

REPUBLIC OF KENYA



THE PRESIDENCY
MINISTRY OF PUBLIC SERVICE, YOUTH AND GENDER

**KEY NOTE ADDRESS BY PROF. MARGARET KOBIA, Ph.D, MGH,
CABINET SECRETARY, MINISTRY OF PUBLIC SERVICE, YOUTH AND
GENDER AFFAIRS DURING THE LAUNCH OF THE JOURNEY ON TWO
THIRDS REPORT AT HILTON HOTEL NAIROBI, 29TH MARCH 2019**

SALUTATIONS

Dr. Joyce Mutinda, Chairperson NGEC,

NGEC commissioners,

Representatives from National and County Governments,

Representatives from Development Partners,

Representatives from Civil Society Organizations,

Distinguished guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

INTRODUCTION

I am delighted to join you this morning as we launch the report: "***The Journey Towards Realization of the Two-Thirds Gender Framework***". The report chronicles the experiences of the National Gender and Equality Commission Technical Working Group in its effort to attain the ***Not more than Two-Thirds gender*** principle as enshrined in the Constitution of Kenya 2010.

I wish to commend the Commission for compiling the report which presents valuable lessons on advocacy and engagement approaches with legislative bodies with respect to gender issues. The report will serve as a useful resource for gender equality advocates nationally, regionally and internationally.

Ladies and gentlemen,

THE GENDER EQUALITY CHALLENGE

Why is gender equality still an issue of concern today?

Globally, women continue to be marginalized and denied the opportunity to compete for opportunities on equal terms with men. Worldwide there is no nation that has a gender parity score of 100%. In terms of labor force, global averages on the participation rate of women in formal employment between ages 25-54 is 63% compared to 94% for men. Globally, women are more likely to remain unemployed as compared to men with 2017 global rates for men standing at 5.5% as compared to women at 6.2%. The Gender wage gap is estimated to be 23%, which means women earn 77% of what men earn. Globally women are 13% holders of agricultural land.

In Kenya the land ownership for women stands at a paltry 1% according to KNBS statistics. The Global Gender Gap report 2017, ranked Kenya at position 76 out of 144 globally, with significant inequalities in education, health outcomes, representation in parliament and participation in the labor market. Women suffered marginalization and discrimination in many areas including access to business opportunities, higher education, reproductive health services, and gender-based violence (GBV).

It is estimated that in any economy the gender gap costs the economy 15% of the country's GDP. It is for this reason that the United Nations identified gender equality as a stand-alone goal under SDG number 5. As a member state we are obliged to ensure gender equality is realized in our country.

Ladies and gentlemen

THE GAINS MADE

Despite many challenges, Kenya has registered great strides in closing the gender equality gap and upscaling women empowerment. In decision making positions we have made notable improvements in many sectors as demonstrated by the KNBS statistics of 2018.

Female representation has improved as follows:

- i. Supreme court – 28%
- ii. Court of Appeal – 32%
- iii. High Court 41%
- iv. Magistrates – 49%
- v. Practicing lawyers – 57%
- vi. Cabinet Secretaries 27%
- vii. Principal Secretaries – 23%
- viii. Diplomatic corps – 28%
- ix. County Commissioner - 36%
- x. Senators – 31%
- xi. National Assembly - 21%
- xii. County Assemblies – 34

It is clear that representation at the national assembly level continues to be the key challenge in meeting gender parity at the decision-making level. You will recall that the last attempt to pass legislation on the two-thirds gender principle failed for the third time early this year.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Despite the hitches, we must remain resolute to our aims. It is important that as we chart the road map to greater achievements, we appreciate the gains made so far, and draw strategies on how to build the gains.

In legislation achievements have been impressive:

Kenya Constitution 2010 entrenches the rights of women as human rights. A number of supportive legislation have been passed entrenching women's rights nationally. To name a few, these include:

- i. Marriage Act 2014;
- ii. Protection Against Domestic Violence 2015;
- iii. Matrimonial Act 2013;
- iv. Prohibition of FGM Act 2011;
- v. Law of Succession Act 2012;
- vi. Citizenship and Immigration 2011;
- vii. Sexual Offences Act 2006;
- viii. National Gender and Equality Act 2011.

In women empowerment the country boasts of vibrant affirmative action funds that continue to impact women's lives in many positive ways:

- i. **Women Enterprise Fund:** Has cumulatively disbursed **Ksh. 15 billion to 1.5 million women**
- ii. **UWEZO Fund** has disbursed **Ksh. 5,944,023,000** to **65,012** groups comprising **40,850** women groups since 2014.
- iii. **The National Government Affirmative Action Fund (NGAAF)** has disbursed **Ksh.7.07 billion** shillings to counties to-date.

These efforts have been complemented by the programs of the various government ministries and agencies. Through supply of Government Sanitary Towels, girls are remaining in schools and we have the first female General in Fatuma Ahmed of the Kenya Defense Forces.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

CALL TO ACTION

The full implementation of the affirmative action principle in line with Article 27 (8) of the Constitution will go a long way in ensuring full realization of gender equality in Kenya. The hurdles in this journey have shown us that we need to re-examine strategies to ensure the implementation of the Constitution in relation to the principles of equality and inclusion.

I invite the Commission to take lead in examining all possible routes within and without the legislative framework to chart out a practical road map that will lead us to the desired outcome of equal representation.

I urge you to think outside the box and come up with innovative approaches to achieving the desired constitutional goals of equality and inclusion. As a commission you owe it to the women of Kenya as well as the country.

The country's top leadership, particularly His Excellency President Uhuru Kenyatta, has demonstrated his support for the two-thirds gender principle. The commission should strategize on how to capitalize on the good-will by the President and other leaders of note. As calls for a referendum gain traction, the commission should consider accelerating its advocacy messaging on the two-thirds gender principle. As the line ministry, we are keen to engage and work together with other state and non-state actors including Parliament, Attorney General's Office and NGEC to secure the realization of these goals of equality and inclusion.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

CONCLUSION

As I conclude, let me once again commend the Commission for the report on this struggle. It will serve as an invaluable tool of knowledge management for current and future generations.

Let me also reiterate the Government's commitment to deliver our pledge to empower all persons and groups in line with the Constitution and economic Blue Print Vision 2030. In this regard, I assure the commission of the ministry's unreserved support as they pursue the realization of the two thirds gender principle in our statutes.

Similarly, I urge the development partners and non-state actors not to give up but continue giving the needed support in seeing this process through to its logical conclusion.

Finally, ladies and gentlemen, it is now my pleasure to declare the report ***"The Journey Towards Realization of the Two-Thirds Gender Framework"***, officially launched.

Thank you