such as the African Development Bank, Afreximbank, and the African Union Development Agency — signals that the giant is no longer asleep. The expansion of modern transport and communication infrastructure also shows that we are preparing for a predictable and prosperous future.

5. These efforts are laying the foundation for prosperity driven by investment, industrialisation, manufacturing for global markets, and trade. Already, the African Continental Free Trade Area is reshaping our economic landscape — connecting 1.3 billion people across 55 nations with a combined GDP of $3.4 trillion.

6. Chambers of commerce are indispensable because they bring a proactive and solutions-oriented perspective. Thus the Kenya National Chamber of Commerce and the World Chambers Federation serve as vital bridges between government and enterprise — helping businesses navigate risk, unlock opportunities, and expand into global markets. Their advocacy and support are empowering local entrepreneurs to think globally and act boldly.

7. In Kenya, we fully embrace this transformation. In 2022, 41% of our exports were destined for African countries. Our manufacturers and tech start-ups are expanding across the region, demonstrating our strong conviction that Kenya's and Africa's economic fortunes lie in intra-African trade and cooperation.

8. Despite global headwinds, Kenya's economy is resilient. Last year, our GDP grew by 5.6%, outpacing global trends. Key sectors like agriculture, services, and manufacturing are rebounding. At the grassroots level, micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) are the backbone of our economy, employing over 80% of our people. Their main constraints — limited credit, infrastructure gaps, and climate risks — are, in truth, opportunities waiting for innovation and smart investment.

9. As part of our Bottom-Up Economic Transformation Agenda, we are focused on uplifting those at the base of the economic pyramid. We are investing in agriculture, MSMEs, healthcare, housing, and the digital and creative economy. Our goal is to catalyse a bottom-up surge of creative and productive opportunities through strategic investment and targeted intervention. The Financial Inclusion Fund or 'Hustler' Fund, for example, which was launched in 2022, has already unlocked access to affordable credit for millions of Kenyans.

10. We have made remarkable progress in digitising government services (20,000), streamlining business registration, and launching the Unified Business Permit in Nairobi — with more counties set to follow. Our investments in infrastructure — from railways, highways, and border posts to markets, fibre-optic networks, and renewable energy — continue to support enterprise and economic growth.

11. Devolution is a powerful force for bottom-up transformation and county governments have and continue to play a crucial role.

Together with the devolved chapters of Kenya National Chamber of Commerce, counties must champion pro-business reforms, eliminate bureaucratic bottlenecks, and support local entrepreneurs. To encourage this, we are developing a County Ease of Doing Business Index to drive healthy competition, accountability, and progress.

12. Whether we look at Kenya or any other African country, the signs are clear: Africa's future is bright. Through collaboration, investment, good governance, private sector innovation, and a reform-driven approach, we are ready for take-off. In this journey, chambers of commerce will play an increasingly critical role. Kenya, for its part, is committed to remaining open for business, regionally engaged, and globally ambitious.

13. Let us therefore move forward with shared purpose to unlock Africa's vast potential. What we achieve together — driven by this collective commitment — will shape a prosperous present and an even greater legacy for generations to come.

Thank you.
God Bless you.
God bless Africa.

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