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Speech

by

His Excellency

Hon. Daniel T. arap Moi, C.G.H., M.P.
President and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces
of the Republic of Kenya

on the occasion of

**The State Opening of the Fourth
Session of the Eighth Parliament**

on

Tuesday, 28th March, 2000

**HOTUBA YA MHESHIMIWA RAIS DANIEL T. ARAP MOI,
C.G.H., M.P., AMIRI JESHI MKUU WA MAJESHI YA
JAMHURI YA KENYA, KATIKA SHEREHE YA KUFUNGULI-
WA RASMI KWA KIKAO CHA NNE CHA BUNGE LA NANE,
MNAME JUMANNE, MACHI 28, 2000**

Bw. SPIKA,

Katika wakati huu wa kihistoria ambapo Bunge letu linakutana kwa mara ya kwanza karne hii, nina furaha kuwakaribisha waheshimiwa Wabunge kwa kikao hiki cha nne cha Bunge la Nane.

Kabla sijaendelea na hotuba yangu alasiri hii, kwanza ningependa kuwaomba waheshimiwa Wabunge wajiunge nami katika kutoa heshima zetu kwa marehemu Mbunge wa Sehemu ya Uwakilishi Bungeni ya Kwanza, Mheshimiwa George Kapten, ambaye aliaga dunia mnamo asubuhi ya Sikukuu ya Krismasi, mwaka uliopita. Nawaomba nyote msimame na kukaa kimya kwa dakika moja kwa heshima yake . . . Ahsanteni.

Bw. Spika,

Hii ikiwa ni mara ya kwanza Bunge letu kukutana karne hii, ningependa kuchukua nafasi hii kutoa maoni na mawaidha kadhaa juu ya hali ya taifa letu na matumaini yake ya siku zijazo. Kwa vile kufunguliwa kwa Bunge si wakati wa siasa za vyama vya kisiasa, ningependa kuzungumuza juu ya mambo ya kijamii na kiuchumi pamoja na maendeleo.

Katika kipindi chote cha mwongo uliopita Wakenya wamekuwa wakiwaza na kujadiliana kama karne mpya huenda ikawaletea mabadiliko mema katika maisha yao. Mimi nina amini kwamba nyakati nzuri ziko mbele yetu, lakini haziwezi kuletwa na juhudi za Serikali pekee. Yafaa ieleweke kwamba wakati ambapo Serikali kuu pekee, ndiyo ilikua inaendesha shughuli zote za kitaifa katika kila sekta, sasa umepita. Kwa hivyo ni lazima sasa

tujifunze kuwa na Serikali yenye watumishi wachache na ambayo inatoa huduma nzuri zaidi za kubuni mazingara bora ya ustawi. Ni wazi kwamba msingi wa ufanisi ni ustawi wa kiuchumi ambao unatokana na nafasi zinazotolewa kwa wananchi na Serikali waliyoichagua.

Kuongezeka kwa shughuli za kiuchumi, nafasi za kazi, huduma bora za afya, njia bora za mawasiliano, mabarabara na kadhalika, haya yote yanatokana na utawala bora. Serikali yangu inatambua faida ya mabadiliko na kwa hivyo, tayari nimetoa maelekezo kwamba mpango unaoendelea sasa wa marekebisho usikiukwe.

Kenya, kwa miaka mingi iliyopita, imeweka msingi imara wa maendeleo ya kiuchumi. Sasa tumefikia kipindi muhimu ambako tunaweza kuangalia mbele na kuwa na matumaini ya kufikia viwango vya juu vya ustawi wa kiuchumi, na ambavyo vitaleta mafanikio mema katika maisha ya watu wetu. Hata hivyo, kufikiwa kwa lengo hilo kutategemea mambo mengi. Kwanza kabisa, hali ya sasa ya kufikia kwa ustawi wa uchumi ni lazima ikomeshwe na ipewe mwamko mpya. Katika kipindi cha miaka miwili iliyopita, hali ya ukosefu wa nafasi za kazi imekuwa mbaya sana na hata umaskini katika sehemu za mashambani umeongezeka.

Ningependa kuhakikishia waheshimiwa Wabunge kwamba Serikali yangu itaendelea kuyaweka katika mstari wa mbele mambo ya kushughulikia matatizo yanayo kabili uchumi wetu. Tutafanya kila tuwezalo kulisimua uzalishaji katika kilimo, viwanda na hata sekta ya jua kali. Ningependa kuona wengi wa watu wetu wakijishughulisha zaidi katika shughuli za kiuchumi za uzalishaji, ili Kenya isonge mbele kimaendeleo. Hata hivyo, ningependa ieleweke wazi kwamba jukumu lililo mbele yetu si rahisi. Hali ya sasa ya viwango vya juu sana vya umaskini, imetatiza juhudi zetu za kuboresha hali ya ukuaji wa uchumi wetu.

Kwa hivyo, Serikali yangu itaendelea kuelekeza zaidi rasilimali zake katika juhudi za kuangamiza umaskini. Serikali hasa itaendelea kuunga mkono uwekaji rasilimali katika juhudi za kuimarisha elimu na afya ya watu maskini, ili kuongeza uwezo

wao wa uzalishaji mali na vile vile kuwajumuisha katika mkondo wa maendeleo ya taifa.

Kufikia lengo hilo, Serikali yangu inakaribia kumaliza kutayarisha taratibu za jinsi ya kuangamiza umaskini, ambazo zitalinganishwa na bajeti ya muda ya miaka kadhaa. Mpango huu wa muda wastani wa matumizi ya Serikali, utaimarisha sana uthabiti wa mapato na ubora wa shughuli za upangaji wa Serikali.

Bw. Spika,

Waheshimiwa Wabunge watakumbuka kwamba mnamo Januari mwaka huu, nilihudhuria mkutano wa viongozi wa mataifa ya Afrika juu ya kupunguza umaskini na kustawisha uchumi, mkutano ambao uliandaliwa na Shirika la Fedha Duniani yaani I.M.F. mjini Libreville, Gabon. Mkutano huo ulizungumzia juu ya matatizo kadha yanayo kumba nchi za Kiafrika hasa katika kanda hili ambako viwango vya umaskini vinaongezeka. Vile vile tulijadiliana juu ya jukumu ambalo Shirika la Fedha Duniani, Benki ya Dunia na mashirika mengine duniani yangeweza kutekeleza katika kusaidia juhudi za kutatua tatizo hili.

Nina matumaini kwamba kwa muda wa miezi michache ijayo tutaweza kufikia mapatano na wahisani wetu juu ya misaada ya maendeleo ya kiuchumi. Kwa wakati huu Serikali yangu inakamilisha mazungumzo na Shirika la Fedha Duniani pamoja na Benki ya Dunia. Nina matumaini makubwa kwamba hivi karibuni tutapata fedha za kutuwezesha kupambana vilivyo na matatizo ya umaskini na viwango duni vya ustawi wa uchumi.

Ombi langu kwa Wakenya, na hasa viongozi, ni kwamba hali ya umaskini isifanywe kuwa jambo la kisiasa. Mtu ye yote asiitumie hali ya matatizo ya watu maskini ili kujipatia sifa kisiasa. Badala yake, sote tuungane mikono kupiga vita hali ya umaskini na ukosefu wa nafasi za kazi, ili tuwasaidie wale wanaotegemea misaada kutoka kwa Serikali kujidhibiti na kuwa wazalishaji mali katika jamii. Hasa ningependa kuwaomba waheshimiwa Wabunge wajitahidi na wahakikishe kuona kwamba kuna ushirikiano baina ya viongozi, wananchi, Serikali na hata mashirika mbali, ili tutatue kwa pamoja matatizo yanayo kumba watu wetu.

Sehemu nyingine ya muhimu ni marekebisho katika sekta ya umma, marekebisho ambayo yanatarajiwa kuwa na matokeo makubwa katika kuhakikisha kuweco kwa huduma bora. Kwa hivyo, Serikali yangu inaweka katika mstari wa mbele shughuli za matumizi bora ya mapato ya Serikali. Uhepaji kulipa kodi, hasa katika ukusanyaji wa VAT ni mojawapo wa sehemu ambazo zitapewa umuhimu zaidi katika marekebisho. Vile vile, shughuli za ukusanyaji malipo ya madeni katika mashirika ya kutoa mikopo, hasa yale mashirika ambayo sasa yametambuliwa kuwa hafifu zitatiliwa mkazo zaidi.

Katika upande wa taratibu za ununuzi, kuna ishara kwamba hatua thabiti ambazo zimechukuliwa na Serikali sasa zimeanza kufanikiwa. Nimetoa maagizo kwamba hali ya uwazi katika taratibu za ununuzi isiwe katika Serikali Kuu pekee bali isambazwe kote, kama vile katika Bodi za Tenda Wilayani na za serikali za mitaa, kwani hizo nazo pia zinahitaji kuwa na taratibu thabiti za ununuzi. Vile vile, mashirika ya Serikali ni sehemu nyingine ambako fedha za umma zimepotea kwa wingi kama vile inavyodhihirika katika ripoti za kamati ya Bunge ya uwekaji rasilmali za umma.

Kutoheshimu afisi na matumizi mabaya ya fedha za umma si matatizo ya kipekee kwa nchi yetu. Hata hivyo, ni lazima tujitolee kikamilifu kuyatatua. Tatizo la ufisadi ni la muhimu sana kwa Serikali, na kwa hivyo Serikali ikishirikiana na Bunge, hivi karibuni itabuni mbinu za kudhibiti utendaji na tabia za maofisa wa umma. Ningependa kuwahakikishia kwamba Serikali yangu inazingatia kikamilifu hali ya uwazi na uwajibikaji katika shughuli za umma.

Bw. Spika,

Nimezungumzia juu ya mambo haya kwa kirefu kwa sababu ya kuweco na mawazo potofu ya kwamba matatizo ya kiuchumi yanayotukumba ni ya kujiletea sisi wenyewe. Wale kati yetu ambao tunaelewa yale yanayoendelea katika uwanja wa kima-taifa, tunafahamu vyema kwamba hali ya umaskini na ukosefu wa nafasi za kazi, ni matatizo yanayo patikana kote duniani. Ni wazi kwamba hata zile nchi zilizoendelea, pia nazo zina matatizo yao

ya kutokuwa na usawa katika usambazaji wa rasilmali zao. Isitoshe, marekebisho ya kiuchumi si jambo jipya au geni kwa nchi yetu. Nchi nyingi zilizoendelea ilizibidi kurekebisha chumi zao ili kukabiliana vyema na hali zilizokuwa zikibadilika.

Sisi katika nchi zinazoendelea hatuwezi kuepuka mabadiliko yanayo fanyika kimataifa. Lakini tuko katika hali ya kuathirika zaidi kwa sababu ya hali hafifu ya chumi zetu. Isitoshe, hali ya kutegemea sana uuzaji wa nje wa bidhaa zikiwa bado maligafi, na ambazo bei zao hubadilika mara kwa mara katika masoko ya dunia, pamoja na mzungo wa madeni ni mambo ambayo yameendelea kuwa pingamizi kubwa kwa maendeleo ya haraka ya nchi zinazoendelea.

Bw. Spika,

Marekebisho yanayotekelezwa na Serikali katika sekta mbali mbali yanaendelea kuleta mafanikio mema. Lakini katika uwanja wa siasa, mafanikio ambayo yangeletwa na siasa ya mfumo wa vyama vingi bado hayajaanza kuonekana kwa sababu ya ugomvi baina ya wanasisia. Hili ni jambo la kusikitisha sana. Mimi nina amini kwamba mashindano ya kisiasa yakitekelezwa vyema, hutoa nafasi bora ya kubadilishana mawazo ambayo ni manufaa kwa jamii ya kisasa. Kwa sababu hiyo, inatambulika wazi kwamba kuna wale ambao watakubaliana ama wale ambao watachagua kutokubaliana kwa maswala ya kimsingi. Hata hivyo, jambo hili halipasi kuachiliwa kufikia kiwango cha kuhatarisha umoja katika utekelezaji wa malengo ambayo ndio msingi wa ufanisi wetu kijamii na kiuchumi.

Kile Wakenya wanachohitaji ni siasa nzuri, siasa ambazo zitaleta matunda mema kama vile umoja, amani na hali ya kuelewana. Wakenya wanahitaji siasa za maendeleo, siasa ambazo zitasisimua watu kuongeza uzalishaji katika mashamba yao na mahali pao pa kazi. Kwani tunaishi katika dunia yenye mashindano makubwa, njia pekee ya kufaulu ni kufanya kazi kwa bidii na nguvu. Katika kipindi cha mwongo uliopita kumekuweko na upigaji porojo kupita kiasi. Yawapasa viongozi sasa kushughulikia maswala muhimu yanayo athiri maisha ya Wakenya.

Idadi ya Wakenya bado inaendelea kuongezeka. Kwa hivyo, watu wetu wanahitaji shule zaidi, huduma za afya, maji safi na vyombo vya kisasa vya mawasiliano. Vile vile wanahitaji barabara nzuri na masoko hapa nchini na nje kuuza bidhaa zao. Isitoshe, wafanyi biashara wanahitaji mazingara tulivu ya kijamii na ya kisiasa ili waweke rasilimali zao na kufanya biashara hapa. Haya yote hayawezi kufanyika kama viongozi watatengana katika misingi ya kikabila ama kujihusisha katika mizozo isiyokuwa na mwisho ambayo hueneza hofu na chuki katika jamii. Ukabila, mizozo na chuki ni matunda ya siasa mbaya. Mimi, nawaomba viongozi waungane katika kuzingatia mambo ya faida kwa nchi yetu kwa kuweka masilahi ya Kenya mbele ya masilahi yao ya kibinafsi ama ya sehemu za jamii zao.

Bw. Spika,

Wakati tulipokuwa tunapata uhuru wetu, tulitambua ugonjwa kama mojawapo wa adui mkubwa kwa watu na maendeleo ya nchi yetu. Kwa hivyo, tulitumia rasilimali zetu nyingi ili kuhakikisha kuweko kwa hali bora ya afya kwa watu wetu. Hata hivyo, kuingia kwa ugonjwa wa ukimwi kumeathiri vibaya sana mafanikio tuliyokuwa tumepata, na kwa njia nyingine kuturudisha nyuma kabisa.

Wengi wa vijana wetu wanaendelea kufa kila siku kwa sababu ya ukimwi, hali hawa ndio tunaotegemea kwa maendeleo ya siku zijazo ya nchi yetu. Kwa hivyo, tusipo thibiti tatizo hili kwa haraka huenda likaathiri vibaya sana elimu, kilimo na viwanda vyetu na kwa hivyo kutulazimu kubadilisha kabisa mipango yetu ya sasa. Ukimwi ni janga la taifa ambalo latulazimu sote kukabiliana nalo. Kwa hivyo, juhudi za kupambana na kuenea kwa ugonjwa huu ni lazima zihusishe kila mmoja wetu bila kujali kabila, misingi ya kisiasa, dini ama uchumi. Kamwe hatupaswi kuendelea kunong'ona kuhusu jambo hili, hali watu wetu wanaendelea kuangamia.

Kwa hivyo, ningependa kutoa shukrani kwa waheshimiwa Wabunge kwa kuunga mkono juhudi za Serikali za kupambana na tatizo la ugonjwa wa ukimwi. Ninafuraha kuona kwamba tangu washa ya Wabunge ilipofanyika mjini Mombasa mnamo

Novemba mwaka uliopita, mambo mengi ya faida yameendelea kufanyika kuhusu jambo hili. Tayari, Baraza la Taifa la Kuzuia Ukimwi, yaani National Aids Control Council, lilianzishwa na linatarajiwa kushirikiana na mashirika mbali mbali hapa nchini na nje, ili kuleta rasilmali mbali mbali pamoja katika kupambana na ukimwi. Kwa hivyo, nawaomba waheshimiwa Wabunge kuunga mkono vita dhidi ya ukimwi kwa kuwajumuisha watu pale mashinani kujikinga na ukimwi.

Bw. Spika,

Shughuli za urekebishaji wa Katiba bado zimeendelea kuwa kichwa cha majadiliano mengi juu ya jinsi shughuli hiyo itatekelezwa. Kwanza kabisa, hebu nisisitize kwamba tatizo kubwa sana linalokumba Kenya kwa sasa ni ukuaji pole pole wa uchumi. Hili ndilo jambo muhimu sana linalofaa kutiwa maanani na kuzingatiwa na viongozi wote.

Kwa maoni yangu, Katiba ndiyo nguzo ya uthabiti wa taifa letu kijamii na kisiasa. Kwa hivyo, taratibu za kurekebisha Katiba hazina budi kuwajibika kwa wananchi, bali vile vile ni lazima zihakikishe kwamba mapendekezo na matokeo yake yanazingatia masilahi ya Wakenya wote. Hata hivyo, mambo haya hayawezi kufanyika kikamilifu katika mazingara ya hadaa, chuki na kutoaminiana. Hatuwezi kuwa na urekebishaji wa Katiba ulio kamilifu wakati wengine wa wale wanaohusika katika taratibu hizo wanazingatia ajenda za kibinafsi ama za kikabila.

Hatuwezi kuendelea na mwenendo huu. Bunge hili lina jukumu na wajibu wa kuchukua uongozi katika jambo hili, ili Wakenya waweze kujihisi kuwa huru na kuwa na imani kamili katika kujihusisha katika zoezi la marekebisho ya Katiba. Hakuna kusanyiko jingine lililo na mamlaka haya.

Bw. Spika,

Katika ratiba ya shughuli za Bunge za kikao hiki, Serikali itawasilisha Miswada kadhaa ambayo itazingatia maswala muhimu. Baadhi ya Miswada hiyo imo ile ilipitwa na wakati katika Kikao kilichopita na kwa hivyo, itachapishwa tena na kujadiliwa katika Kikao hiki. Hii ni kama vile: The Industrial Property Bill,

The Central Depositories Bill, na The Capital Markets Authority (Amendment) Bill.

Vile vile, Serikali itawasilisha Miswada kadha mipya kujadiliwa katika Kikao hiki cha Bunge. Kwa mfano: The Statute Law (Miscellaneous Amendments) Bill, The Maseno University Bill, The Traffic (Amendment) Bill, The Copyright Bill, The Penal Code (Amendment) Bill, The Criminal Procedure Code (Amendment) Bill, The Children Bill, kati ya nyinginezo. Madhumuni ya marekebisho hayo ni kuzifanya sheria hizo kuwa sambamba na hali halisi ya wakati huu. Ni matumaini yangu kwamba waheshimiwa Wabunge watasoma kwa makini Miswada hiyo, ili kuweza kuchangia vyema majadiliano Bungeni.

Bw. Spika,

Ningependa kukamilisha hotuba yangu ya leo kwa kuwaomba waheshimiwa Wabunge kuzingatia umoja na kudumisha hadhi ya Bunge wakati wote. Kumbukeni kwamba sote tunatumikia nchi yetu. Tofauti za maoni au jinsi ya kukabiliana na maswala mbali mbali ni sharti zitatuliwe kwa njia ya amani.

Mwisho, Bwana Spika, ni furaha yangu kubwa kutangaza kufunguliwa rasmi kwa Kikao cha Nne cha Bunge la Nane.

AHSANTENI.

**SPEECH BY HIS EXCELLENCY HON. DANIEL T. ARAP MOI,
C.G.H., M.P., PRESIDENT AND COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF
OF THE ARMED FORCES OF THE REPUBLIC OF KENYA
ON THE OCCASION OF THE STATE OPENING OF THE
FOURTH SESSION OF THE EIGHTH PARLIAMENT ON
TUESDAY, 28TH MARCH, 2000**

MR. SPEAKER,

At this most memorable juncture, when Parliament is sitting for the first time this century and this new millennium, it is my utmost pleasure and duty to welcome all honourable Members to the Fourth Session of the Eighth Parliament.

Before I proceed with my remarks this afternoon, I wish, first of all, to request honourable Members to join me in paying our respects to the late Member of Parliament for Kwanza Constituency, Honourable George Kapten, who passed away on Christmas morning, last year. May I ask you all to stand and observe one minute of silence in his remembrance . . . Thank you.

Mr. Speaker,

This is the first meeting of Parliament this century, and I would like to take the opportunity to offer some thoughts and observations on the state of the nation and the prospects for the future. The opening of Parliament is not an occasion for party politics. I will, therefore, limit myself to a discussion of socio-economic and development issues.

Throughout the last decade, Kenyans have debated whether the new century will bring a positive change in their lives. I believe that better times lie ahead, but this will not come about through the sole initiative of the Government. The days of central Government domination of all sectors of national life are behind us, and we must become accustomed to leaner, more efficient

Government that creates an environment for growth. Economic growth driven by the opportunities offered to the citizens by their elected Government is the foundation, for success. Increased economic activity, expansion of markets, more job opportunities, better healthcare, improved infrastructure and information technology, are all potential products of better governance. My Government recognizes the value of change, and I have given clear instructions that the on-going process of change for the better is irreversible.

Over the years, Kenya has built a strong foundation for economic development. We are well placed to attain higher levels of economic growth that will lead to better conditions of living for our people. The realization of this potential will, of course, depend on many factors. First and foremost, the slow down in economic activity and growth must be halted and reversed. During the past two years, the unemployment situation has worsened, while the incidence of poverty, especially in the rural areas, has increased.

I want to assure all honourable Members that my Government will continue to assign priority to addressing the ills affecting the economy. We will do everything possible to stimulate increased production in agriculture, in manufacturing, as well as in the jua kali sector. I want to see more of our people engaged in productive economic activities, so that Kenya can move ahead in development. I want to make it very clear, however, that the task before us is not easy. The current conditions of high poverty levels have complicated efforts to restore economic growth.

My Government will, therefore, continue to direct more of its resources towards the eradication of poverty. In particular, the Government will continue to support increased investment in education and health of the poor in order to make them more productive, and bring them into the mainstream of national development. Towards this end, my Government is working on the final details of a poverty reduction strategy, and this will be linked to a budget process that will be projected over several years. This medium-term expenditure framework will greatly enhance fiscal discipline and proper planning.

Mr. Speaker,

Honourable Members will recall that, in January this year, I attended the meeting of African Heads of State on Poverty Reduction and Growth, convened by the International Monetary Fund in Libreville, Gabon. The meeting highlighted the various problems affecting African countries, especially the sub-Saharan region, where poverty levels have been on an upward trend. We also discussed the role that the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and multi-lateral agencies can play in supporting regional and country efforts to combat this problem.

Over the next few months, I hope that we will reach agreement with our development partners for economic assistance in various areas. My Government is currently engaged in the final round of talks with the World Bank and International Monetary Fund, and I am optimistic that in the very near future, we will have access to funds that will enable us to more effectively tackle the problems of poverty and low rates of economic growth.

My appeal to Kenyans, and especially leaders, is not to politicize poverty. No one should exploit the sufferings of those who are poor, to gain political mileage. Instead, all of us should join hands to fight poverty and unemployment so that we can assist those who continue to rely on the Government for handouts to become productive members of society. In particular, I urge honourable Members to strive for and ensure a strong partnership between leaders, the people, the Government and civil organizations, in order to tackle the problems facing our people from a common front.

Another important area is the public sector reforms which are expected to have far-reaching impact on our efforts to ensure better service delivery. My Government is giving priority to the more effective use of revenue collection. Tax avoidance, especially in the area of VAT collection is to be made a priority area for remedial action. Debt recovery, particularly in some of the lending institutions which have now been identified as being ineffective will be given greater attention.

In the area of procurement, there is an indication that the tighter controls put in place by the Government are beginning to bear the desired fruits. I have directed that transparency is not to be confined to central Government alone. District Tender Boards and the local authorities are equally in need of tighter procurement procedures. The state corporations are also areas where substantial losses of public funds have occurred as is so clearly demonstrated in the reports of the Public Investments Committee of this House.

The abuse of office and misuse of public funds is not unique to our country, but we must be bold enough to address it. The issue of corruption is a major concern and the Government, working closely with Parliament, will soon introduce far-reaching measures to control the conduct of public officers. I assure you all that my Government is fully committed to transparency and accountability.

Mr. Speaker,

I have discussed these matters at length because of some misconceptions that the economic problems we are facing, are of our own making. Those of us who are familiar with the goings-on in the international arena, know fully well that poverty and unemployment are worldwide problems. As a matter of fact, even the developed countries have their own problems of inequitable distribution of resources. Furthermore, economic restructuring is neither new, nor unique to our country. Many developed countries have had to restructure their economies in order to cope with new circumstances.

We in the developing world are not immune to the rapid changes taking place on the global scene. But we are more vulnerable because of our weak economic base. In addition, heavy reliance on the export of primary commodities which are subject to constant shifts in prices on the international markets as well as the debt burden, have continued to stand in the way of faster development for many Third World countries.

Mr. Speaker,

The reforms implemented by the Government in the various sectors continue to yield positive results. But in the political arena, the benefits of political pluralism are yet to be realized, as confrontation amongst the various political players seems the order of the day. This is a very sad development indeed. I believe that political competition, if properly handled, can create a fertile environment for the exchange of ideas, which is good for a modern society. In this case, it is recognized that some may agree or even choose to disagree on matters of principle. But this should never be allowed to go so far as to endanger the unity of purpose which is so fundamental to our social and economic well-being.

What Kenyans need is good politics, the kind that will yield positive fruits such as unity, peace and mutual understanding. Kenyans need development conscious politics which will mobilize the people to increase productivity on their farms and at their places of work. For we live in a highly competitive world in which hardwork is the only way ahead. There has been too much talking during the past decade, and leaders should give more attention to the real issues affecting the livelihoods of Kenyans.

Kenya's population is still growing, and our people need more schools and more health facilities. They need clean water and modern telecommunications services. They need better roads and market outlets, both local, regional and international to sell their produce. Above all, the business community needs a calm and predictable social and political environment in which to invest and trade. The focus for all leaders should be to avoid unnecessary disputes that cause fear and apprehension in the society. Tribalism, conflicts and hatred are the product of bad politics and I urge leaders to be united in pursuing the common good of our country, and to put the interest of Kenya above personal and sectarian interests.

Mr. Speaker,

At the dawn of Kenya's independence, we recognized disease as one of the foremost enemies of our people, and of Kenya's

development. We invested a lot of our resources to ensure a better health status for our people. But the AIDS pandemic has made serious inroads into all the gains we have made. And in some cases, we have actually witnessed a reversal of our achievements altogether.

Many of our young people continue to die every day due to AIDS. Yet these are the ones we look up to, to ensure the future development of our country. Unless we can impact upon the spread of this disease and do so in very quick time, the effects upon education, agriculture and industry will be such that our plans will have to be completely reconsidered. HIV/AIDS is a national disaster that all of us must address. And the strategies to slow the spread of the disease, must involve each and everyone of us, irrespective of ethnic, political, religious or economic status. We cannot afford to continue talking in whispers, while all around us, our people are dying.

I therefore want to thank honourable Members for supporting efforts by the Government to combat the AIDS problem. I am particularly glad, that since the seminar by Members of Parliament in November last year in Mombasa, many positive developments have continued to take place. The National Aids Control Council is now in place, and is expected to liaise with both local and international organizations in order to mobilize the necessary resources to fight AIDS. I urge honourable Members to continue supporting the war against AIDS by mobilizing people at the grassroots to protect themselves against the disease.

Mr. Speaker,

The constitutional review process has continued to generate considerable debate on how the exercise should be carried out. First of all, let me emphasize that the most critical problem facing Kenya today, is the slow growth of the economy. This is what should be the primary concern of all leaders.

In my view, the Constitution is the heart of our nation's social and political stability, and therefore, the process to change it must not only be accountable to the people, but it must also

ensure that the final outcome reflects the wishes of all Kenyans. However, this cannot take place in an atmosphere where suspicions, hypocrisy and mutual distrust abound. We cannot have meaningful constitutional review, when some of those involved in the process are more concerned with the pursuit of personal or sectarian agendas.

We cannot go on like this. This House has a duty and an obligation to provide leadership in this matter, so that Kenyans can feel free and confident to participate in the review process. No other forum has such a mandate.

Mr. Speaker,

In the legislative programme for this Session of Parliament, the Government will introduce various Bills, which will reflect a number of priorities. Some of the Bills lapsed during the last Session, and will therefore be re-published and discussed during the current Session. These include, the Industrial Property Bill, the Central Depositories Bill and the Capital Markets Authority (Amendment) Bill.

In addition, the Government will submit a number of new Bills for discussion during the current Session of Parliament. For instance, the Statute Law (Miscellaneous Amendments) Bill, the Maseno University Bill, the Traffic (Amendment) Bill, the Copyright Bill, the Penal Code (Amendment) Bill, the Criminal Procedure Code (Amendment) Bill, the Children Bill, amongst others. The purpose of these amendments will be to up-date Kenya's laws and harmonize them with the existing realities. I hope that honourable Members will study all the Bills carefully in order to make serious contributions to the House debates.

Mr. Speaker,

I wish to conclude my remarks today by urging honourable Members to maintain unity of purpose and uphold the dignity of the House at all times. Remember that we are all serving the same fatherland. Differences of opinion or approach to issues should always be resolved in an amicable manner.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, it is now my greatest pleasure to declare the Fourth Session of the Eighth Parliament officially open.

THANK YOU.