



REPUBLIC OF KENYA

**REMARKS BY HIS EXCELLENCY WILLIAM SAMOEI
RUTO, CGH; PHD; PRESIDENT AND COMMANDER-
IN-CHIEF OF THE KENYA DEFENCE FORCES,
WHILE DELIVERING HIS NEW YEAR'S MESSAGE
TO THE NATION**

DECEMBER 31, 2024

STATE LODGE, KISII



1. It is a great privilege to have this opportunity to address the people of Kenya in these final moments of 2024 and to wish everyone a happy and prosperous new year 2025. Without hesitation, we all agree that this year has been remarkable; a year to remember for its many challenges, obstacles, and risks that tested our resolve and threatened our prosperity, security, and happiness. Equally, it has been a year of numerous opportunities, successes, and progress that enabled us overcome these undeniable difficulties and forge ahead with heroic determination.
2. The year began with strong faith and optimism despite a climate of hardship, uncertainty, and widespread anxiety. Security, economic instability, climatic challenges, and political uncertainty loomed large. Global economic shocks drove up the cost of living, while conflicts disrupted supply chains, creating scarcity and rising inflation. At the same time, we were striving to recover from the pandemic's disruptions. Our currency, the shilling, faced significant pressure from major currencies. Many families struggled to provide daily meals as agriculture grappled with the aftermath of the region's longest and harshest drought, followed by devastating floods that destroyed crops, livestock, infrastructure, and development.
3. At the year's onset, parents were anxious about the transition of young learners into junior secondary school while the youth grappled with increasing difficulties in finding employment. In various parts of the country, perennial security challenges persisted. Additionally, demands for adequate, high-quality, and sustainable food, healthcare, and education not only persisted but grew even more pressing.



4. Looking at the days ahead, it became clear that overcoming these challenges would require unwavering faith, unity of purpose, immense sacrifice, and relentless hard work. We needed a coherent plan to address these obstacles, deliver the transformation our nation needs, and provide every Kenyan with the opportunities they deserve. The magnitude of the challenge demanded bold, decisive, and unfaltering efforts from all of us.
5. We had to find ways of mobilising sufficient revenue to finance all our obligations, provide services inclusively and consistently, and invest in development. This called for tough decisions, not just to reduce waste and increase efficiency in the mobilisation and utilisation of public finances but also to promote broader compliance with our civic obligations to pay taxes whenever they fall due.
6. Under the difficult conditions we all faced, implementing these necessary and overdue measures caused much discomfort and contention. At the heart of the ensuing dissent lay a demand for a robust conversation about the stewardship of public resources and, by extension, the proper exercise of public authority. You, the people, made it clear to us as leaders that compliance with revenue measures must be accompanied by a stronger commitment on our part to deliver greater transparency and efficiency in the administration of all public resources. You demanded a more thorough national conversation to address the perennial inclusiveness question in order to reflect equity and social justice as primary considerations in government plans and actions.
7. Despite these challenges, we have worked tirelessly to fulfil the pledges and commitments of our governing mandate. We are making steady progress in feeding the nation, with productivity rising across key crop and livestock value chains, progressively enhancing our food security objectives.



Similarly, we have deployed technology to digitise and automate the provision of services to the public, significantly increasing dividends in terms of service delivery and enhanced revenue collection.

8. The universal healthcare coverage is finally here with us, and we are working round the clock to address various hiccups in its roll-out that are to be expected in a programme of the magnitude and ambition of Taifa Care. Together with the counties, we have employed community health promoters to ensure health services are accessible and convenient for all Kenyans at the grassroots.
9. With the rollout of the construction of 200 markets, our marketplaces are developing into safe and dignified working environments for hustlers, complemented by ICT hubs in constituencies and wards, which are becoming essential nodes in our digital economy. The Hustler Fund has launched an enhanced facility aimed at transitioning borrowers in good standing into more robust financing to promote the growth of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises.
10. We have constructed thousands of classrooms and other facilities across the country to expand school infrastructure. Additionally, we have employed and trained more teachers to support the transition to the competence-based curriculum and ensure the seamless progression of learners into junior secondary school. We are addressing the chronic higher education financing challenges that had paralysed learning, research, and development at the peak of our education and training ecosystem. Our goal is to make higher education, particularly university education, more inclusive, ensuring that no one is left behind.



11. Our country's network of transport and communications infrastructure continues to evolve rapidly to serve the needs of a demanding, dynamic, and rapidly modernising economy, ensuring it remains efficient and competitive. Institutional improvements and incentives are attracting investors to our land, driving industrialisation, expanding manufacturing, and enhancing our export capacity.
12. Ladies and gentlemen, the houses are finally here. Our affordable housing programme now includes 873,000 houses in its pipeline at various stages of development across different parts of the country. Among these, the inaugural 8,000 units are nearing readiness for handover and occupation. This programme alone has contributed 200,000 jobs to the 1,000,000 new jobs created through intentional, consistent, and strategic efforts. To ensure young people have opportunities to actualise their talents, apply their skills, and drive economic growth, we have pursued every promising intervention. From the National Urban Climate Resilience Programme, also known as ClimateWorx, to over 10 labour mobility agreements that provide qualified citizens with access to employment opportunities abroad, we have utilised every available mechanism to support their aspirations.
13. We have also made undeniable progress in securing the nation. Consistent investment in expanding capabilities of our security service, equipping them with efficient, modern tools, and empowering them through technology has significantly enhanced our capacity to combat crime and ensure public safety. The strides we have made against terrorism, banditry, cattle rustling, cybercrime, and other offences will not only be sustained but will continue to be enhanced in the future.



14. It is important to acknowledge that, in the process of securing the nation, our security services often interact with citizens exercising their democratic freedoms and fundamental rights. They must continuously strike a delicate balance between delivering robust security responses and enabling the enjoyment of these rights and freedoms. In situations involving serious threats to public order, human life, and safety, this balance can be particularly challenging and knowing this, criminal elements often seek to exploit protests and demonstrations to further their schemes.
15. It cannot be denied that there have been instances of excessive and extrajudicial actions by members of the security services. At the same time, it must also be acknowledged that due process is underway in appropriate institutions to ensure accountability. That said, it is crucial to remember that every freedom has its limits and that public safety and order must always supersede the desire for unchecked liberty. We must ensure that our pursuit of rights and freedoms does not compromise our collective or individual safety, nor should we allow criminals to exploit constitutional rights to harm and destroy others.
16. In the spirit of fostering a candid national conversation, I urge every critical stakeholder to reflect deeply on the failures that have led people to adopt radical, individualistic, and self-centred interpretations of rights and freedoms, interpretations that often seem fundamentally opposed to the rights of others and the collective good. This tendency to promote a definition of rights and freedoms that undermines democracy and the public interest reflects a broader collapse of our value system and a serious strain on our moral fabric. I also believe that this disregard for moral values, including compassion, responsibility, and decency, contributes to violent crimes, such as femicide, perpetrated by men against women.



17. These are clear signals that our moral fabric is at risk of decay, exacerbated by various factors, including the manipulation of digital technology, particularly social media, to amplify anti-social behaviour and erode moral values.
18. The maintenance of our social fabric and the promotion of a strong value system is a collective responsibility we cannot run away from. This task has always required and will continue to require the involvement of a wide spectrum of society, agencies and institutions, with the family unit being the most critical. The broader community, faith-based organisations, the education system, and law-and-order institutions exist to support and complement the family's fundamental role in nurturing compassionate, responsible citizens who are empowered to propel our nation forward.
19. As a society, we have a legitimate expectation that the next generations, benefiting from the accumulation of socio-economic, scientific, and technological advancements, will bring greater energy, better ideas, clearer vision, and a stronger commitment to our shared values. We should be humane, responsible, and well-grounded citizens whose actions promote unity, patriotism, democracy, the rule of law, and our rights and freedoms, rather than sabotaging them.
20. I have previously extended an invitation to all stakeholders, in their diversity, to join the national conversation and explore the best ways to implement an all-of-society strategy and approach to counter moral decay and reset our nation's moral compass. As parents, we must never walk away from our children nor abandon them to the vagaries of our times. This is essential, as all the transformations we undertake today will mean little if our young people are left without sound guidance, moral mentorship and ethical support.



21. The broad-based, bipartisan national conversation we are having with leaders from various political formations seeks to extend the principle of inclusiveness to its widest possible reach without compromising the fundamental values of competitive democracy and diversity of viewpoints. Our goal is to enhance, not diminish, our identity as a free, open, and democratic society founded on constitutionalism and the rule of law. We are making meaningful progress, which, if sustained, will establish us as a mature democracy firmly anchored in a sustainable political culture.
22. In 2024, our nation faced serious challenges and great difficulties. Yet, we did more than endure; we stood together in unity, worked with determination, and overcame these obstacles. Because we are Kenyans, an indomitable, courageous, and enterprising people unafraid of hard work, because we are resilient champions who strive to win and face every challenge with dedication and stamina, we achieved progress despite significant difficulties.
23. Today, we have succeeded in laying a solid foundation for even faster progress in the coming year. The Kenyan shilling, which began the year on a subdued note, has appreciated significantly, strengthening from KSh165 to the dollar in February 2024 to KSh129 today, making it one of the world's best-performing currencies. Inflation, a key indicator of economic health, has fallen from 9.6% in September 2022 to 2.7% in October 2024, the lowest level in nearly two decades. Meanwhile, foreign exchange reserves have surged by \$2.4 billion to reach \$9.5 billion, providing five months of import cover and insulating our economy from external shocks. Our economy continues to outpace global trends, growing at 5.6% in 2023, positioning us among the world's fastest-growing economies.



24. In light of the outcomes of our collective determination and efforts, we have every reason to approach the new year with optimism and a renewed commitment, not only to work harder and achieve greater progress but also to transform ourselves and turn every challenge into an opportunity to do more and to do better.
25. In 2025, the seeds we have patiently and carefully planted will continue to germinate and grow. The progress we have made has set us firmly on a path of rapid and sustainable growth. As a result, we can anticipate stronger economic performance, more jobs for our youth, and higher incomes for farmers and entrepreneurs. Additionally, we expect that in 2025, more investments will mature, leading to a considerable expansion of our manufacturing sector and an increase in exports. The reforms we have implemented in both basic and higher education will also come to fruition, providing new momentum and focus for the entire education sector. In 2025, Taifa Care will approach optimal performance, offering significant relief to households by reducing the burden of healthcare costs and delivering enhanced benefits through an efficient, inclusive, and high-quality public healthcare system.
26. As we speak, subsidised fertiliser is already in stores waiting for farmers. Next year, we plan to achieve higher yields from every crop, ensuring even greater rewards for our hardworking farmers and food security for all Kenyans. Additionally, we aim to free our livestock from deadly infectious diseases, alleviating the fears of pastoralists and stockkeepers from devastating outbreaks. This is why the nationwide livestock vaccination campaign will be a game-changer. Unlike segmented vaccination efforts that left some areas unprotected and vulnerable to outbreaks, thereby risking re-infection in vaccinated regions, this voluntary comprehensive approach will eradicate these threats comprehensively once and for all.



27. In 2025, we will be busier at school and at work, better nourished, safer, more secure, and with more money in our pockets. We will hold productive national conversations to empower our youth as responsible custodians of our shared aspirations and to solidify our State as a robust and secure democracy. We will continue to work hard and deliver greater progress, becoming better equipped to tackle our challenges.
28. In 2025, I will have the honour of handing over the first keys to completed affordable housing units to hardworking men and women from all walks of life. At last, the transformation you entrusted us to lead will take tangible shape, and the fruits of our collective labour will be undeniable. We will continue to work for you and deliver for you. Let us, therefore, submit our hopes and aspirations to the Almighty God of all creation so that together, in unity and with a shared determination, we may embrace the New Year and work towards achieving the Kenya We Want, which is now well within sight.

Thank you
God bless you
God bless Kenya
Happy New Year!

