



REPUBLIC OF KENYA

THE NATIONAL TREASURY AND ECONOMIC PLANNING

SPEECH OF CABINET SECRETARY, THE NATIONAL TREASURY AND ECONOMIC PLANNING HON. FCPA JOHN MBADI NG'ONGO, EGH, DURING OFFICIAL OPENING OF THE KENYA POPULATION AND DEVELOPMENT CONFERENCE, TUESDAY 11TH MARCH, 2025 AT THE CHANDARIA AUDITORIUM OF THE UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI.

Principal Secretaries present

Board Chair, National Council for Population and Development

Board Members, National Council for Population and Development

Other Board Chairs present

Director General NCPD, Dr. Mohamed Sheikh

Other Chief Executive Officers present

Development Partners present

All invited guests

Ladies and gentlemen,

Good afternoon!

1. If we are to develop well informed sustainable strategies then we must seek to have the right information. This is why I am honoured to join you today to officially open the 2025 Kenya Population and Development Conference whose objective is to: **promote the generation, dissemination, and translation of research findings; build collaborations; and harness partnerships among population stakeholders.**
2. I wish to thank, through the State Department for Economic Planning, the National Council for Population and Development, a Semi-autonomous Government Agency under my Ministry, for organizing this important conference that brings policy makers, researchers, academia and other key stakeholders together to deliberate on population matters which are integral part of social and economic planning.
3. This conference comes at an opportune time when the country has started implementing the Fourth Medium Term Plan which is informed by Kenya's Vision 2030, Bottom-Up Economic Transformation Agenda and Global and Regional Development Commitments. It is my hope that the conference will bridge the gaps between the policy makers and researchers, private sector, development partners and other stakeholders.

Ladies and gentlemen,

4. This conference provides us the golden opportunity as stakeholders to discuss contemporary population issues.

5. The global, regional and national agenda on population and development as reflected in the Sustainable Development Goals, International Conference on Population and Development Plan of Action (ICPD PoA), African Union (AU) Agenda 2063, EAC Vision 2050, Kenya Vision 2030 and the Bottom-up Economic Transformation Agenda (BETA); require such convergence of thought and effort. The outcome of this conference will not only realise the requirement under these instruments but will contribute to the achievement of our national goals and aspirations.

Ladies and Gentlemen

6. The demographic landscape has evolved over the past 50 years, presenting countries with varying opportunities and challenges. Developed countries are experiencing population ageing and shrinking working-age populations due to low fertility, while developing countries are faced with youth bulge and unemployment challenges arising from rapid population growth. Adjusting population and development policies is therefore increasingly becoming necessary to address these demographic shifts.

Ladies and gentlemen,

7. Kenya, like many other sub-Saharan countries continues to experience a relatively high population growth rate which has placed significant strains on ecosystems and natural resources, social services, housing, and infrastructure, while contributing to unemployment and environmental pressures.
8. Population issues are complex, and it is necessary to address them in a holistic manner. Over the years, the government has adopted a multi-sectoral approach to address the population challenges.
9. As a result, the country has made significant progress in improving population and development indicators; such as in life expectancy, decline in maternal mortality ratio as well as reduction in under-five mortality rate and reduction in teenage pregnancy.

Ladies and gentlemen

10. The thematic areas identified for discussion in this conference aptly reflect government's population and development priorities including as outlined in our Sessional Paper No. 1 of 2023 on Kenya National Population Policy for Sustainable Development. The Policy aims to attain population age structure that will accelerate economic development.

Ladies and gentlemen,

11. Article 43 (1) (a) of the Constitution guarantees the right of every Kenyan to the highest attainable standard of health including reproductive health care. Giving effect to this provision is the National Reproductive Health Policy 2022-2032 that guarantees achievement of universal

reproductive health coverage to all persons in the country. The government has also demonstrated its commitment to FP 2030 by increasing the budget allocation for family planning.

Ladies and gentlemen,

12. Healthcare is one of the pillars of government development blueprint as captured in the Bottom-up Economic Transformation Agenda (BETA) and in the Kenya Health Policy 2014–2030 that directs ensuring significant improvement in the overall status of health in Kenya.
13. In addition, the Kenya Universal Health Coverage Policy 2020-2030 aims to ensure all Kenyans have access to essential quality health services without suffering financial hardship. Other initiatives to promote health and wellbeing include Kenya National NCD Strategic Plan 2020/1-2025/6; Kenya Mental Health Policy 2015-2030; National Road Safety Action Plan 2024-2028; and Healthy Ageing and Older Persons' Health Strategy 2022-2026.

Ladies and gentlemen,

14. Migration and urbanisation continue to be of great concern and has implications on development planning both at national and county levels. This is mainly because majority of migrants are young people aged 20-24 seeking jobs and education opportunities, but the ever-increasing numbers are unable to find decent employment to be able to financially support themselves as well as their families.

15. Kenya has instituted a sound legal and policy framework to address migration issues. These include Kenya Citizenship and Immigration Act 2011 (Amendment Bill 2023); Kenya National Migration Policy, Global Compact for Migration (GCM) Implementation Plan; Kenya Refugee Act (2006); Children's Act 2022; Kenya's Diaspora Policy 2014; Counter-trafficking in Persons Act 2010 (Revised 2012), National Policy on Labour Migration (2023).
16. If well planned, urbanization has the potential to improve access to education, health, housing, and other services and to expand people's opportunities for economic productivity.
17. The National Urban Development Policy, 2016, guides policymakers and devolved functions in responding to the urban development challenges. The vision of the policy is to have secure, well governed, competitive and sustainable urban areas that contribute to the realisation of the broader national development goals articulated in the Constitution of Kenya 2010 and Vision 2030.
18. While recognizing that some counties have developed spatial plans to respond to these emerging issues, there is need for all counties to accelerate measures to address rapid urban expansion.

Ladies and gentlemen,

19. Kenya is experiencing multifaceted effects of climate change, including increased frequency and severity of droughts, unpredictable rainfall patterns, and rising temperatures. These environmental changes have far-reaching consequences for human health, natural resources, and

the overall well-being of communities, particularly among vulnerable populations such as children and pregnant women.

20. To mitigate the challenges of climate change, the government developed the Sessional Paper No. 3 of 2016 on National Climate Change Framework Policy which aims to enhance adaptive capacity and resilience to climate change and promote low carbon emissions. GoK also enacted the Climate Change Act, 2016 to guide the mainstreaming of climate change adaptation into sector planning, budgeting and implementation processes.

Ladies and gentlemen,

21. The significant role of science, technology, and innovation (ST&I) in addressing population issues cannot be understated. ST&I tools such as geographic information systems (GIS), advanced data analysis techniques, remote sensing, digital census platforms, and modeling software facilitate better understanding of population dynamics and enables monitoring of demographic trends; and promotes informed decision-making through easy accessibility of population data.
22. To leverage on innovation, Kenya has transformed the Science, Technology and Innovation (ST&I) sector through adoption of the ST&I Act, 2013 and ST&I Policy 2020-2030 that aims to mainstream science, technology and innovation in all the sectors of the economy through targeted investments.

Ladies and gentlemen,

23. Gender responsive policies and programmes as well as laws, ensure that the needs of men and women, boys and girls are addressed in all sectors of a country's development process. Article 27(8) and 81 (b) of the Constitution of Kenya 2012 provides for the state to put in place measures for the implementation of the gender principle that ensures at least a third of each gender in all elective and appointive posts. The Sexual Offences Act 2006 and the Employment Act 2007 among others ensures equality in addressing the gender challenges that hinder full participation in development. The Children Act, 2022 protects children's rights, including provisions addressing child marriage and female genital mutilation.
24. Adolescent pregnancy and childbearing negatively impact the economic growth of a country due to poor socioeconomic outcomes such as school dropout, lost productivity, and intergenerational transition of poverty. To mitigate against these challenges, the government, through the 2020 National School Re-Entry Guidelines, facilitates and formalises teenage parents' re-entry into learning institutions.

Ladies and gentlemen,

25. Kenya's greatest resource is its people particularly skilled youthful population who can significantly contribute to national development. The harnessing of the demographic dividend from the youthful population can catapult the country's development. Young people who are the custodians of the future can be at the forefront of social transformation if provided with quality education and high potential work environment. The

revamping of the Technical and Vocational institutions is aimed at improving skills and competencies that enhance opportunity for the young to positively engage the work environment.

26. The Kenya Youth Development Policy (2019) was developed to give youth equal opportunity as other citizens, to realise their fullest potential and productively participate in economic, social, political, cultural and religious life.
27. Programmes such as the Kenya Youth Employment and Opportunities Project (KYEOP) were initiated to improve youth employability and assist in job creation. In addition, the National Employment Authority Act 2016 was enacted to provide for a comprehensive institutional framework for employment management; to enhance employment promotion interventions; to enhance access to employment for youth, minorities and marginalized groups and for connected purposes.
28. To ensure meaningful participation by youth in entrepreneurship, the government came up with Access to Government Procurement Opportunities (AGPO) which facilitates enterprises owned by women, youth and persons with disabilities to be able to participate in Government opportunities. Further, the National Youth Service (NYS) was restructured in 2013 to equip young people with skills to participate in the country's development agenda.

Ladies and gentlemen,

29. This conference offers an opportunity to enhance knowledge and awareness of the population challenges we face today, share new

approaches and best practices that can inform policy and programme development aimed at enhancing the quality of life for our population.

30. I therefore wish you all fruitful deliberations in the quest for new insights to inform the national development agenda.

31. With these remarks, it is now my distinctive honour and pleasure to declare this conference officially opened.

Thank you and May God Bless Kenya