

SPEECH BY THE CHAIR, COUNCIL OF GOVERNERS DURING THE CLOSING CEREMONY OF THE 3RD EDITION OF THE KENYA NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR UNESCO (KNATCOM) NATIONAL CULTURAL CELEBRATIONS ON 23RD SEPTEMBER 2018 AT THE JOMO KENYATTA SPORTS GROUND, KISUMU COUNTY

Distinguished Guests,

Members of the Celebrations organizing committee,

Participating teams,

Ladies and Gentlemen.

It gives me pleasure to join you on this auspicious occasion to officially close the 3rd Edition of the Kenya National Commission for UNESCO (KNATCOM) National Cultural Celebrations. I am pleased to note that for the last one week Kisumu City has been a cultural melting point showcasing the rich cultural heritage of the Kenyan people. May I take this opportunity on behalf of the people of Kisumu to thank the Kenya National Commission for UNESCO (KNATCOM) for having chosen Kisumu as the venue for this year's celebrations which I am informed is a biennial event. I also wish to thank the Governor of Kisumu Prof. Peter Anyang Nyong'o for accepting to host this event.

Ladies and Gentlemen, Culture is an important aspect of a people as it represents their identity and heritage and is therefore, a human right. Denying people the opportunity to celebrate their cultural heritage is dehumanizing and

is the ultimate relegation to slavery, which is why the Swahili people say “**Mwacha Mila ni Mtumwa**”. In fact, a nation that does not recognize the important role of culture in development is unlikely to make significant impact in economic, social and even political development. Good governance and dispensation of justice in a nation is many times a reflection of that nation’s national character and her cultural value systems.

The Kenyan Constitution, in its preamble, acknowledges the cultural diversity of the Kenyan people who are determined to live in peace and unity as one indivisible sovereign nation. Further, in Article 11, the Constitution recognizes culture as the foundation of the nation and as the cumulative civilization of the Kenyan people and the nation and commits the government to promote and protect national cultural expressions. The recognition of culture in the Constitution is indeed a reaffirmation of the importance of culture as a source of strength upon which to sustain the socio-fabric of the nation and is a source of fresh ideas and perspectives to resolve the common challenges that face our people.

Ladies and Gentlemen, the diversity of the Kenyan people is indeed a resource that we must endeavour to promote and develop as it has the potential to contribute to national development. It is noted that nations that have invested in their cultural heritage are now reaping huge economic benefits. Kenya being a multicultural country has rich and diverse cultural resources such as; traditional

medicine and foods, arts, crafts, music, dance, dress, design and various traditional knowledge systems. I urge and call upon both the national government and county governments to invest and support the culture sector to improve the livelihood of communities and artistes.

I am informed that this festival brought together participants from across the counties and other public institutions to celebrate our various diverse cultural diversities which were displayed and showcased. These unique diversities must be safeguarded and promoted for the posterity of the nation. Dialogue of cultures promotes and strengthens the bonds between communities and further promotes understanding and tolerance as a requisite for peace.

Ladies and Gentleman, in the spirit of our Constitution, it is important that the country embraces the vision of our forefathers of having a united nation by nurturing values that can concretize societal values that will hold the country together. It is thus critical for the country to seek new ways to promote and embrace genuine social, cultural and political dialogue with a view to build bridges for a peaceful society in which all communities are not only respected but celebrated in our daily lives.

Human development is about allowing people to lead the kind of life that is beneficial to them and this requires the government to promote inclusive growth at both levels of government so that no one feels left behind. Cultural dialogue will not only promote participation of citizens in development but will

guarantee cohesion and respect for diversity. This is in recognition that without social cohesion and peace there can never be development.

Ladies and Gentlemen; the 3rd Edition of the Kenya National Commission for UNESCO (KNATCOM) National Cultural Celebrations indeed is very timely and of great significance as it has been held at a time when our country is at cross roads in building bridges among Kenyan communities with a view to build one strong united nation that takes pride in her people. The theme of this year's celebrations **“Enhancing National Cohesion, Identity and Pride”** is of great significance and complements the efforts towards promotion of a culture of peace and tolerance as well as guaranteeing a unified nation.

Further, I take note of the commitment demonstrated by various participants that have showcased their unique cultures during these celebrations as an affirmation of the pride and value communities have on cultural heritage. Participation of counties and other public institutions in these cultural celebrations is a confirmation that culture is the glue that holds us together and lives through generations. I hope the cultural exchanges and interactions that have taken place during the celebrations have provided a new opportunity for participants to appreciate cultural diversity as a source of wealth and not a factor for division. This festival should indeed be a turning point for participants to become new ambassadors in building bridges of peace. I urge all of you here

to promote tolerance and understanding to help fight stereotypes and prejudices held about other communities which are threats to democracy and peaceful society.

Kenya's vision 2030 aspires that the country becomes a globally competitive and prosperous country with a high quality of life by 2030, and unless the Kenyan people are united through common shared values as stipulated in our Constitution, Vision 2030 will remain only a mirage. It is indeed in recognition of the importance of peace and stability in development of the nation that the President and I have taken it upon ourselves to build bridges founded on the values of mutual understanding to promote an intercultural dialogue that can result into a unified, prosperous nation that thrives on the richness of the diversity of her people.

Ladies and Gentlemen; this new understanding is in tandem with UNESCO's main mission of building peace in the minds of men and women. It is important for the nation to rekindle the vision of our fore fathers and heroes who sacrificed for this great nation. Negative ethnicity has continually pulled this country down. We must join hands to foster appreciation of diversity as a source of our wealth and strength.

I wish to thank the organizers of this event, various participants, partners and all those who found it worthwhile to support and participate in these cultural

celebrations. I hope your stay in Kisumu was memorable and that you will have a safe journey back to your communities and work places.

With these remarks, it is now my pleasure to officially close the 3rd Edition of the Kenya National Commission for UNESCO (KNATCOM) National Cultural Celebrations.

Thank you and God bless you all.