

ADDRESS BY

**H.E. HON. UHURU KENYATTA, C.G.H,
PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF KENYA
AND COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF OF THE
DEFENCE FORCES**

ON THE OCCASION OF
THE LABOUR DAY CELEBRATION

AT
STATE HOUSE, NAIROBI

SATURDAY, 1ST MAY, 2021

Fellow Kenyans,

1. It is with great pleasure that I join all workers of Kenya, and, indeed, the rest of the world, to commemorate **International Labour Day**.

2. On this day, we come together to **celebrate** our workers as **creators** and **makers** of things, and to recognize the **best efforts** of their labour. From **factory** to **factory**; from **field** to **field** and from **office** to **office**, the labour of their hands

has transformed this country from year to year and from generation to generation.

3. It is a fact, without **labour**, there is no **prosperity**. As one philosopher noted, labour is what brings the **difference** to **everything**. Evidently, without a doubt, labour is the **game changer** of all **progress**.

4. This is why today we celebrate the fruits of our labour with **thanksgiving** in our hearts, as instructed by our **national anthem**.

Fellow Kenyans,

5. When I addressed you on this occasion last year, the **first wave** of COVID-19 had just hit the country. Little did we know that, **one year later,** we would be celebrating Labour Day under a **third wave** of this virus.

6. **Fourteen** months later, after our first COVID case was reported, the economy has **slowed down.** The informal sector has **shrunk;** and in

the hospitality sector, some enterprises have literally closed.

7. Similarly, the cogs in the manufacturing sector have **stopped turning** as fast as they did. As your fellow worker it is not lost on me, that the people most **affected** by these unfortunate events are the **workers**.

8. But in these unprecedented times, not only in Kenya, but **globally** as well, Kenyans have a way of intuitively **pulling together**, coming up with **innovations** and **building resilience**.

9. Our Founding Fathers engrained our national motto of '**Harambee**', or pulling together in **our national psyche**. I am particularly grateful to the labour movement for keeping the Spirit of Harambee alive during the COVID crisis.

10. The labour movement has not only pulled together the workers during the **dark moments** of this pandemic, it has also been a robust co-worker with the government in trying to contain the crisis.

11. And this is because during moments of crisis, like COVID, those who suffer the most are workers, women and children.

12. This ability to **step in to fill the gap** during times of crisis is not new to the labour movement in Kenya. When the colonizers **banned** all political parties in the **mid-1950**, creating a crisis of political expression, the labour movement stepped in and continued with the struggle for our independence.

13. It became the **funnel for political agitation**. And when the leaders of our

independence movement were detained during the emergency period, the **trade unionist** quickly stepped in and **held fort** until they were released.

14. Undeniably, it was on the tide created by these **acts of Harambee** that some of our Founding Fathers rose. These include Tom Mboya, Clement Lubembe, Arthur Ochwada, Denis Akumu, Martin Shikuku, Makhan Singh, Fred Kubai, Bildad Kaggia and JD Kali, amongst others.

15. However, the effort by our labour movement to **offer leadership** and **pull together** the

country in times of crisis, did not stop in the 1950s. During the **post-election violence of 2008**, our labour movement was the first one to begin **mediation efforts** between the **warring divides**.

16. Indeed, their efforts to resolve the crisis had been recorded way before the arrival of the first international **mediator**. This **uncelebrated role** of the Labour movement in Kenya must be put on **record**. More so, their ability to **act swiftly** in times of crisis.

Fellow Kenyans,

17. I have submitted in the past indicating that a crisis, like the COVID pandemic, represents both **threats** and **opportunity**. Those who get **paralyzed** by the hurdles amount to **nothing**. But those who see **opportunity** in the face of challenges produce **innovations**.

18. And because there are **no workers** without **industry**, I will make mention of two **innovative industries** during the last 14 months of COVID.

19. The first one is **Hela Clothing Limited**. When the COVID pandemic hit our country, this EPZ Company quickly **discovered** the **opportunity** and **switched** to the **production** of **PPEs** and **facemasks**. By **rejecting paralysis** and **embracing innovation**, this company saved 300 workers from joblessness.

20. As Hela Clothing Limited was making this transition, the World Health Organization indicated that there was a monthly **deficit of 89 million masks** globally to fight COVID.

21. Faced with this opportunity, Hela was swift to produce **10 million masks** during the months of **April** and **May 2020**. This meant that one factory in Kenya manufactured **1** out of **18** masks globally, to close the WHO deficit.

22. The second industry is **Bedi Investments**, a Kenyan apparel company based in Nakuru. When the COVID pandemic hit, Bedi Investments

retooled its **productive capacity** due to a fall in clothing demand from the west. Over **800 workers** stared at unemployment due to **falling demand** from especially the U.S and Europe.

23. By July 2020, however, Bedi began producing PPEs, and masks. Their production capacity of PPEs shot with speed to **10,000 PPEs daily**. Instead of **firing its 800 workers**, Bedi actually **hired another 300 workers** to cope with the heavy demand, not just from Kenya but from Uganda as well.

24. Today, Bedi Investments is responsible for the manufacturing of **80%** of all the PPEs available in Kenya and for over **70%** of all PPEs in Uganda.

25. The success of the two companies under mention was made possible because they were not **paralyzed by the COVID crisis; instead, they seized the opportunity and created innovations.** But, above all, their innovations preserved the much-needed jobs and even created new ones, in the case of **Bedi investments.**

Fellow Kenyans,

26. I have spoken about the **swift actions** of the **labour movement** and the **innovative ventures** of the **employer** in industry. **Now,** I will turn to the **unbroken spirit** of the worker.

27. I lead the nation in celebrating our **Doctors, Nurses, Clinical Officers,** and **medical support staff** who have worked without tiring, for the **last 14 months** of this pandemic. Their current life of **sacrifice** and **danger** is a true testament that nothing is **impossible.** They have taught us that if we put our **hearts** and **minds** to the service of

others **selflessly**, we will find our **true happiness**.

28. To honour the sacrifice made by our health workers, therefore, we the citizens **must exercise continuous civic responsibility. We must** not overwhelm our health system by acting irresponsibly and raising the rate of admissions into our hospitals, unnecessarily. Let us repay their sacrifice with **civic responsibility**.

29. I lead the nation in celebrating our **law enforcement** and **administration officers** on this Labour Day. These are probably the most **unappreciated workers**, but the most stretched by the COVID pandemic. **We** as a caring nation have noted their **service, dedication** and **sacrifice**, for which we thank them.

30. I lead the nation in celebrating the '**invisible workers**' of our markets during COVID. These are the **invisible suppliers**, who have kept our nation running in the face of difficult times.

31. From the **truck drivers** who deliver our food from far, to the *marigiti women* who have to distribute the food from 4.00 a.m. **From the boda boda riders** who connect the delivery dots, to the **digital sellers** who make this possible. **I** thank you all.

32. And fundamentally, I wish to thank every Kenyan whose **unsung efforts** support our resilience against the challenges we face today.

Fellow Kenyans,

33. Let me end with some **reflections** on our **current COVID-19 status** as a nation. **When I issued the second Public Order of 2021 in March,** announcing the obtaining containment

measures, our COVID caseload in **Nairobi was 56,815.**

34. This caseload has now gone down to below **15,000** for the month of **April**, signifying a **74% decrease** in infections in Nairobi.

35. Data from our medical experts suggests the same trend in the **zoned area** we put on lockdown during my **March 26th 2021 address.** After one month of lockdown, COVID **caseload** within the zoned area has come down by **72%**. In other areas of the Republic, the COVID **caseload**

fell by **89%** in **Mombasa** and **90% in Busia** between March and April 2021.

36. Given the expert evidence we have received and **on the counsel** of the National Security Council and the National Emergency Response Committee on Covid-19, I have on **this day** issued **Public Order No. 3** of 2021, as follows:

- I.** With regard to the Zoned Area comprising of the counties of Nairobi, Machakos, Kiambu, Kajiado and Nakuru, it is directed that **the cessation of movement into and out** of the Zoned area be and is **hereby lifted;**
- II.** That the hours of curfew in the Zoned Area are revised to commence at **10:00pm** and end at **4:00am**, with effect from mid-night on this 1st day of May, 2021, until otherwise directed;
- III.** That in-person and **congregational worship** shall resume in strict fidelity to

the guidelines issued by the Inter-Faith Council and Ministry of Health. **However,** the attending congregation is **capped to 1/3 (*One-third*)** of the capacity of the place of worship;

IV. That the operations of **restaurants and eateries in the Zoned Area shall resume** in accordance with the guidelines issued **jointly by the Ministry of Health and Ministry of Tourism and Wildlife.** Restaurants are encouraged to utilize outdoor spaces to maximize on physical and social distancing.

37. For the entirety of the **Republic of Kenya**, it is **directed** as follows:

- I.** That all our **education institutions** in all levels of learning shall **re-open** in accordance with the **calendar** issued by the **Ministry of Education**;

II. That the resumption of **sporting activities** shall be guided by the regulations to be issued by the **Ministry of Health** jointly with the **Ministry of Sports**;

III. That all bars in the territory of the Republic are to operate until **7:00 P.M.**;

IV. All employers and enterprises are encouraged to allow employees to work from home, with the only exception being with respect to employees working in

critical or essential services that cannot be delivered remotely;

V. That all hospitals are directed to limit the number of visitors for hospitalized patients to **one** visitor per patient **per day**;

VI. That the **prohibition against political gatherings is extended** until otherwise directed; and

VII. All the other containment measures and guidelines that are not expressly set-

out in this Address **remain in force**, and shall be **enforced dutifully**.

Fellow Kenyans,

38. The **containment measures** we have instituted today and all **the interventions** that the Government has made over the last **fourteen months** are geared towards responding to the

unprecedented health threat that has gripped the world. We have instituted those **containment measures and restrictions with no joy.**

39. However, as a caring Government, we fully acknowledge that the responsibility bestowed upon us **calls for action to secure the lives of our people.**

40. Over the last year, we have witnessed challenges in **other parts of the world,** where the

surge of infections has nearly **led to collapse of globally acclaimed health systems**. In moments like this we are all called upon to **make sacrifices** for one another for the **collective good**, it is never the intention of the Government to **make life difficult or unbearable** for any of our citizens.

41. Finally, as we prepare for the **re-opening of schools**, let me emphasize again that **our staying power** in the fight against this pandemic is our **greatest arsenal**.

42. I say so, because, if **public responsiveness** to the **health protocols** goes up, then the

possibility of **further de-escalating** the containment measures **is within reach**. Sadly, a surge of infections will **necessitate an escalation** of the containment measures, a possibility we all **dread**.

43. Let all step up together for our **motherland**; step up for our **families**; step up for our **neighbours**; step up for our beloved Nation **Kenya**.

44. Fellow Kenyans, I wish to conclude my Address to you with a reflection from the third

Stanza of our **National Anthem**. “...may the **Glory of Kenya**, and **the fruit of our labour**, **fill every heart with thanksgiving**” this **labour day**.

45. There is no doubt, without **labour** there is no **prosperity**. Labour is the **game changer** of all **progress; we must**, therefore, celebrate our workers as creators and makers of things, during COVID and in good times.

46. I wish you all a Happy Labour Day, one full of thanksgiving for the fruits of your labour to the nation this year.

**Happy Labour Day, Stay Safe and Stay home.
God Bless You and God Bless Kenya.**

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