



**LAUNCH OF THE KENYA HUMAN RIGHTS
POLICY AND ACTION PLAN**

Remarks by

Siddharth Chatterjee
UN Resident Coordinator
&
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Attorney General of the Republic of Kenya Honourable Githu Muigai;

The Vice Chairperson, Kenya National Commission of Human Rights Mr. George Morara;

The Secretary, Justice and Constitutional Affairs, Mrs. Maryann Njau-Kimani;

Distinguished Members of the Diplomatic Corps;

Distinguished Representatives of Civil Society;

Our colleagues from the Media and the Press

Participants, and Colleagues;

Good morning!

Let me start by conveying the deepest regrets from the UN Resident Coordinator Mr. Siddharth Chatterjee who could not be here due to an urgent commitment.

On Behalf of the RC, I will therefore convey his speech to you.

It is with great privilege and honour that I participate to the launch of the National Policy and Action Plan on Human Rights of the Government of Kenya.

The Plan marks a remarkable milestone in Kenya's march towards strengthening the enjoyment of human rights. My sincere appreciation goes to the Attorney General and Kenya National Commission on Human Rights which played a critical role to spearhead the development of the Plan and lay the foundations for its effective implementation.

Kenya has taken important steps to realise the human rights vision of its Constitution. The Plan provides a clear roadmap to further Government and County action in the next five years, by skilfully unpacking human rights goals and priorities and by entrenching them in the Kenya development agenda. It says loud and clear, that economic growth and social wellbeing must go hand in hand with human rights, democracy, the rule of law, equality and non-discrimination.

Human Rights are at the heart of the United Nations Charter; promoting and encouraging respect for human rights norms and standards without discrimination is one of the main purposes, values and principles of the UN. This is not only a normative imperative, but it is also a practical and operational necessity for greater impact on the lives of people, enabling them to be engaged, safe, productive and creative citizens, of tomorrow's shared prosperity. Today, I wish to reiterate the UN family commitment to support the implementation of the National Policy and Action Plan on Human Rights; this can be achieved through our close partnership in the context of the UNDAF and by leveraging our distinct but complementary roles.

Distinguished guests, Ladies and Gentlemen, I wish to underscore five opportunities, which are going to assist us towards effective implementation of the National Policy and Action Plan on Human Rights.

First, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Kenya were officially launched on 14 September. Human Rights are at the heart of the SDGs; there is not a single SDG that has no equivalent in Kenya's human rights commitments: health, education, food, housing, gender equality, democracy, accountability, public participation, just to mention some. The 17 SDGs provide renewed impetus for fulfilment of human rights. The UN stands ready to partner with Kenya to promote human rights based approaches in designing and implementing Government and County development plans and programmes, consistent with the SDGs promise to leave no one behind.

Second, Kenya has a history of robust and committed civil society;

many of the institutional positive transformations in Kenya were achieved thanks to their commitment, competence and tenacity. The implementation of the National Policy and Action Plan on Human Rights is an immense task and requires involvement of all sections of society. The question is: how do we tighten partnerships between Government, county institutions and civil society networks towards achieving human rights goals and priorities? I welcome the recent Government decision about the coming into operation of the Public Benefit Organisations Act and I look forward to seeing this critical piece of legislation in place. It presents a critical opportunity to consolidate and optimise bridges with civil society networks an acknowledged force for social justice, human rights and equity.

Third, the critical importance of generating public human rights awareness. Far too many Kenyans are not aware of their rights and therefore do not claim them. The National Policy and Action Plan on Human Rights highlight the importance of civic education, public participation and access to information as pre-conditions for effective development and enjoyment of rights. The UN salutes the recent passing of the Access to Information Act, among other developments, and stands ready to support further measures in this direction. We need informed and empowered citizens to advance the Kenya human rights agenda.

Fourth, I wish to underline the mutually reinforcing links between the National Policy and Action Plan on Human Rights and the Universal Periodic Review. When Kenya went through the UPR review in 2015, it welcomed 192 recommendations covering a wide range of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights. The Government has since worked in commendable ways to turn the 192 recommendations into an action oriented and results based implementation matrix. Building on the significant human rights gains achieved so far, we count on the continuous leadership of the Government of Kenya to address existing concerns. In this context, it should be noted, the Co-leadership the Government has taken, in the framework of the UNDAF, to fight poverty in effective and less fragmented ways, to find new ways of supporting innovation and job creation, especially among the youth; continue to invest in reducing the high maternal and infant mortality rates and achieve gender equality as set out in the Constitution. We stand

ready to support Government efforts towards the abolition of the death penalty. The UN supports Kenya's police reform, as a building stone of enforcing human rights, and State security responses which are respectful of human rights and enable independent investigations into complaints, not least emerging from fellow Kenyans.

Fifth, and this is my final remark, I would like to reiterate our full support for Government actions in favour of free, fair and peaceful elections next year. We all need to show the world, set the example and raise confidence, with citizens, partners, investors and visitors of this fantastic country, that expectations will be met, that civil and political rights will be fully delivered upon, consistent with the promise of the Kenya Constitution. Respect of human rights is the bedrock of truly resilient, cohesive and stable societies and is the cornerstone of any fair, free and peaceful election. I welcome the emphasis in the National Policy and Action Plan on Human Rights on the promotion and respect of fundamental freedoms and the Government commitment to improve the institutional framework that will ensure credible elections and address upfront the risks of ethnic manipulation.

Distinguished guests;

Let me end my observations by reiterating once more on behalf of the UN family our commitment to partner with Kenya in its march towards full realisation of human rights. I would like to refer to one of the great quotes from Nelson Mandela: 'As long as poverty, injustice and gross inequality persist in our world, none of us can truly rest'. Let's use this day to renew our efforts and commitments. We owe it to the Kenyan people, which we are here to serve.

Thank You! Asanteni sana!