

**SPEECH BY H.E. HON. WYCLIFFE AMBETSA OPARANYA,  
E.G.H., C.G.J., GOVERNOR KAKAMEGA COUNTY DURING THE  
OFFICIAL OPENING OF THE SECOND SESSION OF KAKAMEGA  
COUNTY SECOND ASSEMBLY ON 20TH FEBRUARY, 2018**

**Mr. Speaker**

**Honourable Members of the County Assembly**

**Ladies and Gentlemen**

It gives me great pleasure to address you at the beginning of the Second Session of Kakamega County Assembly soon after 2017 end year - as well as 2018 New Year – festivities. I am confident that Honourable Members have had a well-deserved recess and are now re-energized and ready to resume their legislative and oversight roles as provided for in the constitution and other relevant laws.

Mr. Speaker

I need to emphasize that it is healthy to have the recess as it provides Honourable Members with an opportunity to spend time with the electorate to understand their needs with a view to representing them more effectively.

I would like therefore to start my speech by formally wishing Honourable Members a very successful and prosperous New Year 2018. As you are aware, our work is cut out for us, taking into account that our election manifestos and the County Integrated Development Plans are in the public domain. We should therefore be prepared for a pretty well defined task that will take a considerable amount of time, with pitfalls and difficulties that will challenge all our skills and endurance.

Mr. Speaker

The citizens of Kakamega and other stakeholders have high expectations and are hopeful that the Executive and Legislative arms of Government will continue to work closely and tirelessly for the benefit of the people. We need to provide transformative leadership as we strive to create wealth and improve the quality of life of our people through effective implementation of the development agenda of our great county.

One of the immediate key tasks before the House is the on-going vetting of nominees for the positions of County Executive Committee Members, Chief Officers and the County Secretary, in line with Section 7(4) and 5 of the Public Appointments Act, 2017.

I wish to emphasize that the Executive, the County Assembly and the public have a common interest to ensure that our County gets not only qualified and self-driven individuals, but also a team whose integrity is beyond reproach. I sincerely hope that all of us will play our respective roles fairly, transparently and expeditiously in pursuit of public interest.

To achieve our goals, there is absolute need to recruit capable and committed individuals whose skills and leadership qualities are equal to the tasks we have set out to accomplish and the expectations of our people. Our vision and strategic plans are clear and must be actualized.

Mr. Speaker

I have made public pronouncements on our vision that seeks to 'Create a wealthy and prosperous economy for the benefit of all the citizens of the County.'

In my manifesto, I promised to launch a transformative agenda focusing on County functions whose key pillars are as follows:

1. Transforming the agricultural sector to improve productivity, promote diversification and ultimately increase farmers' incomes. We also intend to improve the livelihoods of residents through competitive agricultural production. Food security is one of our key priorities that must take a special place in our project planning and implementation agenda.

Some of the key deliverables include farm preparation and inputs subsidy programme to enable farmers access to mechanized farm preparation and cheaper fertilizer and maize seeds; this year's programme of distribution of the fertilizers and seeds has already commenced. I urge you to advise farmers in your respective Wards to collect their requirements at the Ward level.

2. Infrastructure development to spur economic growth by improving intra and inter county connectivity, improving access to markets and attracting investments; we are currently undertaking rehabilitation of 400 Kilometers of roads under Fuel Levy Fund, and soon 600 Kms will be covered under the 10 Km per Ward project. The ambitious 200 Kms of Bitumen road network is also on course

3. Transforming the county health services to ensure our citizens have access to affordable and high quality preventive and curative health services; all health facilities will be revamped and we expect to officially open the Kakamega Teaching and Referral Hospital before the end of this year.

4. Transforming the education sector to equip our young people with knowledge and skills to become globally competitive individuals; we have initiated the free ECDE learning, expected to be fully operational by the next financial year. We are also exploring the possibility of starting a feeding programme at the ECDE level.

5. Strengthening the devolved structures to enable our citizens to reap the fruits of devolution; Community Administrators will be in place by the beginning of the next financial year.

6. Accelerate the development and application of ICTs to support our economic development agenda; already, operationalisation of the ERP system is on course.

7. Creating a highly supportive and competitive environment for our businesses to grow and thrive so that they can create more quality jobs, thus contributing to the economy of the County;

8. In the water sector, we will develop a water and sewerage Master Plan to guide the development of water and sewerage infrastructure in the county. We recognize that the County has abundant water resources, but owing to an absence of water storage and irrigation infrastructure, they are grossly underutilized.

Achievement of water security – defined as reliable water supplies and acceptable risks from floods and other unpredictable events will require significant expansion storage capacity from current levels of 200 cubic meters per capita to levels of at least 750 cubic meters per capita. Over the next four years, we will allocate more resources to this sector to ensure that all households have access to clean piped water; urban areas will get priority in provision of piped water.

9. Another important priority for my Administration is the mounting of high mast lighting in urban areas to enhance security and support a 24 hour economy; we have engaged Kenya Rural Electrification Authority to partner in all rural electrification programmes.

As you may be aware, the National Government has taken housing to be one of its key agendas. As a County, we are also planning to commence a major construction of 1000 houses to cater for the needs of County staff. The ground breaking ceremony for this project is expected to take place by June this year.

Mr. Speaker

During our first term in office, we recorded tremendous achievements in infrastructure development, education, agriculture, trade, social services, water and sanitation, health services and culture and sports.

However, we also faced many challenges as the newly adopted devolved system of Government was rolled out. There were no clear policies and regulations to guide Government operations; no strategic plans; projects were undertaken without budget; there was inefficient and ineffective County administration; weak capacity of contractors which resulted in delayed/stalled and poor quality projects. These constraints were compounded by delayed disbursement from the National Treasury leading to low absorption of budgets.

We are encouraged to note that the key players in the devolved system of government including the National Government, County Governments and development partners are keen to seriously address the development pitfalls and gaps experienced during the formative stage of the devolved system. However, we still experience serious delays in the flow of Funds; for the last four months Counties have not received disbursements from the National Treasury. If this issue is not addressed before the end of the month, staff should expect to experience delayed payment of Salaries.

Mr. Speaker

Our experience, coupled with hiring of qualified and carefully vetted team of top-flight technocrats to implement and supervise policy and project implementation, puts us on a solid ground for greater success.

Furthermore, we have restructured the Government by creating one new ministry as well as new departments within some ministries with a view to

overcoming persistent challenges. The Ministry of ICT, Communication and E-Government will play a key role to ensure that Kakamega County deploys cutting edge ICT to drive efficiency, reduce costs and rampant theft of Government revenue. We will introduce an e-citizen platform to enable citizens to access and pay for all Government services on-line.

The Government will also introduce a cashless revenue collection system across all major revenue collection centers within the county. This will minimise revenue leakages.

As part of improvement of our service delivery systems, we have established a service delivery unit under the office of the Governor. This unit will be responsible for monitoring service delivery across various ministries and devolved units.

Mr. Speaker

I urge Honourable Members to accord priority to the bills that are lined up for debate as the economic health and prosperity of our county is anchored on these important legal instruments. Some of the priority bills include:

- Kakamega County Trade and Markets Bill
- Kakamega County Dairy Development Corporation Bill
- Kakamega County Micro Finance Corporation Bill
- Kakamega County Investment and Development Agency Bill

The enactment of these bills will go a long way in, among other things, accelerating diversification of our county's economic activities, boosting farmers' earnings and creating access to cheap credit as well as rolling out a programme of constructing markets to provide small-scale traders with convenient and clean environment where they can do business.

I am happy to note that our focus and relentless effort to move our flagship projects forward including the Bukhungu Stadium, have begun to bear fruit and stimulate economic activities in our county. So far, we have hosted international matches including CECAFA tournament; and very soon we shall welcome national sports tournaments such as KECOSCA and KECOSO here in Kakamega.

The magnificent architecture and finishing of the stadium has also led to a number of teams adopting Bukhungu as their home ground, in addition to attracting numerous high-level benchmarking trips from other counties.

Indeed, in April Kakamega County will host the prestigious Annual Devolution Conference organized by the Council of Governors, bringing over 6000 guests and economic benefits to the county. The conference will guarantee unlimited media coverage not only to the participating dignitaries from the 47 counties countrywide, but also to national government delegations, development partners and last but not least, the sounds and sights of our home county. I look forward to all hounorable members participating fully in the conference.

Mr. Speaker Sir

This year, we look forward to the commissioning of Phase 1 of Kakamega Teaching and Referral Hospital. This facility will be one of its kind and will offer top-notch medical training services, as well as highly specialized curative and preventive health services for residents and visitors from the western region and

beyond. It will be the hub of health tourism for the western region and even across our national borders.

I wish to urge honourable members to sensitize our citizens on the existence of this facility.

Mr. Speaker

I would like to take this opportunity to commend this Honourable Assembly for its commitment to implementation of the Kakamega County's development blueprint. We have had close and constructive consultations with the Legislature under your able leadership, Mr. Speaker, as we chart the way forward for the county.

However, should there be isolated lack of clarity on issues of policy implementation in the devolved system, I urge Honourable Members to engage the Executive in constructive dialogue before any issues are escalated to the media. We are always open to dialogue and we should encourage it, taking into account that we have a common objective of serving our people.

As you are aware, County Assemblies recently sought to establish Ward Development Funds. As my advice and guided by the Director of Budgets, the establishment of a county public Fund shall at the minimum meet the following requirements:

- a) Be initiated through a proposal by the County Executive Committee Member responsible for the county government entity under which the functions of the Fund fall, clearly setting out the justifications and submit it to the County Executive Committee;
- b) The County Executive Committee Member responsible for the county government entity shall certify in writing that the functions and the public services to be delivered through the Fund cannot be delivered through the structure of budget appropriations;
- c) Provide a clear justification as to why a Fund structure is deemed appropriate for improved service delivery in light of the legislative mandate of the county government entity."

It also states that the County Executive Committee Member responsible for the entity shall demonstrate how the activities of the proposed County Public Fund will fit in the overall Medium Term Plan and County Fiscal Strategy paper.

From the foregoing, Mr. Speaker, I am confident that Honourable Members are now adequately updated and willing to move forward as we focus on service delivery and improvement of the quality of life for the citizens of Kakamega County. However, we can discuss and seek ways out of this situation.

Mr. Speaker

Finally, I wish the Honourable Members a productive Session in which the common interest of the people of Kakamega County overrides any other individual or factional agendas. This is the honourable thing to do and it is possible when leaders set aside personal interests and dedicate themselves to pursue what is best for the citizens of our county.

With these remarks, Mr. Speaker, it is now my pleasure to declare the Second Session of the Second Kakamega County Assembly officially open.

Thank you and God bless you all.