

**SPEECH BY HIS EXCELLENCY THE PRESIDENT, HON.
DANIEL T. ARAP MOI, C.G.H., M.P., ON THE OCCASION
OF JAMHURI DAY, FRIDAY, 12TH DECEMBER, 1997**

FELLOW KENYANS,
DISTINGUISHED GUESTS,
LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

On this day, thirty-four years ago, we won independence from colonial domination and took full responsibility for managing the affairs of our nation. We celebrate Jamhuri Day this year with a sense of pride as we recall the commitment and courage of the men and women who lost their lives during the struggle for uhuru. As we celebrate this memorable day, I send warm greetings to all Kenyans. I also extend our appreciation and gratitude to all our friends for their support.

Over the years, we have built a strong and united nation. We have faced many challenges with courage and determination. But we also know that nation-building is not a process that can be completed within a single generation. Indeed, it was the vision of the heroes of the freedom struggle to see a nation that is united, a nation that is free from the evils of nepotism, sectionalism and tribalism.

Furthermore, when we assumed our independence in 1963, we all accepted the validity of the saying that, "United we stand, but divided we fall". After all, this is the spirit that led to the

success of the freedom struggle and which we have consolidated during the past thirty-four years. It is the spirit which must continue to guide us all as we prepare for the challenges of the next millennium.

Fellow Kenyans,

In seventeen days time, we shall go to the polls to elect leaders who will steer this country into the next millennium. This is an important exercise that is also crucial to the stability of our nation. Indeed, the coming elections will be a test of our maturity and integrity as a nation. The world will be watching to see how we will manage the elections.

As you all know, freedom is not simply the liberty to speak one's mind, nor is it the licence to accuse, criticize and even insult as some do. Real freedom must be founded on responsibility to oneself, one's people and above all, one's nation. Real freedom can only flourish where speech is used to heal and not to hurt, where the citizens direct their efforts towards building the nation and not destroying it. Such a responsibility cannot be of the Government alone. Indeed, all leaders, political parties and wananchi as a whole have a duty to uphold peace and ensure that we have free and fair elections.

During this campaign period, Kenyans will have a chance to have a close look at their leaders. They will hear a lot of rhetoric, some of it absurd and some utterly false. But above everything else, Kenyans have a duty to reject people who fail to put the interest of the nation above their own. Kenyans have the power of the vote which they can use wisely to reject those who support acts of violence and who incite their followers to take part in violence and other illegal activities.

It must also be borne in mind that the success of our young democracy depends on perseverance and tolerance on the part of all Kenyans, not on how much we criticize and vilify others. There is therefore need for political parties to focus more on issues so that Kenyans can have lively and constructive discussions on how best our scarce resources can be utilized in our nation-building efforts.

I therefore call on all political parties to carry out their campaigns in a responsible and mature manner so that voters can take part in the electoral process with confidence. The elections will give an opportunity to Kenyans to elect leaders of their choice and to give a direction on how our national affairs must be conducted. But for this to happen, there must be an atmosphere of peace and tolerance so that all registered voters can come out to cast their votes without fear or intimidation.

In this regard, political parties must ensure that their supporters are disciplined and responsible. They must also accept and understand that in an election, there will always be winners and losers. The privilege of deciding who wins and who loses rests with the people and it is the duty of everyone to respect the judgement of the people irrespective of how undesirable it might seem. I therefore urge everyone seeking an elective position in the forthcoming general elections to accept the people's verdict with dignity and in the spirit of unity and patriotism.

Finally, ladies and gentlemen, I wish to conclude by urging you to respect one another and your country by upholding the virtues of peace and unity at all times. The responsibility for

maintaining peace rests on all of us. We are one people sharing a common destiny. Let us therefore march into the future with confidence as one strong and united nation.

I wish you all a happy Christmas and a prosperous new year.

THANK YOU.