

**SPEECH BY HIS EXCELLENCY THE PRESIDENT,
HON. DANIEL T. ARAP MOI, C.G.H., M.P.,
ON THE OCCASION OF MADARAKA DAY,
SUNDAY, 1ST JUNE, 1997**

**BROTHER PRESIDENT MKAPA,
FELLOW KENYANS,
DISTINGUISHED GUESTS,
LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,**

Today we celebrate Madaraka Day. This is a memorable occasion because on this day 34 years ago, we attained Self-Government and the right to manage our own affairs. Kenyans look back on this day with pride as we honour the founding fathers of our Nation whose self-denial and sacrifice enabled us to join the community of free nations.

Madaraka Day, is part of our history and indeed, part of the fabric of our nationhood. Kenyans are therefore glad to share this joy with friends and well-wishers all over the world. We are particularly grateful to those who have sent us greetings and messages of good will. On this Madaraka Day, I send greetings to all Kenyans and friends of Kenya who have joined us to celebrate this historic occasion.

Today, we are honoured to have with us the President of the United Republic of Tanzania my brother Benjamin Mkapa. Mr. President, may I on behalf of all Kenyans welcome you most warmly to our Madaraka Celebrations. Your presence here today, is not only a testimony of the friendship between Kenya and Tanzania, but a clear indication of the path East Africa has chosen to follow—the path of close co-operation.

Last month saw yet another step forward in the development of our East African co-operation. We now have a flag for our region and also a regional passport. Much has been achieved in the year

since we set up the secretariat of the Commission for East African Co-operation in Arusha. My brother presidents and I are committed to the same goal—to establish a single market for East Africa. Already we have received considerable international support and encouraging interest from the business community. This is truly the way forward for East Africa and Kenya.

But we seek more, and my hope for the longer term is that our present co-operation will develop into a political federation for East Africa, once economic integration is in place. After all, we share common ties of language, history, and culture with our brothers and sisters in Tanzania and Uganda—much closer ties than exist in many of the world's major trading blocks.

Federation is therefore a natural development for us but we should not rush it or put forward too rigid a timetable. The pace must be driven by the people of East Africa themselves, it must not be forced on them. I am, however, confident that it will evolve, to the benefit of us all—given the political will.

My Fellow Kenyans,

So much, will of course depend on peace. Without peace there can be no progress and certainly no development. As I have said on so many occasions, when law and order break down it is the innocent who suffer. This is why we strive continually for peace, both within our region and beyond. We cannot hope to develop fully as a Nation with instability on or near our borders. We know from experience the cost of looking after tens of thousands of refugees.

Last month we were able to initiate a meeting between the Heads of State of Uganda and Sudan which led to an immediate reduction of tension between the two countries. When the refugee crisis erupted in the great lakes region last year; we took the initiative to call for a regional summit in Nairobi. The resolution from the Nairobi summit of 5th November was adopted by the Security Council of the United Nations and spearheaded international humanitarian assistance for the refugees. We acted as impartial mediators, drawing in other heads

of state to lend weight to the search for peace in Zaire. Morally, this was the right thing for us to do. We do not pursue an adventurist foreign policy for possible short-term gain. As a result, our views and actions, which demonstrate our long record of stability, have earned us international respect.

As chairman of the great lakes region peace initiative, Kenya could not afford to be partisan. As always, we were guided by the cardinal principle of upholding the sanctity of human life. I have since had the occasion to discuss the situation with the leadership, and we do recognize the new government. Kenya will work closely with Laurent Kabila and other regional leaders to bring lasting peace in our region.

My Fellow Kenyans,

I discussed the situation in the region first on this occasion because we cannot afford to ignore what is going on around us. But for us, Madaraka Day will continue to be a day for renewal—a time to remind ourselves of the values that this country holds dear. A time for reflection as we face up to the challenges of the future.

This year, one of the challenges we face is the general elections. We have come a long way since we took up the challenge of steering the destiny of our country. At that time, there were many who doubted our ability to manage our affairs in a responsible manner. Some even claimed that our country would be torn apart by internal strife. Today, Kenyans continue to enjoy peace and stability that has made it possible for us to make great strides in various spheres of social and economic development. The successes we have made since the attainment of our independence are the results of the unity of purpose that has guided us in all our endeavours. I am confident that we shall continue to be guided by our unity and sense of responsibility as we prepare to meet the challenges of the years ahead.

Elections present a very special challenge for us as they will reflect on our sense of responsibility as well as our maturity and integrity as a nation. The manner in which we all conduct

ourselves in the period leading to and during the election will be important in the eyes of the world. As has happened before, some will be watching and anticipating that we will fail. Indeed, we find it strange that some people seem to forget that Kenyans have held democratic elections on a regular basis since independence. The holding of regular elections is a constitutional requirement in our country, and we have always supported constitutional rule. By holding regular elections, Kenyans can elect leaders of their choice and also play an active role in directing the course of national events.

Towards this end, the Voter Registration Exercise started on 19th of May and is scheduled to be completed in three weeks time. I therefore urge all eligible Kenyans to obtain their voting cards, so that they can exercise their constitutional right to elect leaders of their choice.

However, for Kenyans to exercise this constitutional right, elections must be held in an atmosphere that is free from threats or violence. In our last elections in 1992, for example, our people decisively rejected the unconstitutional behaviour of some people among us whose ambitions for power had been defeated at the ballot box. The message from Kenyans was for these people to instead take up their places in Parliament through the ballot. It is our duty now to act constitutionally and put our faith in the people of Kenya.

We must reject violence—and all talk of violence, particularly the whipping up of ethnic or racial hatred. This has no place in modern Kenya as it will benefit no one. In fact, it is more likely to create anxiety, particularly among foreign investors and damage the confidence in our country which we have all worked so hard to build.

We must always remember that we belong to one family, one nation and that we share a common destiny. As members of a family, there will always be issues about which we may hold different opinions. We must, however, not allow our differences of opinion to be exploited by those who wish to undermine the unity and stability of our nation.

As I have said on many occasions, our constitution stipulates and regulates our conduct. It is the backbone of our nationhood, our sovereignty and our stability. The constitution that has served us so well should therefore not be subjected to changes that are designed to satisfy short-term interests.

As I have stated recently, the current atmosphere in the country, is not conducive to holding serious and meaningful discussions on a subject of national importance such as the Constitution. For this reason, discussions on the Constitution can only be held meaningfully after the general election. A commission will then be appointed, that will take into account all interested parties. The commission will look into the entire Constitution in order to satisfy the interests of all Kenyans. However, for the commission to carry out its work effectively, discussions must be held in an atmosphere of peace and that is devoid of irrational behaviour.

Another issue, is the Public Order Act which has been the subject of public debate for some time now. I am glad to inform Kenyans today that the Government has considered some amendments to this Law. A new legislation entitled "The Peaceful Assemblies Bill" will soon be presented for debate in Parliament. This new law will replace the Public Order Act.

Fellow Kenyans,

Many of us were not yet born when we attained self Government in 1963. But all of us certainly have the responsibility of progressing this great nation of ours as we move into the next century and into the new millennium. It is our tomorrow for which we must plan today. You as tax payers and our employers are entitled to ask the critical question of us, your leaders. Let me therefore give you a sense of our vision for the future—for you are the ones who will reap the benefits.

Of all the challenges that we face, the greatest is poverty. Although we have made great progress in many areas, the level of poverty in this country is still high. Thus, everything we try to achieve in Government must be directed towards eliminating

poverty. Our vision for Kenya, is therefore one where we have successfully taken challenge—where our economic growth can offer job opportunities at all levels in our society. Where we can give greater security to those who are disadvantaged and provide good public services and improved standards in health and education.

With regard to the utilization of public land, instructions have been issued to the Commissioner of Lands to protect public institutions as well as land that has been set aside for public utilities. The registration of new titles must be done only after the required procedures have been followed thoroughly. In this regard, the Provincial Administration will be consulted fully by the Commissioner of Lands so that the correct information regarding the status of land may be obtained. Furthermore, the role of local elders in resolving disputes on land matters will be strengthened to ensure that no one is dispossessed of his or her land unfairly.

My Fellow Kenyans,

During the last few years, we have created the conditions—not without considerable sacrifice, for sound economic growth. We appreciate the fact that the private sector must become the engine of economic growth, so that Government is free to tackle the many social and development issues that we face. We must also strengthen our infrastructure and create the right atmosphere for investment by the private sector.

But we are still faced with another major problem—the divisiveness of our political system. This drains our energies, breeds antagonism, and has a negative effect on our economic performance. Indeed we must all accept the reality that the World is a competitive place and investors will only come to Kenya if they see a comparative advantage in doing so. It is true, that in Kenya we have been peaceful for 34 years. But we must ensure that Kenya continues to be a nation that is at peace with itself.

In particular, it is now time for both elected Members of Parliament and aspiring candidates to address themselves to issues that concern the development of this country instead of making statements that cause disunity. My vision for the future is for a calmer and more confident Kenya where endless confrontation no longer dominates the domestic agenda. I want to see a nation where political differences do not mean personal antagonism. I want to see a nation which can hold its head up proudly, as the nucleus of a new dynamic economic region.

Above all, I want to see a nation that is free to concentrate her energies on progress and development. Only in this way, shall we be able to harness our energies and confront our single greatest challenge—the challenge of poverty.

I promise you all, Fellow Kenyans, that I will spend the remaining years of my life working tirelessly for this goal. This is the pledge I give you, on this Great National Day.

THANK YOU, AND GOD BLESS YOU ALL