

COMMUNICATION FROM THE CHAIR

WELCOME ADDRESS TO HIS EXCELLENCY THE PRESIDENT

Your Excellency the President and Commander-in-Chief of the Defence Forces of the Republic of Kenya, the Honorable Uhuru Kenyatta EGH. MP

Honorable Members:

It gives me great pleasure to welcome His Excellency and all Honourable Members of the 11th Parliament to the official opening of our Parliament, the citadel of our democracy.

I wish to take this earliest opportunity to congratulate your Excellency for being elected the Fourth President of the Republic of Kenya. I also wish to congratulate the Deputy President Hon. William Ruto who is seated in the speaker's row and indeed all Honorable Members for making it to the 11th Parliament. I cannot forget my counterpart the Hon. Ekwe Ethuro who has made history in being elected the first Speaker of Senate under our new Constitution. To you all Congratulations!

Your Excellency,

First and foremost I wish to thank all Kenyans for participating peacefully in the just concluded general elections. The exercise showed

maturity and deepening of our democratic culture. This has restored and redeemed our standing in the community of Nations.

On this note I wish to congratulate the former Prime Minister Right Hon. Raila Odinga and the former Vice president Hon. Kalonzo Musyoka both of whom are seated in the Speaker's row for providing opportunity for political competition and being worthy competitors in the just concluded presidential elections.

Today's sitting is historic in many ways. It is the first time we are having a joint sitting of the National Assembly and the Senate under a bicameral system re-introduced by the Constitution of Kenya 2010. Today's inauguration is also significant because we are together assembled as two Houses and as legislators from diverse backgrounds representing the various sectors of our society. Today we demonstrate that we are operating under our New Constitution. It is truly a day to celebrate.

Your Excellency,

It is a moment of great inspiration for us all to have you in this House to address the nation on the government policy and legislative agenda for the Eleventh Parliament.

We are very eager to listen to you because from your address today, Kenyans will know the political philosophy and economic strategy of the new Government of the people of Kenya.

Your Excellency,

Before I invite you to talk to us, allow me to make some brief remarks. Honourable Members, there is no doubt that Kenya, and all her institutions, Parliament included, are at the threshold of a new epoch, of a new dispensation- indeed a new chapter. To borrow words from Hon. Mwai Kibaki, your predecessor, in his inaugural speech on 30th

December 2002, I agree that “our Country is going through a critical moment”. He continued to say that “**the task ahead is enormous, the expectations are high, and the challenges are intimidating,**” However I want to assure you that the most encouraging thing is that Kenyans are fully behind the Government in its efforts to change for the better.

You are aware that for the first time the Executive is not fused with the Legislature but the two are separated in a new system of check and balance. It is my hope that we shall all work together in comity, mutual respect and cooperation, among the three arms of government and with all oversight institutions established by the Constitution.

Honourable Members know that this is a new legislature with new structures and new ways of working. Our legislature is now bicameral. Our committee system has changed. The budget making role of Parliament has been strengthened. The role of Parliament in international relations and security is larger. The systems of oversight have been overhauled to bring on board the participation of the citizenry. It is in our interest to understand and get used to these new ways of working.

So Honourable Members, as a Parliament, we must use this opportunity in our history to play our rightful role in the renewal of the country. I urge you to approach your responsibilities with dedication and sense of purpose for the common good. Failing this, our relevance will be called into question.

Your Excellency,

A quick glance at the membership of the Eleventh Parliament, gives me pleasure to report that there is an increase in the number of professionals from varying backgrounds. There are Members with impressive track records in public and private life, who have voluntarily abandoned their

careers to join this August House. In addition there are more women and youth in this Parliament than ever before in the history of our Country. Equally there are more persons with disabilities and minorities are represented now. Given this scenario, we should look forward for more robust and informed debates.

As a Parliament we shall Endeavour to foster good working relations with your Cabinet Secretaries in their new role and we shall ensure they are constantly held to account in the running of their ministries, departments and agencies.

Your government shall be held to account on your commitment to implement the constitution, your support to devolved system of government and in the fulfillment of your undertakings to the people of Kenya in the elections concluded recently. You can count on the support of these two Houses to help realize these goals.

Your Excellency

I need to observe here that we must all strive to strengthen our political parties and to instill Party discipline. Strong political parties mean strong democracies. Strong democracies mean good governance. Good governance is essential for the development of our Nation. It is for this reason that our Constitution has firmly anchored political parties as key institutions in our public governance structure.

Last and not least, I would like to thank the former Government headed by the now retired President Mwai Kibaki for the support it continually gave the Parliamentary Service Commission. We are all hopeful and actually trust that your Government will continue to give support to the Parliamentary Service Commission to enable it fulfill its mandate of

providing facilities to the Members for the efficient and effective functioning of Parliament.

Your Excellency,

We shall expect your Government and this House to be the glue that holds the people of Kenya together, to constantly work on a long term national cohesion project and to see that the marginalized, minority groups and the vulnerable of our society can see hope in our governance.

And finally it is now my pleasure and privilege to invite his Excellency the President to address the House.