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STATEMENT

BY

**H.E. DR. WILLIAM SAMOEI RUTO, EGH
PRESIDENT AND COMMANDER IN-CHIEF
OF THE DEFENCE FORCES OF THE REPUBLIC OF KENYA**

DURING

THE

GENERAL DEBATE

OF THE

**77TH SESSION
OF THE
UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

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Please check against delivery



MR. PRESIDENT OF THIS 77TH SESSION OF THE UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY, YOUR EXCELLENCY CSABA KÖRÖSI,

SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE UNITED NATIONS, YOUR EXCELLENCY ANTONIO GUTERRES,

EXCELLENCIES,

DISTINGUISHED DELEGATES,

I am grateful for the immense privilege to join Your Excellencies in this distinguished Assembly; a privilege accorded me through a peaceful, democratic transition following free and fair elections in Kenya on 9th August, 2022. Elections that stand as testimony of the universal power of democracy, but also of the manifest ability of African peoples to invest in stronger nations and a secure future by directing robust constitutions, effective institutions, and the impartial administration of the rule of law towards the achievement of shared aspirations. It is an honour to be here as the newest Head of State and Government at this 77th session of the United Nations General Assembly, exactly six years to the day since I last stood here, when I was Deputy President of the Republic of Kenya, representing my President, on 21st September, 2016.

This 77th session comes at a unique moment when the entire world is struggling with multiple grave challenges that include regional conflicts, the Covid-19 pandemic, the triple planetary crises, food insecurity and the rising cost of living.

I take this opportunity to congratulate you, Mr. President, on your election to preside over this Session, and to express my confidence that your wealth of experience, accumulated over a career that is admirable for both its duration and distinction, offers us significant assurance of your good leadership. Your



motto: *"Solutions through Solidarity, Sustainability and Science"* succinctly captures with particular resonance the urgent imperatives of our time. It also calls our attention to the principles and modalities that hold great promise in unlocking the possibilities in the present global situation. Indeed it is a strong reminder of legitimate expectations throughout the world of high performance from leadership. I assure you of Kenya's firm support and cooperation during your tenure.

I further take this opportunity to commend your predecessor, His Excellency **Abdulla Shahid**, for his bold steps in steering the United Nations community and for ensuring its business continuity under the unprecedented circumstances occasioned by multiple global threats such as the Covid-19 pandemic. The positive output of your successful tenure has galvanized the political impetus of member states to achieve demonstrable resilience in pursuit of prosperity and sustainability of our respective economies.

Excellencies, Human well-being is under grave threat. The health of the planet requires urgent attention. The immense pressure exerted by conventional threats such as climate change, the global food crisis, terrorism, cybercrime and armed conflict has been compounded by unprecedented devastating disruptions due to Covid-19. I express my approval of the theme for this session, **"A Watershed Moment: Transformative Solutions to Interlocking Challenges"** because it boldly signals the window of opportunity we now have to escalate our engagement, **from firm consensus to decisive action.**

In many respects, the Covid-19 pandemic stripped us of many illusions and exposed stark justice and solidarity deficits in the face of existential crisis. It brought into sharp focus the global economy's two-lane highway, repressively patrolled by a rising tide of exclusionist nationalism. A spectre that



undermines prospects of collective action and significantly impairs the resolve of the international community to guarantee fundamental rights, including safety and dignity of the world's vulnerable majority. It is for this reason that many nations , especially of the Global South, now advocate for the democratisation of global governance and a re-imagined multilateralism that is inclusive and works for the good of all. Kenya stands ready to work with other nations to achieve the pan-Africanisation of multilateralism and a more just and inclusive system of global governance.

It is important to reflect on these matters as we do our best to get our people, enterprises, and industries back on their feet so that the engine of development can power our societies towards prosperity that actually leaves no one behind. **Building Back Better** is the universal rallying call to incorporate lessons learnt into doing more, in a better way to recover from the shock. I suggest that we have a golden opportunity to faithfully adhere to this motto by augmenting it, in word and in deed, with an additional “B”: **Building Back Better, from the Bottom.**

Building back better from the bottom upwards is, essentially, about including the marginalised working majority in the economic mainstream. The bottom billion relentlessly wage their daily battle for survival in a crowded arena characterised by scarcity of opportunity and a generally precarious existence. The ingenuity, optimism, resilience and energy in this ever *bustling* bottom is sometimes called *hustling*. Invisible to policy makers and beyond the reach of many public services, these hustlers take nothing for granted, surviving overwhelming odds, and frequently succeeding greatly. A famous American once said that **things may come to those who wait, but only things left behind by those who hustle**. It is time to bolster the resilience of our nations; to mainstream these **hustlers** through deliberate strategies and



efforts for economic inclusion; by **Building Back Better, from the Bottom-Up.**

The interlocking challenges of conflicts, triple planetary crises and the global food crisis have impeded our momentum and obstructed our focus on achieving fundamental transformations towards sustainable development. In the Horn of Africa region, severe drought, disruption of supply chains in the region and beyond due to the Covid-19 pandemic, as well as the Russia-Ukraine conflict have left us food-insecure. Consequently, we have been constrained to repurpose our strategies to prioritise drought and famine relief, insulating education from disruption and improving social protection and healthcare systems to secure the well-being of our people.

Many countries now bear witness to the unsettling phenomena of rivers, canals and water reservoirs that are drying up on account of droughts and heat waves occasioned by climate change. Kenya is no exception. The northern, arid and semi-arid rangelands of our country have been gravely impacted by drought whose severity has not been experienced in 40 years. 3.1 million residents of these ASALs are now severely food-insecure on account of scarce rainfall over three consecutive seasons, leading to poor crop and pasture. This unprecedented confluence of intensely adverse events has exacerbated water scarcity and starvation, worsened by rising food prices, thus complicating Kenya's roadmap towards delivering good quality of life to our citizens, and hindering the progress to achieving SDG 6 and SDG 2.

Severe drought has affected not only the Horn of Africa and the Sahel regions, but continues to devastate many others, including in Asia, Europe and the Americas. If for no other reason, the fact that we are in this together must strengthen the case for concerted efforts across the continents. With this in mind, I call on Member States and all relevant stakeholders to demonstrate



strong political will and showcase effective cooperation by supporting the most affected countries financially, as well as through sharing land restoration and climate adaptation technologies. It is through collaborations to expand inclusion that we can attain a new paradigm in multilateralism.

The latest report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) reminds us that we cannot afford to waste another moment debating the merits of doing something vis-a-vis doing nothing. It will soon be too late to reverse the course of events, and then, even the best possible interventions will not suffice. As leaders, every day is an opportunity to expedite our efforts to confront the triple planetary crisis.

It will be recalled that during the Stockholm+50 meeting, which Kenya had the honour of co-hosting with Sweden, there was consensus from States on the need to act urgently in addressing environmental impacts. Given this agreement, it is deeply concerning that little progress has been made in respect of the needful actions. It is time to collectively contemplate urgent measures needed to implement high-priority actions required to contain ongoing disruptions, as we deliberate on long-term implementation approaches to be undertaken. I fully agree with the Secretary-General's memorable statement, that **“we have a rendezvous with a climate disaster”**. I add that we must not be taken by surprise. If indeed forewarned is forearmed, this is our opportunity **to mobilise with tremendous urgency and take action at once.**

Excellencies, the agricultural sector has an important part to play in reducing the severity of climate change. A number of practices have a bearing, positive or negative, on various dimensions of the environment. Investing in modern agricultural technology is therefore one important avenue towards tackling prevailing environmental challenges.



Kenya is responding through substantial investment in climate-resilient agriculture. At the core of our 10-year strategy for Agricultural Sector Growth and Transformation are 9 flagships. They include the registration of farmers to direct incentives, improving farmer practices through customised extension services, monitoring of emergency food reserve stocks using a Digital Food Balance Sheet and the use of Early Warning System to monitor food supplies and market prices.

Agriculture remains the bedrock of the development of many nations, and will thus continue to hold the key to the creation of equitable and sustainable growth for our people. No country, large or small, has ever attained significant growth without modernizing its agricultural sector. And as we rededicate ourselves to these targets, we must, in the immediate term, find answers to the severe deficit in the availability, flow and accessibility of fertiliser to our farmers worldwide. I couldn't agree more with Secretary General Guterres on his warning right here yesterday, that **“without action now, the global fertiliser shortage will quickly morph into a global food shortage”**.

We are encouraged to note that education, health, agriculture and numerous other public services have become increasingly reliant on digital access. The world needs greater investment in the development of ICT infrastructure, accompanied with policies that support innovation and increased acquisition and deployment of technology. In so doing, we should be driven by the conviction that these measures offer a viable shortcut to poverty reduction and the promotion of inclusive development. I call for stronger global partnerships to enhance ICT infrastructure in developing countries and bridge the yawning digital divide between the global south and the rest of the world.

Excellencies, this 77th United Nations General Assembly follows the commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the United Nations Environmental



Programme - **UNEP@50** as well as **Stockholm+50** and the 4th **United Nations Ocean Conference** in Lisbon. Outcomes of these conferences demanded real commitment to address global environmental concerns as a matter of urgency, and for a just transition to sustainable economies that work for all people.

The March 2022 landmark resolution of the 5th **United Nations Environmental Assembly** in Nairobi to end plastic pollution is a decisive signal that the world is prepared and motivated to act on this menace. Kenya is committed to work closely with other nations to pursue legally binding instruments aimed at bringing an end to plastic pollution. As the host nation to **UNEP** and the **UN-HABITAT**, Kenya affirms that these critical United Nations Agencies have an indispensable role in the promotion of environmental sustainability globally, as well as in developing socially and environmentally sound and sustainable cities.

In keeping with its strong commitment to multilateral institutions, Kenya has made available more land for the United Nations Office in Nairobi (UNON) to facilitate the upgrading of its complex. I take this opportunity to call on Member States to complement this contribution through enhanced financing to adequately modernise the UNON facilities.

Kenya remains a strong advocate for making the sustainable use of **Ocean and Blue Economy** resources a development priority, holding the firm belief that significantly increased investment in this essential sector can end hunger, reduce poverty, create jobs and spur economic growth. I urge the Secretary-General to continue calling attention to the urgent need to develop this vital sector. In particular, I further urge the Secretary-General to call on developed countries to invest in sustainable fishing, protect marine



ecosystems and to share ocean-based climate solutions with developing countries.

For our part, I am pleased to report that, building on the historic **2018 Sustainable Blue Economy Conference** in Nairobi, Kenya is reviewing its **National Blue Economy Strategy** to strengthen community structures in participatory management of freshwater, coastal and marine resources and ecosystems. The strategy is expected to contribute to our economic development through food and nutrition security, coastal and rural development and income increases along the aquaculture value chains, maritime transport and tourism. We invite development partnerships to invest in Africa towards building capacity to sustainably utilise marine resources. We must rally together to make the best use of Africa's vast blue resources in developing our economies while meeting our climate targets.

As we look forward to the 27th **Conference of Parties** to the **United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change - COP27**, scheduled for Sharma-El-Sheikh in Egypt, it is logical to expect that Member States will shift their attention towards the development and implementation of frameworks for climate change mitigation. Accomplishment of pending actions by Member States is essential for the implementation work that lies ahead. I therefore call upon all of us to urgently deliver on all commitments made towards climate financing. On this matter, it is critical to emphasize that we are running out of time.

Over the past decade, Kenya has sustained its aggressive pursuit of rapid socioeconomic transformation through three principal roadmaps. First is the **Kenya National Vision 2030**, the formal long-term blueprint aimed at transforming Kenya into a newly-industrialising, upper-middle-income country providing high quality of life to all its citizen in a clean and secure environment



by 2030. The second has been the **African Union's Agenda 2063** and the third, the **Sustainable Development Goals**. Kenya looks towards tapping into a variety of resources to catalyse the achievement of these interlocking and mutually reinforcing objectives.

The disruption and ensuing crisis due to Covid-19 pandemic compelled us to diversify our focus into new interventions, including an **Economic Stimulus Programme**, a **Covid-19 Economic Recovery Strategy** and a **Covid-19 Social Economic re-engineering Recovery Strategy**, all aimed at mitigating the adverse impacts of the pandemic. I confirm that we have done the best of everything we could in the circumstances. Nevertheless, it is not enough. Kenya and the rest of Africa, like other developing countries, are in need of greater international partnership and cooperation to avert economic crisis in the wake of the pandemic.

Developing countries, being heavily burdened by external debt servicing, run the risk of losing development gains due to the shocks inflicted by the pandemic and associated disruptions. I call upon global financial institutions and the international community to take urgent measures and release all existing financial instruments to provide much-needed additional liquidity and secure better fiscal space for developing countries like Kenya to enhance social investment, support climate change adaptation and mitigation, address security needs and resolve development financing challenges.

On behalf of Kenya, therefore, I join other leaders in calling upon the **World Bank**, the **International Monetary Fund** and other multilateral lenders to extend pandemic-related debt relief to the worst hit countries, especially those affected by the devastating combination of conflict, climate change and covid-19. Furthermore, I urge the **G20** to extend and expand the scope of the



common framework to suspend or reschedule debt repayments by middle-income countries during the pandemic recovery period.

At this point, I would like this distinguished assembly to take a moment and consider the peace and security landscape. A landscape currently beset with multiple challenges, yet abounding with considerable opportunities. Our home region of Eastern and Horn of Africa is, in particular, burdened by significant conflicts and changes with implications for the region's development. We stand on the cusp of vast opportunity for galvanising confidence building measures to generate and sustain momentum towards sustainable peace.

In its role as an anchor state in the region, Kenya has sustained our investment in diplomatic efforts to find lasting peace in myriad situations within and beyond the region. Although some processes have yielded undeniable successes, challenges remain. I therefore strongly reiterate our call for partnership towards confidence-building measures and urge more concerted efforts towards sustainable peace and stability.

Kenya is currently serving in the United Nations Security Council. I am proud to confirm that our engagement over the last 2 years has prioritised **Regional Peace and Security, Countering Terrorism and Violent Extremism, Peace Support Operations, Climate and Security** as critical contributions to collective efforts to build a safer, more prosperous and peaceful world. I am also proud to state that Kenya has continued to champion closer cooperation between regional mechanisms and the Security Council as an effective means of achieving international peace and security.

Kenya continues to advocate the renewal of the African Union security architecture which draws comparative strength from the highly productive



complementarity between the **United Nations**, the **African Union** and the **Regional Economic Communities**. Working closely with the two elected African Countries of the **A3** in the UN Security Council, we are committed to finding a stronger African voice in the Council, and achieving a consensus-driven, rule-based multilateral system. It is our manifest intention to see greater Pan-Africanization of the global agenda in order to make multilateralism work for the people of the world in their diversity. It is time for multilateralism to reflect the voice of the farmers, represent the hopes of villagers, champion the aspirations of pastoralists, defend the rights of fisherfolk, express the dreams of traders, respect the wishes of workers and, indeed, protect the welfare of all peoples of the Global South.

Let me express the strong collective conviction of my country that the relevance, legitimacy and moral authority of the United Nations will forever remain deficient, undermined by the absence of comprehensive reforms of the **United Nations Security Council**. We therefore remain firmly committed to reforming the Security Council to make it a more effective, representative and democratic global institution. Given the magnitude and variety of challenges the world continues to confront, a more fit-for-purpose United Nations is urgently needed, that possesses the legitimacy and efficacy in dealing with threats to international peace and security. A just and inclusive world order cannot be spearheaded by a **United Nations Security Council** that persistently and unjustly fails the inclusivity criterion. Similarly, threats to democracy will not be credibly resolved by an undemocratic and unrepresentative **Security Council**. It is vitally important for this critical institution to reflect the values it is entrusted to protect, defend and uphold on behalf of humankind.



There might never be a more opportune time to revisit the practice of unilateral coercive actions, which often violate fundamental tenets of a rule-based international order, such as those imposed on Zimbabwe and Cuba. Apart from undermining the sovereign equality of nations, they also indiscriminately punish the general citizenry, reserving their bitterest sting for innocent hustlers and the vulnerable. This compounds injustice and worsens suffering.

The Covid-19 pandemic severely disrupted health systems, seriously challenging the implementation of programmes that are vital for the realisation of health-related **Sustainable Development Goals**. To place us firmly back on track, and accelerate our progress towards these SDG targets, it is imperative for us to foster sustainable partnerships between Governments, other state actors, the civil society and the private sector. This modality of collective action is particularly vital for building resilient health systems, whose importance in enabling us withstand future pandemics and other health crises can no longer be disputed.

For this reason, Kenya will continue to strongly support the development of a legally binding **World Health Organisation** international instrument to anchor global solidarity and promote equity. The fact of the matter is that the Covid-19 pandemic exposed, for all the world to see, the severe deficit of these critical values in our present multilateral configuration. Global supply chains remained impervious to demand in the Global South generally, and Africa in particular. Unequal access to vaccines underscored this unjust and unequal situation with unforgettable clarity. Whenever human life, security and welfare is in jeopardy, it is immoral to administer interventions through frameworks that are anchored on fundamental inequality.

We are all witnesses to admirable demonstrations of effective solidarity in response to crises in various parts of the world. Our knowledge of the possibility of spontaneous yet resolute global solidarity reinforces the African exception as particularly repugnant. From genocides and civil conflict to



famine and pandemics, the African continent is consistently left behind to bear the brunt of weak solidarity and disastrous failure of multilateralism. History indicates the last time that Africa was the focal point of strong and effective multilateral consensus was during the Berlin Conferences of 1884-1885, and the character of the ensuing interventions casts a long shadow to date.

Not to put too fine a point to it, the failure of multilateralism during crises which relegate the people of Africa outside the circle of moral consideration, and normalises humanitarian neglect and other casual injustices are failures of humanity. Nothing about Africa or its peoples makes it acceptable for this type of failure to persist in this era, and we have an urgent moral duty to do better. And to right this wrong.

For two decades, Africa has borne the brunt of three epidemics: the human immunodeficiency virus (**HIV**), **tuberculosis (TB)** and malaria. I applaud innovative partnerships like the **Global Fund** for their progress in addressing the three menaces, and also welcome the ambitious targets set for the 7th replenishment cycle. Kenya is committed to supporting the **Global Fund** and implementing the agreed targets in order to actualise our pledge at the replenishment conference.

Kenya calls upon all countries implementing the **Global Fund** programs, especially fellow African states, to remain at the forefront in championing for successful replenishment of the fund. This way, the mobilisation of much-needed resources is enhanced, bringing us closer to the final elimination of these dangerous diseases.

In conclusion, Kenya joins the Secretary General in calling for the strengthening of multilateralism as the only sustainable path to a peaceful, stable and prosperous world for all. This is the imperative of our time, and the



call of this moment. It is time to work on the trust deficit with stronger conviction that none of us is really safe until all of us are safe.

The theme of the 77th Session, **“A Watershed moment: Transformative Solutions to Interlocking Challenges”** demands of us that we recognise that the crises we must confront are inter-linked in complicated ways. They can only be effectively addressed through more imaginative strategies and innovative formulae. A population of 8 billion people, in a densely networked world increasingly looks up to the multilateral system as the anchor for their individual aspirations directly, and indirectly through robust national frameworks. Increasingly, therefore, the United Nations system is expected to be responsive to these needs, and for the proceedings in forums like this, to speak to ordinary people in far flung reaches of our incredibly diverse globe. It is impossible to address all their individual needs directly, but it is possible to respond to all of them by speaking with conviction to the universal values of equality, inclusion, justice, solidarity and collective action, and by making sure that all our interventions effectively reflect them with clarity.

The integrity of the international order must be measured by the distance separating our resolutions, consensus and agreement from decisive actions, committed interventions and effective solutions. A watershed moment, therefore, demands that we reduce that gap drastically, and quickly.

Kenya pursues numerous essential domestic agenda through the multilateral framework. We are heavily invested in the strength, effectiveness and eventual success of all interventions formulated by this institution. It is important that the outputs of this and other similar fora achieve immediate resonance in the minds and lives of our youth still seeking opportunity to express and actualise themselves, our farmers working to feed the nation, our *jua kali* entrepreneurs striving in pursuit of success in the informal economy,



and our professionals who formulate policy, implement strategy and monitor service delivery in the public and private sectors.

Africa places immense value in the international community and the tremendous possibilities it can unlock, through inclusive, sustainable and effective action, to transform the lives of our peoples and establish lasting peace, security and shared prosperity. This watershed moment is our chance to turn the key and open this door of opportunity. We can make progress in addressing the triple global threats, and liberate ourselves from the shame of past failures of multilateralism. At this watershed moment, we must not only choose, but also act decisively to bequeath to our children and their children a greener, safer, healthier and more abundant Earth. **Let us do it. TOGETHER. INCLUSIVELY. MULTILATERALLY!**

