

REPUBLIC OF KENYA



**COUNTY GOVERNMENT OF KAKAMEGA
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR**

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OPARANYA, E.G.H., C.G.J., GOVERNOR KAKAMEGA COUNTY
DURING THE OFFICIAL OPENING OF THE FOURTH SESSION
OF THE SECOND ASSEMBLY OF KAKAMEGA COUNTY ON
TUESDAY, 25TH FEBRUARY, 2020**

Mr. Speaker

Honourable Members

I wish to start my address by conveying my best wishes to you at the onset of the Fourth Session of the Second Assembly of Kakamega County. During the nine weeks recess, Honourable Members had ample time to join their families for the end and new year holidays and festivities.

You also took time to interact with the electorate to get to understand better the challenges they face in their day to day activities.

Mr. Speaker;

As you are aware, this august House shoulders a heavy constitutional duty to ensure smooth running of County Government functions and responsibilities through the legislative and oversight mandate.

On 22nd January, 2020 Honorable Members were called upon to interrupt their recess in order to consider and approve Kakamega County Supplementary Budget estimates for 2019/2020, within the timeframe determined by the law.

The budget is now uploaded in the IFMIS system and as I speak to you this afternoon, it is under implementation to ensure smooth rollout of service delivery to the people of Kakamega County. Honourable Members have made similar sacrifices on previous occasions for the greater good of the people.

In this regard, I sincerely commend the Honourable Assembly for not only embracing a positive disposition to the call of duty but also for forging close working relations with the Executive, bearing in mind that both arms of Government draw their power from the people whose needs must be prioritized in planning and execution of development programmes.

Despite the ongoing heavy responsibilities in your respective committees, I sincerely hope that Honourable Members will start the new Session with renewed energy and passion that has now become synonymous with 'Brand Kakamega'.

Mr. Speaker

I have the honour to inform the august House that preparation of the Fiscal Strategy Paper has been concluded after a successful Public participation exercise earlier this month. The strategy document will be submitted to the County Assembly by end of this week.

As Honourable Members may recall, during my speech at the beginning of the Third Session, I expressed confidence in our efforts to increase revenue collection through implementation of the cashless system. I am happy to report that our own revenue collection is on the upward trend. Besides technology, the administrative actions we have taken to seal revenue leakages have finally paid off.

We found it necessary to shakeup the revenue unit and institute close supervision of the field staff to get to where we are today. We also took the extraordinary step of deploying CEC Members, Chief Officers and Sub County Administrators to make a complete turnaround of the County revenue Collection operations.

Mr. Speaker;

As a result, our annual revenues are expected to increase this Financial Year to over Shs 2 billion, up from Shs 890 million in the previous year. In order to sustain the momentum, we have established a County Revenue Agency under new leadership that is expected to bring on board the right caliber of staff whose performance will be measured against set targets.

It is our commitment as County Executive to work closely with the Assembly and the National Government to implement our common agenda of spearheading development and bringing about transformative change in the lives of our people. To this end, we are inspired by the Building Bridges Initiative whose values resonate well with the rights and aspirations of our people. Some of the key proposals of the BBI include:

- Commitment to strengthen devolution through increased financial resources to counties

- Building a strong united Kenyan Nation, bound by noble ideals including inclusivity, shared prosperity and justice for all
- Pulling the vast majority of Kenyans from abject poverty and misery
- Freeing Kenya from corruption and capture by ruthless cartels
- Creating economic opportunities for our youths majority of whom are out of decent gainful employment
- Improvement of our governance system that recognizes the diversity of Kenya's cultures and her rich ethnic composition
- Integration of people living with disabilities to live as full members of society with equal rights and equal opportunities; and...
- Ending the specter of violence and insecurity after every electoral cycle

Mr. Speaker;

I urge the people of Kakamega County and all Kenyans of goodwill to embrace the BBI through which our great Nation stands to gain in the fight against poverty, disease and ignorance. No economy can grow and prosper in an environment of mistrust and perpetual negative ethnicity.

As patriots, it is our duty to take the cue and embrace the efforts of President Uhuru Kenyatta and the Rt. Hon. Raila Odinga to create a conducive environment for sustained development of our nation.

Mr. Speaker;

We have a golden opportunity to make a difference in our people's lives through focused planning and development of key sectors of the economy including health, agriculture, transport and education.

On the health sector, devolved units have committed themselves to collaborate with the National Government towards realization of successful implementation of the Universal Health Coverage (UHC). UHC has been identified as a driver for the global health

agenda which emphasizes that all people, irrespective of socio-economic status, should have access to health services without risking financial ruin or impoverishment.

Pilot projects have been launched in four counties and it is envisaged that 100% universal health coverage will be realized by 2022. Given the high poverty levels in a majority of counties including Kakamega, it is understandable why we have taken keen interest in registering the poor for membership in the National Health Insurance Fund scheme.

Mr. Speaker;

In addition, the community health sub-sector is being strengthened and integrated into the health strategic planning and financed to increase access and improve quality and affordability of services. To this end, we have embraced the Community Health Policy to guide implementation of community health services.

The role and support for Community Health Volunteers is critical in successful implementation of the UHC strategy.

Mr. Speaker;

It is against this background that I urge Honourable Members to give the health Bills priority once they are presented to the house. They cover the Health Fund, the UHC and the Community Health Volunteers.

As you are aware, the outbreak of the dreaded coronavirus in China has caused panic throughout the world. It is feared that the unpredictable virus might turn out to be pandemic. We have many Kenyan students in Chinese universities and some of them are our own children from Kakamega County sponsored by the County Government. So far, we thank God that none of them has been taken ill.

After careful assessment of the situation, the Kenya Government has stated that it is safer for the Kenyans to stay where they are rather than risk infections through evacuation. There is no reason therefore to panic.

Mr. Speaker;

I wish therefore to reassure all the parents and guardians of our children in China that necessary measures have been put in place to ensure their safety and reduce exposure to infection.

In order to keep the virus at bay, it is advised that movement be restricted until such time that the threat is eliminated by the Chinese government in collaboration with the World Health Organization. For now, we have decided to closely monitor developments in China, the world's epicenter of the outbreak, and share information with all concerned as and when necessary.

The other threat that has potential harmful effect on our people is the invasion of swarms of desert locusts in the northern and eastern parts of Kenya. We are closely monitoring the threat to ensure that our farmlands are protected from the menace. We have also taken note of all the intervention measures being undertaken by the National Government in collaboration with regional and international organizations that have the capacity and resources to mitigate the disaster and ensure that our food security agenda is assured.

Mr. Speaker

In the recent times, our county has gone through tragic events that claimed dozens of innocent lives including school children. More recently, it all started with heavy rains that swept away foot bridges dotted along many river crossings. The tragic drowning of two sisters in Mumias East Sub County: 15 year old Lavinda Mang'eti and 12 year old Patience Mang'eti turned out to be a precursor of more deadly incidents yet to happen.

On 3rd February, 2020 the stampede that happened at Kakamega Primary School, claiming the lives of 15 pupils, was truly heartbreaking.

We did what we could as County and National Governments, encouraged by the compassion and generosity of hundreds of well wishers including the Council of Governors, to give the departed innocent souls a befitting send off. Once again, my heart goes out to the parents and guardians who lost their loved ones in the incident.

I am aware that there are many more parents and guardians who are still nursing the traumatic effects from the events of that fateful day. I would like to assure them that their fellow citizens in Kakamega County and the entire country remember them in their prayers.

The National Government and relevant investigative agencies have undertaken to get to the bottom of what caused the stampede leading to tragic loss of lives and injuries and ensure that no such incidents recur in our schools in future. All of us look forward to early release of the findings.

Mr. Speaker

You will recall that during the joint funeral service for the children at Bukhungu Stadium, I did mention a series of calamities that have befallen our County since 2016, mainly caused by road accidents and natural calamities.

- In 2016, a mother and her 4 children perished after their house was swept away by a mudslide while they were asleep in Mukhonje village along the Kakamega-Nandi County border.
- In 2018, we lost 31 people in a horror bus accident in Kericho including an entire family of three.
- Last month we lost three teachers to terrorist attacks in North Eastern Kenya and several others in previous years as they served fellow Kenyans

All these calamities have taught us a lesson about the need for our County to prioritize disaster preparedness.

To this end, we will substantially increase budgetary allocation towards disaster management and upscale our capacity in emergency response operations. In this regard, we intend to establish a disaster fund to mitigate against the ever increasing calamities in our great county.

Furthermore, the heavy rains have taught us the necessity to allocate more financial resources to building bridges that can allow our people to go about their daily

activities without fear of being swept down stream. We look forward to the County Assembly's support to realize this objective.

Mr. Speaker;

On water supply within easy reach of households, the County Government has made it a top priority in line with our CIDP and the County manifesto. We are in the process of connecting thousands of our citizens to clean piped water regardless of whether they are urban or rural dwellers. Our multi-million shilling water projects in Khwisero Sub County, Mumias and Kakamega towns attest to our commitment.

In Likuyani Sub County, we are piloting a containerized water treatment plant at Lumino dam at a cost of Kshs 55 million. Upon success, the technology will be rolled out to the other 11 Sub Counties.

These projects need to be closely monitored and managed by an agency of the County Government in order to add value to users. To this end, we have presented Kakamega County Rural Water and Sanitation Corporation Bill to this august House for consideration and approval.

Mr. Speaker

We are on course in many of the County priority areas as well as flagship projects most of which will be commissioned shortly. They include the following:

- Mumias and Shamakhubu Level Four hospitals are ready for commissioning
- Phase One of Kakamega Teaching and Referral Hospital is due for commissioning in three months time
- Construction of the County Dairy Processing Plant in malava is ongoing
- Construction of Phase 2 of Bukhungu Stadium is ongoing and is expected to be completed in March 2022
- Capitation of ECDE centres and County Polytechnics is ongoing

- Revival of Mumias Sugar Company is gaining momentum with the recent switch on of the ethanol plant at Mumias factory and yesterday's presentation of the National Sugar Taskforce Report to President Uhuru Kenyatta
- Construction of open air markets to widen space for enhanced trade and commerce in the county
- Enhanced ICT connectivity between the County headquarters and Sub County offices is underway to improve service delivery to the public
- Establishment of Community Area Councils to operationalize a people driven governance structure; and ..
- Adherence to greater fiscal discipline by the Executive to save on costs, to name but a few.

Mr. Speaker;

In conclusion, I wish the Honourable Members a productive Fourth Session and look forward to closer consultation between the two arms of Government in order to improve service delivery to the citizens of our great County of Kakamega.

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

Thank you and God bless you all.

