

**STATEMENT BY HIS EXCELLENCY WILLIAM RUTO,
C.G.H.; PhD; PRESIDENT AND COMMANDER-IN-
CHIEF OF THE KENYA DEFENCE FORCES, DURING
THE LAUNCH OF THE FOURTH KENYA
INNOVATION WEEK 2024 AT THE COLLEGE OF
INSURANCE, NAIROBI, ON NOVEMBER 27, 2024**

1. I am privileged to warmly welcome all of you - visionaries, innovators, and designers of our future world - to the 4th Kenya Innovation Week, Africa Edition, here in Nairobi. Today, we reaffirm Kenya's commitment to becoming a global innovation hub by emphasising that innovation lies at the heart of our aspirations for progress and is critical to creating abundant opportunities for all.
2. This year's Kenya Innovation Week has drawn delegates from over 30 countries, a testament to the broad appeal and impact of our past editions.

Throughout this week, you will participate in 25 summits, workshops, and bootcamps where dynamic interactions, collaborations, and exchanges will interrogate old ideas. These ideas have the potential to evolve into startups, scale into major firms, generate value, create jobs, and build wealth. Let us, therefore, pay close attention to the more than 150 exhibitors and startups as they showcase groundbreaking innovations and endeavour to attract local and global investors.

3. We are gathered here under a theme which summons us to re-imagine Africa's future through Kenya's innovative spark and to harness the power of innovation in tackling pressing challenges and unlocking Africa's tremendous potential. This gathering therefore celebrates bold imagination, courage in exploring new paths to solving problems, and disruptive approaches to creating or increasing value. It is also a catalyst for

transformative ideas, a platform for strategic partnerships, and an incubator of ground-breaking solutions that seek to transform Africa's socio-economic challenges into opportunities for inclusive growth.

4. I commend the Ministry of Youth Affairs, Creative Economy, and Sports, the Kenya National Innovation Agency, and their partners for organising this exceptional event year after year. Their consistency and determination have established Kenya Innovation Week as a globally recognised platform for collaboration and ambition, in just four years. It has also effectively showcased Kenya's innovation ecosystem as a critical driver of the African Union's Agenda 2063, proving that innovation is the vehicle to overcome challenges and achieve inclusive prosperity on a pan-African scale.

5. Everyday, we must confront the stark fact that unemployment remains a pressing issue in Kenya and in many African countries. The shape of the crisis is undeniable here: With between 500,000 and 800,000 youth entering Kenya's job market annually, creating sustainable enterprises which can generate quality jobs is a critical imperative. Innovation can no longer be a discretionary consideration; rather, it is now an indispensable component of efforts to promote inclusive growth and uplift the well-being of the majority of our people.
6. It is through initiatives like the Silicon Savannah and Kenya Innovation Week that we refocus our dedication to leveraging technology and innovation to create opportunities, bridge the yawning gap of economic inequality and drive our nations to prosperity.

7. The theme of this forum resonates strongly with the radical vision of the African Continental Free Trade Area as a transformative framework aimed at increasing Africa's income by \$450 billion by 2035 and boosting intra-African trade by over 81%. Through active promotion of collaborations and the facilitation of idea exchange, Kenya is making a significant contribution to Africa's economic transformation.
8. Over the past year, Kenya has made remarkable progress in implementing the 10-Year Innovation Masterplan. Initiatives like the Research-to-Commercialisation Accelerator have supported 18 enterprises and raised over KSh100 million. Likewise, the Kenya Network of Entrepreneurial Institutions has empowered university leaders to drive entrepreneurial transformation. These are remarkable milestones which highlight the strength

of our innovation ecosystem in delivering tangible results.

9. Our commitment to collaboration at the pan-African and international levels is also evident in such initiatives as the Kenya-India Innovation Nexus and the Africa Innovation Agencies Network. These are partnerships dedicated to unlocking markets and ensuring that appropriate and transformative African solutions are deployed to address African challenges. Accordingly, Kenya is proud of its leading role in positively defining the continent's future.

10. At the same time, Kenya is also emerging as a global leader in the green economy. Take the example of the Timbuktoo Green Tech Hub, which aims to mobilise \$1 billion for 10,000 African startups, exemplifying our focus on sustainable development. It is through investments like this

that we shall manage to create jobs, advance climate solutions and position Kenya as a hub for green innovation.

11. I firmly associate myself with the proposition that a vibrant innovation ecosystem depends on our capacity to identify and develop strong tech talent and innovative skills, support university-led research and anchor robust linkages between industry and education institutions. For this reason, we have committed to expand the provision of entrepreneurial training, enhance support for university spin-offs and strengthen institutional frameworks like the Start Up Bill and the National Intellectual Property Policy. We are also fostering a knowledge-driven economy through initiatives like the Cloud First Policy and Konza Technopolis, to ensure Kenya remains globally competitive.

12. Additionally, the Presidential Innovation Challenge signifies the strength of our commitment to empower young innovators. Last year, 30 awardees created more than 300 jobs in eight months. Building on that promising achievement, this year's challenge has been enhanced to include categories for youth, startups, students and researchers, while its resource fund has been doubled to adequately cover increased requirement for mentorship and funding.

13. Through decisive measures, we are working hard to steadily improve our ranking in the Global Innovation Index. As we do so, I call on all stakeholders - government, private sector, higher education and development partners - to remain steadfast in collaboration and intensify efforts to promote innovation. Together, we can build an innovation ecosystem that positions Kenya as a leader in job creation, investment attraction, and

sustainable growth. By leveraging innovation, Kenya can contribute significantly to Africa's development.

14. This is precisely what the Kenya Innovation Week is intended to achieve. In addition to being a forum to showcase achievement and ambition, it is also a platform for us to forge collaborations that will accelerate the conversion of ideas into value. Let us commit together to reimagine Africa's future and build a legacy of innovation, inclusion and opportunity.

15. The 2024 Kenya Innovation Week is officially opened.

**Thank you
God bless Kenya
God bless Africa.**