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STATEMENT

BY

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DURING

THE

GENERAL DEBATE

OF THE

**72ND SESSION OF THE
UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

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**Mr. President,
Mr. Secretary-General,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

I am delighted to address this 72nd Session of the United Nations General Assembly. I convey to you all warm greetings and best wishes from the President of the Republic of Kenya, H.E Uhuru Kenyatta, whom I have the honour to represent in this Assembly. H.E the President is committed to the agenda of this Session and its overall objectives.

I congratulate you, Mr. President, on your election to preside over this 72nd Session of the UN General Assembly.

I also congratulate H.E. Mr. António Guterres on his maiden participation in the UN General Assembly as the Secretary-General. I am encouraged, Mr. Secretary General, by your commitment to empower the world's women and girls because, as you said, "parity at the UN will improve performance at the UN". You can count on Kenya's support on this commitment.

Mr. President,

The world faces enormous challenges which range from poverty, global terrorism, climate change and inequalities, to the unfolding threats on the liberal order that has governed the world in the post war era. At stake in all these challenges is the wellbeing of the 'people', the vast majority of whom are suffering the brunt of these challenges and whose livelihoods are becoming increasingly uncertain.

Describing the state of the world at the time of the Industrial Revolution, English writer Charles Dickens said and I quote: "It was the best of times, it was the worst of times." This is still an apt way of describing the state of the world today with all of its challenges and opportunities.

Kenya welcomes the theme of the 72nd Session, 'Focusing on people: striving for peace and a decent life for all on a sustainable planet.'

Kenya agrees with and supports the priorities for action that you have outlined to guide the focus on people, namely; peace and conflict prevention; migration; the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), climate action; and human rights. These priorities are urgent and deserve the attention not only of governments but also of the private sector and civil society.

Mr. President,

Kenya acknowledges the importance of the SDGs as an appropriate response to the pressing challenges that we face today. We played a key role in the formulation of SDGs

as co-chair of the Open Working Group and remains committed to translating this transformative agenda into tangible action for our people without leaving any one behind.

We recognize, however, that achieving the SDGs will be as much about the effectiveness of development co-operation as it will be about the scale and form such co-operation takes. There is a lot of talk about partnership today, but not enough practical, on-the-ground support to make partnerships effective in practice.

As a country, we have stepped up efforts towards the achievement of SDGs. In the health sector, for example, our Government now offers free maternal health care services across the country. We next intend to target to cover health care services for women, children and adolescents.

Confirming this commitment two years ago, President Uhuru Kenyatta said, and I quote: "I pledge to take the needed sustainable actions to end all preventable deaths of women, children and adolescents within a generation and ensure their well-being; we hold ourselves accountable for our collective progress towards this goal."

Together with the United Nations family in Kenya, we have also established a SDG Partnership Platform that aims to accelerate the attainment of the SDGs in Kenya. The Platform brings together the government, development partners, private sector, civil society and the UN. This Platform has created diverse SDG accelerator windows of which Primary Healthcare has been the first.

This partnership has resulted in a drastic reduction in maternal and child deaths. We intend to transform primary care to pave way for universal health coverage for all our 46 million Kenyans by 2021; therefore ensuring that no one is left behind.

Mr. President,

Climate change in our region is disrupting the livelihoods of millions of people and generating conflicts over dwindling resources especially arable land and water. Climate change costs Kenya's economy approximately 3% of GDP annually.

To address this, Kenya has enacted legislation to implement the Paris Agreement. We have committed to 30% reduction of greenhouse gas emissions by 2030, relative to 'Business As Usual' scenario, and subject to necessary financing, technology transfer and capacity building as agreed in Paris. The capacity of our planet to sustain life is under threat and the need to address climate change is not a choice; it is an urgent imperative.

Mr. President,

We commend the UN for the steps that have been taken to strengthen and upgrade UNEP in accordance with the Rio +20 Declaration. We welcome the move to universal membership and the efforts to enhance the financing and ability of UNEP to fulfill its unique coordination mandate within the UN system.

I am happy to say that since its establishment, the United Nations Environment Assembly has helped the world refocus on the environment. Through the Assembly, which is now the de facto world parliament for the environment, decisions that contribute to the wellbeing of our planet are now being universally respected.

I call upon the United Nations Member States to fully strengthen UNEP to effectively respond to global environmental challenges. In this regard, Kenya insists on the implementation of the decision by heads of state, now enshrined in the Rio Declaration, to consolidate headquarters functions of UNEP in Nairobi. This matter is of grave concern and continues not to receive the attention it deserves. The importance of having UNEP in Kenya, in the global south, cannot be over-emphasized.

Mr. President,

Kenya welcomes the creation of the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism, and looks forward to robust and productive engagement with it. We expect this Office to support UN bodies to develop initiatives that are responsive to member states efforts.

Our priorities are targeted counter engagement in radicalisation clusters, disengagement of defectors, strengthening intelligence and law enforcement, deploying whole-of-government approaches and socio-economic tools in line with global strategy.

Mr. President,

My delegation supports the Secretary General's commitment to UN reform agenda. The UN must embrace reforms to adjust to the 21st global landscape, and be more accommodative, more democratic and more effective to be fit for purpose for our modern world.

Of particular concern to Africa, the UNSC continues to be dominated by a small club of countries totally excluding others. This exclusion continues to undermine the legitimacy and even efficiency of the UNSC; while its operations, on the other hand, raise issues of accountability and transparency.

It is therefore imperative that the UN embraces reforms on all the five core areas that have been identified. We call for Africa's representation in both the permanent and non-permanent categories of the UNSC as stated in the Africa's common position.

Mr. President,

Early this month, we held a high-level meeting to discuss best practices in relation to implementation of the New Urban Agenda as well as measures to enhance the effectiveness, efficiency, accountability and financial capability of UN-Habitat. At the meeting, Member States committed to engage in the Habitat process.

They called for better coordination of urban matters across the entire UN system and for an Urban Assembly to replace the 58-member Governing Council at its headquarters in Nairobi, Kenya. We welcome the confidence that the membership has expressed in our country.

It is not a secret that UN-Habitat is among the least funded UN-Agencies. The Assembly needs an adequate budget to enable it effectively carry-out its mandate. Kenya looks forward to engaging constructively in the follow up discussions at the Second Committee during this Session of the General Assembly.

Mr. President,

Kenya has played a prominent role in the search for peace and security in various countries and especially in Somalia and South Sudan. Thanks to our collective efforts as an international community, tremendous progress has been made in Somalia. In particular, the credible elections last year and the formation of a broad-based government marked a watershed that laid the foundation for a stable democratic transition in Somalia. To consolidate the gains already made, and prevent relapse into conflict, we support the strengthening of AMISOM in Somalia. We also welcome the resolution by the United Nations Security Council to extend AMISOM with revised core tasks.

We urge the UN to give greater support to the Mission, particularly, in terms of sustained funding, to enable it deal with major security threats ahead of the envisaged troop drawdown. Further, we strongly believe that support of the reconstruction process, including by enabling the government to provide basic services, will improve confidence and help prevent conflict in the future.

The humanitarian situation in South Sudan, meanwhile, remains of concern and needs urgent attention. We urge the international community to provide the much-needed resources to help save lives that are being ravaged by famine.

It is our expectation that the Government of South Sudan will ensure the protection of civilians and humanitarian workers. We also call upon the international community to support the efforts of the IGAD revitalization Process to re-energize the peace process by bringing together all the parties to the conflict.

Mr. President,

Kenya has since the 1960s hosted huge numbers of refugees from neighbouring countries. This presented critical challenges to our country. These include smuggling, banditry, human trafficking and the infiltration of refugee camps by terrorists.

In light of these challenges, the Kenya government without abdicating its responsibility over refugees, signed a Tripartite Agreement on the Voluntary Repatriation of Refugees together with the Somali Federal Government and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in 2013.

Although slow, the repatriation exercise has since has been conducted in conformity with international obligations. The international community should join hands in supporting this initiative as it will enable refugees rebuild their lives and regain their human dignity away from the squalor of refugee camps.

Mr. President,

Kenya welcomes your decision to convene the High-level Meeting on the appraisal of the Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons. As a country, we enacted the Counter Trafficking in Persons Act in 2010, which domesticated the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, including its protocol to prevent, suppress and punish trafficking in persons.

We need an integrated global platform to increase public awareness, share good practices and address loop-holes that aid slavery and trafficking - including ensuring effective border management, capacity building for immigration officers and efficient monitoring of local and international employment agencies.

Mr. President,

Kenya welcomes the historic adoption on 7th July 2017 of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. Although nuclear weapon states are absent, the overwhelming majority of members states support the treaty.

This demonstrates our concerns with the danger the use of such weapons poses to humanity as we were all reminded by the unfortunate nuclear detonation that took place on 3rd of September. The adoption of the treaty gives us renewed hope that it is possible, if we work together, to rid the world of nuclear weapons.

Finally, Mr. President,

Kenya is a firm believer in multilateralism. We acknowledge the remarkable role that the UN has played in sustaining peace in our world and in availing a global platform for cooperation and solidarity among nations. We know the UN can do better. We believe that the Sustainable Development Goals and the 2030 Agenda have given the UN a blue print for creating greater peace in our world and for making globalization and development fair and equitable for all.

This is the future that we want for ourselves and for future generations.

I thank you!