

**SPEECH BY HIS EXCELLENCY THE PRESIDENT,
HON. DANIEL T. ^{ARAP} MOI, E.G.H., M.P., ON THE
OCCASION OF THE 15th ANNIVERSARY OF THE
KENYA INDEPENDENCE CELEBRATIONS, ON
TUESDAY, 12th DECEMBER, 1978**

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

This is the first Jamhuri Day we are celebrating without Mzee Jomo Kenyatta, the Father of our Nation and First President of the Republic. I therefore ask you all to stand up for a minute's silence in his memory.

Brothers and Sisters, the minute's silence we have just observed should be regarded as renewing publicly our commitment to work for this country with the same dedication as Mzee Jomo Kenyatta did. Indeed, the biggest tribute we can pay to his memory is to steadfastly uphold the principles of Love, Unity and Peace, and to sustain our efforts to develop a united Kenya for the benefit of all its citizens.

One of the specific subjects I would like to discuss with you today has an important and direct bearing on the effectiveness of individual Kenyans in the development of our country. The subject I have in mind is the ability to read and write.

The development of our country depends very much on the individual efforts of each Kenyan, be he a small-holder farmer, a pastoralist, a trader or an employee. It is the efforts of individual Kenyans in these and other capacities which largely determine the rate at which the country develops. The Government will, of course, continue to play its full part in many ways, such as providing credit, building roads, ensuring security of the individual and his property, providing education and health facilities, organizing better marketing arrangements, and protecting the consumer. But as I have said before, the activities of the Government will achieve little unless each Kenyan, in his various roles, works harder. In addition, it is important to remember that the overall objective in most public development efforts is the improvement of the welfare of the individual Kenyan so that he or she

can become even more effective in promoting his or her own welfare. The development of our country is the development of the people; and that is the strategy which will continue to guide us in future.

In all this, one problem area which I am convinced calls for a completely new approach is the abolition of illiteracy. Soon after Independence, we recognized lack of education as one of the "enemies" to be dealt with. Experience since then has confirmed that we were right in regarding lack of education to be a real "enemy". We now see clearly that the individual Kenyan cannot become effective enough in promoting development, or participate fully in our social and political system, if he is illiterate.

Unfortunately, it is not often that we who are literate appreciate the great difficulties encountered by those who cannot read and write in the Kenya of today. The illiterate Kenyan has difficulty in using our currency, in following instructions for better farming or business practices, in participating fully in discussions about the country, in dealing with ballot papers during elections, and in benefitting generally from the rapidly growing means of communication. Inability to read and write must therefore be regarded as a serious obstacle to Kenya's development and the attainment of our objective to promote self-reliance and democratic, full and active participation by all Kenyans in all the activities of our country.

Illiteracy would not be such a problem if the numbers of Kenyans involved were small. Unfortunately this is not the case. It is estimated that 35 per cent of all male Kenyans above the age of 15, and 70 per cent of all female Kenyans in the same age group, cannot read and write. These figures indicate that slightly more than half of our adult population is illiterate. Furthermore, if we were to rely on expansion of literacy through regular formal education and the efforts now being made in the area of Adult Education, the problem of illiteracy would be with us for many, many years to come. In fact, the population of those illiterate would continue to increase in absolute numbers, and even by the year 2000 only about 80 per cent of our people would be literate.

The time has therefore come to mount a special programme for elimination of illiteracy within a specific period of time. I believe that we in Kenya, with the kind of determination we have shown in the past in dealing with difficult problems, should be able to eliminate illiteracy in our country within five years.

In the kind of literacy programme I have in mind, the opportunity would also be taken to promote our people's knowledge about their own country and system of Government, better farming or trading methods, better hygiene and maternal health care, the difficulties and opportunities available in our development efforts. The necessary details of the programme have not been worked out yet, but the programme will be implemented early, and I shall be able to report on its progress on next year's Jamhuri Day. In the actual implementation of the programme, the District Development Committees will be expected to be the main instruments for co-ordination at the local level. Our Party Kanu and its officials at the district and locational levels will be fully involved in the exercise. We shall also expect full co-operation from private employers. They too must make it their business to educate any of their workers who may be illiterate.

Another subject I would like to discuss today is unemployment. This is a serious problem — if only because those who are unemployed do not have regular means for their livelihood, and because the unemployed constitute a development opportunity which we are not making use of. I also believe that unemployment is demoralizing and inhibits the full development of an individual's personality and dignity.

We must therefore do whatever we can to deal with it. In this connexion, I am happy to announce that after discussions with the employers' organizations, agreement has been reached to increase wage employment by 10 per cent in the private and public sectors. The implementation of the agreement will start from 1st January, 1979. I would like to take this opportunity to say that I hope our trade unions will recognize the importance of ensuring the success of this agreement. It is therefore my wish that the unions will exercise restraint with regard to demands for wage increases.

The employment agreement I have just announced will, of course, only alleviate the unemployment problem. It must therefore be accompanied by programmes and policies which ensure that the economy generates adequate job opportunities in the course of our development. This means that we must, among other things, give high priority to the growth of the economy as a whole, diversify our economic activities, promote rural development, encourage the practice of family planning methods, favour the use of labour in our industrial promotion activities, and train our people so that they can employ themselves more effectively. This last point is particularly important because, as I said earlier, it is the efforts of individual Kenyans which will determine how and at what rate the country grows. Moreover, we must recognize that for many years to come, most of the employment in Kenya will take the form of self-employment. Training Schemes and Adult Education Programmes are therefore important in order to ensure that Kenyans seize self-employment opportunities and that they get maximum benefit from such employment.

Today I can make only a few remarks on this very important subject. Detailed Government measures to promote employment, and alleviate poverty in general, are contained in the Development Plan for 1979-83, which will be published in the near future. However, one additional point about unemployment which I would like to make here is that our people, especially the young Kenyans who have had a bit of education, appear not prepared to do manual work. In our towns today, one finds thousands of people loitering and wasting important years of their lives while farmers in the countryside are desperately looking for workers to pick tea or coffee, to milk cows or undertake a variety of activities. Many of the unemployed people now loitering in our towns could also find employment and steady income from helping their fathers and mothers to manage their holdings more effectively. This is becoming an intolerable situation which may call for direct intervention by the Government. We in Kenya have not so far used force to repatriate people to the rural areas as some countries often do. However, we may have to do so if other ways of persuasion fail

to achieve significant results. The Government's thinking on this matter is not, of course, negative. In fact, in carrying out its part in the employment referred to a while ago, the Government will concentrate on labour-intensive projects and works programmes in the rural areas. In addition, there will be more effort to create self-employment opportunities in the countryside. Because of these measures, many of those now loitering in our towns should be able to find productive employment in the rural sector.

Another subject I would like to touch on today is the development of our children. As I have said many times before, our children are our future and future of our nation. My Government will therefore give special attention to the development of our children. In this connexion I would like to make two announcements. First, the Government has decided that free milk will be given regularly to all our primary school children beginning with the opening of the second term in 1979. I regret that earlier implementation of this decision is not possible because adequate arrangements, in full consultation with all the organizations involved, will take some time to finalize. I believe that this measure will contribute towards improved health of our children. More important, however, is that I hope this decision will encourage the parents to do more for the health of their children.

The second announcement is on school fees. The Government has decided to abolish school fees for standard six with immediate effect. This step is in accordance with the policy objective of the Kanu Party and the Government to achieve free and universal primary education as early as possible. Unfortunately, it appears that in a number of areas of our country some parents are not sending their children to school. Now that primary school fees have been abolished up to standard six, I appeal to such parents to respond positively. I also call upon the Kanu Party officials and Government officers to ensure such positive response.

The final subject I would like to discuss with you today concerns the importance of tolerance and political maturity in managing our affairs. The events of the last few months would

have seriously shaken the stability of some countries. But over that period, we in Kenya have demonstrated that we are politically mature and can manage our affairs in a peaceful and orderly fashion. Political maturity is an asset we must continue to value highly. As I have said before, in the future there will be many challenges with no simple solutions. We can therefore expect that in dealing with such challenges, there will be many views offered on possible solutions.

Such situations are, of course, a healthy thing for a country which is truly democratic and which wants to conduct its affairs in an open manner with each of its citizens fully participating. However, for such situation to be constructive in generating ideas for appropriate solutions to our problems, there must be high degree of tolerance and understanding. I therefore appeal to all Kenyans, particularly the politicians, to avoid irresponsible tactics and strategies. As you know, considerations of national security have in the past compelled the Government to take strong measures against a few individuals whose activities endangered our unity and stability. Such measures have included detention. In order to show all Kenyans that I have firm faith and confidence in their determination to respect and promote our unity and stability, I have today released all detainees. All those who have been in detention are now, at this very moment, at their homes. However, I want to warn everyone that my Government will not hesitate in taking immediate and firm action against anyone whose activities threaten our peace, unity and stability. As I have said before, I believe in action, not words. I therefore call upon everyone and particularly those expected by wananchi to provide leadership and good example to work with me and my Government for the benefit of all our people.

I wish each one of you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year in the spirit of HARAMBEE.

THANK YOU

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT,
NAIROBI.

12TH DECEMBER, 1978.