



REPUBLIC OF KENYA

**REMARKS BY HIS EXCELLENCY HON. DR.
WILLIAM SAMOEI RUTO, PHD, CGH PRESIDENT
OF THE REPUBLIC OF KENYA AND COMMANDER-
IN-CHIEF OF THE DEFENCE FORCES, DURING THE
TOBONG' U LORE FESTIVAL**

OCTOBER 25, 2024

LODWAR, TURKANA COUNTY

Tobong'u Lore!

Karibuni nyumbani!

Welcome Home!

1. We are here to celebrate the inspiring traditions and the strong, dynamic culture of Kenya's proud and beautiful Turkana people and to witness the power of their ancient wisdom to transform our present and prepare us for the future. We are also here to experience the magical attractions of this region's scenic attractions, historic wonders, and other touristic delights. Just like Kenya, Turkana is the beautiful home of a beautiful people: Diverse, warm, vibrant, hospitable, and optimistic.
2. Turkana has endured for countless millennia as the focal stage of humanity's most vital undertakings. Thousands of years ago, it was the site of humanity's first home, and, in our time, it is the scene of robust cultural activity, bridging the past and present, uniting Kenya's diverse communities into one strong, forward-looking nation, and connecting Kenya and Africa with the world.
3. I commend the Turkana County Government for supporting the Turkana Cultural and Tourism Festival and facilitating it to project the essential character of this region's communities and their cultures. In so doing, it has enabled the festival to go beyond mere annual celebration and evolve into a continuous project that unites the pastoral communities of northern Kenya and neighbouring regions and countries, including West Pokot, Samburu, Marsabit and Karamoja.



The effect of this ambitious vision is to bring into sharp focus the distinct cultural identity of the Turkana people, thus fostering a deeper appreciation of its role and potential to promote diversity and cohesion across borders.

4. This festival has become a central event which goes a long way to position Turkana as a top destination for cultural tourism and Northern Kenya as a vast territory of abundant investment potential. Through Tobong'u Lore, local and international visitors come home to celebrate the wonders of Magical Kenya with us, raising the region's profile on the global tourism map. Beyond celebrating our heritage, the festival fulfils the aspirations of many by creating various opportunities and delivering invaluable benefits to the local economy.
5. I appreciate the consideration given by the organisers to artisans who have found a platform to display traditional material culture and market handcrafted products that reflect the exquisite craftsmanship that Turkana is famous for. Their work enriches the festival and sustains livelihoods, bridging tradition with commerce and connecting enterprising Kenyans with visitors from near and far. Consequently, these artisans serve as our cultural ambassadors, deepening global connections with the Turkana heritage.
6. This festival also serves to reaffirm our commitment to the preservation of the Turkana heritage and, indeed, all indigenous culture as our legacy to future generations.



In so doing, it enables us to live up to our national cultural policy and align with international frameworks, including UNESCO's 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage and the 2005 Convention on the Promotion of Cultural Diversity. These institutions and instruments are brought to life by the traditions, performances, art, craft, and stories we celebrate here today.

7. Culture is not static. Rather, it is a living, creative and dynamic expression of a society's values and aspirations. The UNESCO frameworks highlight the need to protect traditions passed through generations and promote creativity in a globalised world. Tobong'u Lore embodies these principles, uniting cultural expression with global connectivity to create economic opportunity and ensure that traditions thrive for years to come.
8. Looking to the future, I am proud to announce that the government has embarked on the development of Kenya: Home of Human Origins Museum and Science Park, a transformative project that will be established at NamortungaKalokol as a world-class centre for scientific research, cultural tourism and eco-tourism.
9. Scientific discoveries such as the Turkana Boy and the world's oldest stone tools have solidified Kenya's global credentials as the first home of modern human beings. When completed, the museum and science park will celebrate these milestones, enable visitors to travel back in time to explore the origins of humanity and experience early technology.



10. Turkana County is rich not only in historic and geographic wonders but it also abounds with unique wildlife, UNESCO-listed sites, as well as the vast Lake Turkana Basin. The project will catalyse complementary investments to enhance infrastructure, diversify tourism and position the region as a hub for researchers, nature enthusiasts and adventurers alike.
11. As this festival demonstrates year after year, the community is the engine of growth. The people are the primary stakeholders of our development agenda, even in the cultural and tourism sectors. We are committed to a community-based approach which ensures that residents benefit directly from job creation and improved livelihoods. Sustainable utilisation of these opportunities will establish Kenya among global leaders in scientific discovery and niche tourism, accelerating economic growth here in Turkana and beyond.
12. The recent recognition of Gedi Ruins as a UNESCO World Heritage Site underscores Kenya's position as a top global tourism destination and reaffirms our commitment to preserving cultural and natural heritage. This aligns with our BottomUp Economic Transformation Agenda's emphasis on inclusive growth and empowerment of the people and communities at the bottom of the socioeconomic ladder. By tapping into the tourism potential of sites like Gedi, we integrate our ambition to deliver prosperity with our vision to protect both ecological diversity and cultural integrity.



13. As we celebrate Tobong'u Lore, we must also reflect on the deep connection between the people of Turkana and their land. The unique, diverse, and abundant potential nestled in this region's desert, within and around Lake Turkana, including its unique wildlife and other attractions and opportunities, are treasured resources not only for Turkana but for all of Kenya. We must, therefore, be mindful of the fact that these plentiful resources are underpinned by fragile ecosystems which require careful management to preserve them for future generations. It is our duty, one and all, to do our part in promoting their sustainability.
14. The Bottom-Up Economic Transformation Agenda recognises that sustainable development of Turkana County and the entire region is fundamental for inclusive growth and for our national transformation agenda. Investments like the Lake Turkana Wind Power Project, which delivers clean energy and creates jobs while respecting environmental stewardship, are firmly aligned with this commitment and our broader vision for Turkana. Here, human talent and enterprise combine with cultural and natural wealth to power economic growth.
15. As we enjoy the performances, crafts and cuisines on display, let us remember that Tobong'u Lore is our collective call to all humanity in our neighbourhood, as well as the farthest reaches of the earth, to come home and join us as we celebrate humanity, protect our shared home and cherish our cultural heritage. Let all the world know that no visa is required to come home and that Kenya is full of magical surprises to delight everyone.



The traditions we celebrate today are a vehicle for transmitting our values, achievements, and aspirations to future generations. Let us stand together to tell a good story for the future.

16. I invite you all to immerse yourselves fully in the festival, learn from one another and carry forward the spirit of unity and respect for our shared heritage. Let us promote our national and international commitments to preserve cultural heritage and honour our cultural diversity, ensuring it remains a source of pride and inspiration for years to come.

Thank you.
God bless you all.

