



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 A SESSION WITH H.E.
EMMANUEL MACRON, PRESIDENT OF THE FRENCH
REPUBLIC, ON THE COMMERCIALISATION OF SPORTS
ON THE MARGINS OF THE AFRICA FORWARD SUMMIT**

MAY 11, 2026

THE UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI

**AFRICA
FORWARD
SUMMIT**
AFRICA - FRANCE PARTNERSHIPS
FOR INNOVATION AND GROWTH
MAY 11-12, 2026 NAIROBI, KENYA



**His Excellency Emmanuel Macron, President of the French Republic and Co-Chair of the Africa Forward Summit 2026,
Excellencies, Heads of State and Government,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

1. I am honoured to join you for this important dialogue on the commercialisation of sports, and it's growing to drive economic transformation, innovation, and opportunity across Africa.
2. Africa today is the youngest continent on Earth. More than one billion Africans are below the age of 35. That is not simply a statistic. It is a historic opportunity.
3. An opportunity to build one of the world's most dynamic sports economies. An opportunity to turn talent into enterprise, passion into prosperity and potential into power.
4. Sports can no longer be viewed merely as recreation or competition. Today, sports is industry. Sports is infrastructure. Sports is investment. Sports is culture, diplomacy, technology, tourism, and jobs.
5. Across the world, sports generates billions of dollars every year through broadcasting, infrastructure, manufacturing, entertainment, tourism, technology, and talent development. Africa must not stand at the margins of this global industry. Africa must stand at its centre.



6. That is why Kenya has deliberately positioned sports as a pillar of our Bottom-Up Economic Transformation Agenda, because we recognise what it can unlock: enterprise, livelihoods, national competitiveness, and hope.
7. As the gateway to East and Central Africa, Kenya brings together two unique advantages: our globally celebrated identity as the Home of Champions, and our internationally recognised high-altitude training environment, which continues to attract elite athletes and institutions from around the world.
8. This advantage is strengthened by something even more powerful: a youthful, innovative, digitally connected generation that is positioning Kenya not only as a global talent incubator, but as an emerging hub for sports media, technology, wellness, tourism, entertainment, and high-performance industries.
9. From our experience, Africa's future lies in building integrated sports ecosystems, supported by harmonised policies, private sector participation, regional partnerships, and sustainable financing.
10. The time has come not only to produce talent, but to build African-owned sports economies that create African prosperity.

Excellencies, ladies, and gentlemen,

11. Across Africa, governments are increasingly recognising that sports infrastructure must serve purposes far beyond ceremonial use.
12. A stadium cannot remain idle six days a week. An arena cannot survive on applause alone.



13. Modern sports infrastructure must function as integrated commercial ecosystems, bringing together sports, hospitality, retail, media production, conferencing, recreation, and digital broadcasting while generating revenue, attracting investment, creating jobs, and stimulating local economies.
14. And that future is already taking shape in East Africa. In preparation for AFCON 2027, Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania, under the PAMOJA partnership, are making transformative investments in sports infrastructure.
15. Kenya is developing Talanta Sports City, anchored by the world-class 60,000-seat Raila Odinga International Stadium, alongside state-of-the-art training facilities, hospitality infrastructure, commercial spaces, media production centres, and smart mobility systems.
16. We are upgrading Kasarani and Nyayo International Stadiums while constructing county stadiums, regional academies, and high-performance training centres across the country. Because our ambition is not simply to host tournaments. Our ambition is to build an ecosystem.
17. We are also positioning Nairobi as one of Africa's leading creative and entertainment capitals through investments in audio-visual infrastructure, film incentives, digital monetisation systems, affordable creative studios, and partnerships that connect African creatives to global markets.
18. In further advancing this vision, Kenya recently signed an agreement with the Zaria Group and Masai Ujiri, a household name in global basketball and sports development, to develop a modern arena and entertainment district within Nairobi Railway City.



We are also engaging partners on the establishment of a Global Sports & Infrastructure Platform at the Bomas Convention Centre, with an initial planned investment of approximately US\$130 million to support the development of modern multi-purpose indoor arenas across ten African cities.

19. Together, these initiatives are expected to strengthen Nairobi's position as a regional MICE, creative, and investment hub while creating thousands of jobs and opening new opportunities for African youth and enterprise.

Ladies and gentlemen,

20. AFCON today is far more than a football tournament. It has become one of the world's most powerful sporting and economic platforms.
21. The most recent edition attracted more than 3 billion television viewers globally and generated over 6.1 billion digital views across online and social media platforms. That is not only influence. That is market power, and the economic impact is equally profound.
22. The 2025 edition in Morocco generated an estimated economic impact of nearly 1.9 billion dollars. The 2023 tournament in Côte d'Ivoire generated approximately 1 billion dollars through tourism, broadcasting, infrastructure development, hospitality, transport, trade, advertising, and job creation.
23. These figures confirm what Africa already knows: sports are now strategic economic assets capable of transforming industries, empowering youth, attracting investment, and reshaping Africa's place in the global economy.



24. And the co-hosting model adopted by Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania reflects something larger still: a progressive Pan-African framework built on shared infrastructure, harmonised logistics, and collective investment. Because Africa's future will not be built in isolation. It will be built together.
25. Kenya has already implemented visa-free access for most African countries and continues to work closely with its PAMOJA partners to facilitate movement, strengthen regional tourism, and expand intra-African trade.

Ladies and gentlemen,

26. Africa possesses something the world is increasingly searching for: authenticity- Authentic sporting culture. Authentic landscapes and authentic experiences.
27. From athletics and football to motorsport, rugby, golf, cycling, and adventure sports, Africa has the capacity to attract millions of visitors through strategically organised sporting experiences.
28. But to unlock this potential, sports tourism must become part of national economic planning, not an afterthought.
29. It requires destination branding, hospitality investment, coordinated event calendars, and cross-border tourism packages that allow visitors to experience Africa not as fragmented markets, but as one dynamic destination.



Excellencies,

30. Partnerships between Africa and France present enormous opportunities to accelerate sports commercialisation, infrastructure modernisation, innovation, sports science, athlete development, and the creative economy by combining African talent and market potential with French expertise, innovation, and investment capacity.
31. Africa remains one of the world's greatest reservoirs of sporting talent, and Kenya has built a globally respected sporting identity anchored on excellence, resilience, and grassroots development.
32. But talent alone is not enough. Africa must become a stronger participant in the global sports economy through professional leagues, digital broadcasting, merchandising, innovation, and strategic partnerships.
33. Kenya is emerging as a regional hub for sports technology, digital content, e-sports, AI-driven talent development, and local manufacturing under the Made in Kenya initiative.

Excellencies, ladies, and gentlemen,

34. To unlock the full economic value of sports, Africa will require stronger investment, deeper continental cooperation, expanded private sector participation, and sustainable financing.
35. Yet Africa already possesses the foundations to lead: the talent, the market, the youthful energy, the innovation, and the cultural influence.



36. The question is no longer whether Africa can participate in the global sports industry, but whether Africa is ready to shape it, lead it, and derive lasting prosperity for our people and future generations. I believe we are.

I thank you.

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