

**Hon. Senator,
H.E the Deputy Governor,
Hon. Members of Parliament,
The County Commissioner,
Hon. Speaker, Tharaka Nithi County Assembly,
Honorable Members of the County Assembly,
Wananchi wa Tharaka Nithi,
Friends of Tharaka Nithi,
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Hamjambo,

I am most delighted to join you today so that together we can commemorate Mashujaa Day as we have traditionally done every year since independence.

Firstly, I send my sincere greetings to the citizens of Tharaka Nithi who are not present wherever they may be, including in the Diaspora.

This is the day when the founding father of our Nation, Mzee Jomo Kenyatta was arrested by the colonialists and underwent a farce trial at Kapenguria, in Trans Nzoia County and later incarcerated. Kenyatta was to be joined in jail by five (5) other compatriots in what was to be known as Kapenguria Six.

Here in Tharaka Nithi, our people were not left behind in the struggle for independence. Some of our heroes and heroines include, the late, Gen. Munai Chui from Tharaka and his wife the matriarch, Mama Karimi Munai who is still alive in Kibung'a, Gen. Kamata and Gen. Karwigi from Murugi, Gen. Mugi from Chuka, Mama Elizabeth Maitha from Kiraro, Mama Nkari, Musa Nanchu among many others.

In appreciation of the patriotic role played by the gallant men and women of Tharaka Nithi in the freedom struggle, my Government has made a decision that the Department of Education, Youth, Culture and Social Services should document their contribution for posterity.

We shall also explore the possibility of erecting a monument at an acceptable site within the County to recognize their efforts for preservation of our culture.

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The journey of the struggle did not end by the attainment of independence. Many years down the line, we underwent another struggle for more freedoms by agitating for political pluralism and a new constitutional order. Today, we are proud of a new Constitution, which has ushered in devolution and the creation of 47 Counties in the Country.

Three years since devolution came into existence in our country, we in Tharaka Nithi County continue to appreciate the changes that it has brought along. Our County received an equitable share allocations of Ksh. 2.4 Billion and Ksh. 2.7 Billion in the 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 financial years respectively. This financial year, Tharaka Nithi has been allocated Ksh. 3.1 Billion.

For a big County with equally a large population, where a big portion lives in the marginal areas, these funds are to say the least inadequate. We shall therefore continue to put forward a strong case for more funds considering our unique challenges as a hitherto neglected County.

In the meantime, as a County and people we have to appreciate this reality and understand why we could only achieve the much that we have done in terms of development with the meager resources at our disposal.

Wananchi of Tharaka Nithi,

Despite numerable challenges, our County has continued to record major milestones in all spheres of development. We are implementing major projects in the water, health, roads, education, trade, land and tourism sectors, as well as improving and upgrading our ICT infrastructure.

In order to implement these programmes, we have put in place policies and strategies aimed at ensuring we reap maximum benefits from devolution. This will ensure that development in our County is fairly and equitably distributed as intended by the policy of devolution. We have therefore registered progress in the following sectors:-

EDUCATION

In order to promote education, we introduced an annual County Bursary Fund with Ksh. 30 M to be distributed to needy school children in the County. Already the first disbursement has been done with another tranche set for distribution in schools this financial year.

My Government has embarked on the development of infrastructure in our learning institutions at a funding of Ksh. 50 million for primary and secondary schools, polytechnics, an ICT Centre and a Community Library.

After the conclusion of Economic Stimulus Programme (ESP), the County took over the funding of polytechnics and therefore we have employed 18 Principals to head our polytechnics and 42 Instructors.

On Early Childhood Development Education (ECDE), we are in the process of employing 448 ECDE Caregivers in all the 448 ECDE centres in the County. We have therefore rehabilitated 78 classrooms in the County for use as ECDE centres.

I recently called upon professionals in Tharaka Nithi residing within and in the Diaspora to initiate mentorship programmes in our schools. Our professionals can act as role models to inspire our young people in schools and colleges to pursue fruitful careers and participate in the development of our County and the Nation at large.

HEALTH

My Government has set aside Ksh. 61.8 million to construct new facilities and improve on existing health infrastructure at our hospitals and dispensaries. These include pediatric , male and female wards, theatres, maternities and mortuaries. The targeted institutions are Chuka, Marimanti sub-county and Magutuni Level 4 hospitals, Chiakariga, Karambani, Ntoroni and Mpukoni dispensaries.

Marimanti and Chuka Hospitals have received health equipment worth Ksh. 200 Million each after I signed the Managed Equipment Service (MES) Programme agreement.

AGRICULTURE

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Our County relies heavily on agriculture, which provides majority of our people with employment.

This year we target to reach 30,000 farmers through extension services and as at the end of September, we had successfully trained 9,040 farmers.

The County has in the meantime set aside Ksh. 42.4 million this financial year to cater for agricultural programmes. Kshs 23.7 million will be utilized to procure assorted seeds, which include maize, beans, sorghum, green grams, coffee, and bananas.

The procurement and distribution of assorted quality seeds is in progress and approximately 10,000 farmers are expected to benefit from this programme. I urge our farmers to prepare and plant crops even though we may get above normal rains due the effects of El Nino phenomenon.

Negotiations are underway for a joint programme with the Kenya Agricultural and Livestock Research Organization (KALRO) and once the agreement is concluded, farmers will access seeds cheaply and on time.

In order to upscale the storage capacity for our cereals, the County is constructing three (3) storage facilities at Mukothima, Marimanti and Magutuni. Once completed, the facilities will have ample space for cereals storage and for value addition. This will complement the two existing stores at Mitheru and Mukuuni that were built by the National Government.

On the tea sector, the County has planned to rehabilitate 23 Tea buying centres at a cost of Ksh. 3.5.million, which include providing electricity at the centres.

To enhance crop production the County expect to distribute 20,000 bags this planting season. This in addition to 28,650 bags of subsidized fertilizer that were distributed last planting season.

At the same time, the County has allocated Kshs 4 million for construction of a farmers' training centre at Maara Sub- County. However, due to budgetary constraints, the Centre is scheduled to be developed in phases.

In order to promote value addition by our farmers, we recently hosted the Eastern and Central Counties Agribusiness Investment Summit (ECCAIS) 2015 at Chuka University. Thousands of farmers within the County and twelve other Counties in the region who attended the forum were able to learn how to improve productivity and raise profits from agricultural activities.

IRRIGATION

Wananchi Wenzangu,

In order to boost food production and guarantee food security, we intend to continue promoting irrigation farming alongside rain fed agriculture. The phase I of Mbogoni Irrigation Scheme in Chuka-Sub County, which started in 2012, will be completed this financial year at a cost of Kshs 300 million. The scheme covers about 100 acres with 500 beneficiaries.

Preparations for phase II are underway and will focus on the development of three irrigation schemes; namely Makanyanga in Igambangombe, Kirumi Kiamunjari in Maara and Rungu in Tharaka South at cost of Ksh. 400 million. Once completed, about 2,000 hectares will be put under irrigation. We sincerely thank the National Government and African Development Bank for funding the project.

PHYSICAL PLANNING AND ICT

Wananchi wa Tharaka Nithi,

I am happy to note that the construction of the County headquarters at Kathwana is progressing as scheduled. Once completed, the new building will provide the much needed office accommodation for County workers and thereby enhance service delivery to our people.

We welcome the institutions that have so far requested the County to allocate them space at Kathwana namely; Red Cross Society, High Court, National Audit Office and a few from the National Government. I am happy to note that land parcel number Kathwana 001 is available for such occupation.

In regard to planning of our County headquarters, I am happy to announce that the Physical Plan for Kathwana town is ready and beacons have been placed. We will continue opening up roads around Kathwana town and the suburbs in order to improve accessibility and ease movement of vehicles and people.

In order to have a well planned and orderly development, we have formed an enforcement committee to monitor and control the development of all physical structures in the County. Therefore, I caution developers to desist from building without the necessary approval documents from the respective County department.

On land management, 38,804 Title Deeds are ready for issuance after completion of demarcation in Makanyanga, Mariani, Marembo, Kajuki, Kamutiria, Gatunga, Chiakariga A & B.

I am reliably briefed that Kathangacini, Ntoroni, Thiite, Kanjoro and Kathura areas are planned for demarcation. I therefore urge the Ministry of Lands to fast track the process for issuance of the ready Title Deeds in order to reduce the inherent conflicts experienced in those areas.

In order to network our County and enhance our capacity to communicate and automate our services, the roadmap for the County ICT infrastructure is on course with assistance from the World Bank.

Upgrading of our County Website is also in the final stages with assistance from Plan International. I am happy to announce that we shall be launching some of the upgraded ICT infrastructure, such as website any time from now.

In the meantime, I urge our people to utilize the ICT platforms that we have installed, such as the website, facebook and tweeter accounts to obtain useful and factual information about our County.

By visiting these ICT sites, citizens shall be well informed of what the County is doing for them, while at the same time contributing their inputs on important issues that informs our decisions to serve you better.

Roads.

In order to improve accessibility the County graded 780 kilometers of road in the last financial year 2014/15, while 50 kilometers more were graveled alongside improvement of drainage. We also opened up roads

that were barely motorable, such as Kaguma-Kembaci in Tharaka South, Gikwego-Kathiru-Ikuu, PCEA Church in Chuka and Mitheru-Mikuu roads in Maara. Works on these roads is ninety percent (90%) complete.

This financial year we are increasing grading of roads by 600Kms and graveling from 50Kms to 150Kms as well as improving the drainage systems.

We thank National Government for funding the upgrading of Chuka-Kareni Road to bitumen standards

In readiness for the adverse effects of the expected El Nino rains, we have engaged two contractors in every sub-county to respond to emergencies in the likelihood of roads being damaged. These contractors will recruit youths who will be on standby to attend to any situation that may require urgent response.

CO-OPERATIVES, TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Co-operative societies are appropriate vehicles for accelerating development because of their ability to offer cheaper investable capital to members in our County. My Government will continue to encourage the growth of SACCOs and towards this end, membership recruitment for the newly registered Tharaka Nithi County Staff SACCO is ongoing.

Likewise, re-organization of Tharaka Nithi County Cereals Marketing Co-operative Union is progressing well.

The draft Bill on Trade Loans is currently at Public participation stage after which it will be debated by the County Assembly and if passed the business community will be able to access loans and boost their businesses.

Tharaka Nithi County Investment and Development Corporation Bill is also ready for presentation to the County Assembly and its enactment will provide a legal framework for Public Private Partnership (PPP) concept.

We are rehabilitating 17 markets across the County , which are almost complete apart from Kaanwa and Kathwana where the contractors are expected to commence works soon.

In our efforts to market our County to investors, I am happy to announce that we shall be hosting a Conference for investors in November this year at Chuka University. The Conference will provide the County a platform to showcase the abundant opportunities that are available to the business community within and outside our County.

TOURISM, CULTURE, ENVIRONMENT AND WATER

In order to promote our culture, we are developing Chiakariga Cultural Centre, which will be an all-inclusive facility for showcasing dancing skills, oral literature prowess among other cultural activities by the youth, women and men in our County.

The County is establishing tourism niche markets, each comprising a main museum for exhibition of artifacts, a curio shop and a dancing arena, namely:-

Mitheru Tourism Market

Ura Gate Tourism Market

Nkondi Tourism Market

We shall continue to promote tourism by identifying and mapping tourism sites across the County. Some of the identified sites are, 27 waterfalls, namely, Kibuka, Ikwa, Ururuni, Kandakame, underground tunnel at Urumande and Inanduru Caves, hills Kijege, Ntugi, Gikingo among others.

We are constructing and branding waterfalls that are a tourist attraction in the County. Some of the waterfalls include, the Ikwa water falls in Kathita River, Kandakame in Nithi River.

In a bid to increase overall bed capacity and accommodate more visitors on tourism and leisure excursions to our County, the concerned Department is in the process of renovating Kinondoni lodge in Mt. Kenya Forest. The lodges will act as stop overs for mountain climbers who scale Mt. Kenya for fun and sport.

We are also exploring the possibility of constructing Board Walks and a Tree House at Gaketha Catchment area, which is the largest elephant maternity in the world.

In regard to the environment, the County has been planting millions of trees in schools, hillsides, along the highways and private farmlands under the greening programme. This will ensure that our County takes a leading role in promoting afforestation and environmental conservation.

On the provision of water, several community water projects have been initiated at a cost of Ksh.118 Million. The aim is to ensure that we have adequate water for both human and livestock consumption.

EL NINO RAINS

People of Tharaka Nithi,

I wish to draw your attention of the likelihood that some parts of the County may be severely hit by El Nino rains. Our County is among those that have been identified to be at high risk of the El Nino deluge.

I therefore urge our people to take the El Nino warnings seriously and heed the evacuation and any other advice by both the County and National Governments' Disaster Preparedness Centers.

In order to mitigate the effects of El Nino, we are in the process of establishing Disaster Operation Centers at the County Headquarters and at the Sub-Counties to deal with any emergencies. We shall not only mobilize resources to deal with any eventuality.

In the meantime, our Operation Centers shall be manned round the clock to ensure that our people are safe and secure.

I also direct the concerned Departments to move with speed and proactively prepare our County to deal with the possible disaster by for instance, strengthening culverts, unblocking drainage systems to tame storm waters, vaccinating livestock, erecting warning signs at hotspots and implementing other cost-effective mitigation measures.

ILLICIT BREWS

Another danger that I wish to highlight is the issue of banned alcoholic brews that had taken a toll on the health of our people, especially the youth. The negative socio-economic effects resulting from consumption of illicit brews cannot be gainsaid.

My Government is aware that the merchants of death are once again secretly brewing and selling banned brews in some parts of the County. I ask the police and all county administrators from both governments to sustain the fight against this menace, which is a threat to our people.

AWARDS

This Mashujaa day my Government will recognize eight (8) nominees of the four (4) each sub county by awarding them medals and certificates for their distinguished service to our people and the county. We shall traditionally be bestowing such recognitions during future national days.

CONCLUSION

Before concluding my speech, I wish to take this opportunity and wish all candidates in Form Four whose exams are ongoing and those in primary schools who will be sitting for their exams later in the year success.

Finally, dear citizens of Tharaka Nithi, I wish you well as you go about conducting the business of nation building. On returning back to your areas of residence, convey my regards to those who for one reason or another could not be with us today.

Together, we should join hands to improve and enhance the profile of our County at the national and international levels. By doing so, we shall be living up to the true spirit of the struggle by our forefathers, who shed precious blood and suffered unimaginable ordeals in the hands of colonialists in order for us to be a free people.

God bless Tharaka Nithi.

Kwaheri na Mungu Awabariki.

H.E HON. SAMUEL MBAE RAGWA

GOVERNOR, THARAKA NITHI COUNTY