

SPEECH DURING THE AFRICA EMPLOYERS' SUMMIT HELD AT EMARA OLE SERENI HOTEL, NAIROBI ON 8TH SEPTEMBER 2025

1. It gives me great pleasure to join this distinguished assembly of employers, visionaries, and change-makers who have come together to advance the noble cause of social justice through business enterprise.

2. The theme of the summit— ***"Empowering Business to Advance Social Justice"*** addresses the ideal obligation of businesses: to create wealth and to maintain the dignity of individuals.
3. For far too long, debate has presented the case of enterprise and social justice as competing forces. Yet, they are mutually reinforcing. When businesses create decent work, ensure fair wages, uphold labour rights, embrace

equity, support communities, and generally integrate social and environmental goals into their business models, they

strengthen the very foundation upon which prosperity is built.

4. Africa is currently at a demographic and economic crossroads. Our youthful population is a tremendous asset, but it also poses an enormous challenge. Africa has

the world's youngest and fastest-growing population, with forecasts suggesting the continent's youth will exceed 1 billion by 2063. A 2023 estimate placed Africa's youth population (ages 15-35) at over 400 million.

5. While many challenges face young people in Africa, undoubtedly the most acute is lack of jobs and income opportunities.
6. We have observed incidences of youth led unrest in some capitals and large cities of the continent. Some of our youths are using social media platforms and digital

technology not for business but for spreading hateful messages.

7. What has been the consequence of youth unrest for business? Loss of property, higher operating costs and dwindling profits. The youth unemployment challenge presents the greatest opportunity for the social justice agenda.

8. We must therefore unlock the transformative potential of business not just to profit, but to **empower**. This requires a new paradigm of enterprise towards:

- a) **Businesses that embrace inclusivity**—where women, youth, and persons with disabilities find meaningful participation and leadership.
- b) **Socially conscious Businesses**—investing in communities, promoting environmental stewardship, and building resilience to climate change.

c) **Businesses that uphold ethical governance**—
where transparency and accountability become
competitive advantages.

9. Kenya, like many other African nations, has made social justice a guiding pillar of national development. Our Bottom-up Economic Transformation Agenda (BETA) has introduced a multipronged job and income opportunities programme targeting the youth.

10. We recognise however, that we cannot do this alone. We need business to transform policy to practical jobs and income opportunities. We need private sector to augment our interventions and offer the requisite community support so that the social aspects such as mental health and wellness, including sports and recreation, and rehabilitation facilities are simultaneously available especially for the youth.

Youthful workers of today and tomorrow are now asking employers for greater flexibilities at the work place. They also want to help the continent drive Continental Integration.

11.How can this be achieved?

- a. Business can partner with government to dovetail common interventions for effectiveness. Private sector can partner in supporting young people's engagement in income opportunities in the sports and creative economy fields. Businesses will benefit from marketing and consumer information targets for their products, while creating jobs and opportunities for young people. This approach can be replicated in many other sectors.

b. Business can also be at the forefront in mainstreaming government-led women, youth and persons with disability strategies.

(i) The Access to Government Opportunities (AGPO) programme for example, would greatly benefit

from having business enterprises, especially those that supply and/or are contracted by government, to also adopt the thirty (30%) percent threshold as an internal target for

themselves. This approach would expand the threshold of beneficiaries.

- (ii) Businesses can be at the forefront in providing additional opportunities for internships, dual training, and on the job training for young graduates of both TVET and university level, so as to produce graduates who are fit for market.
- (iii) Business enterprise should also take lead in showcasing their support for inclusivity and ethical governance can lead the way on

practical inclusivity approaches for
government to follow.

12. It would be inspiring to see business enterprises recognising and profiling those amongst them or indeed

those in the public sphere who espouse long lost values of integrity, honesty, hard work, transparency and care for others.

13. Together, let us envision and create an Africa where every individual has a place, where no one is excluded, and where
business stands as the most dynamic driver of social transformation and shared prosperity.
14. This is the Africa that we must dream of and actualize in our life time.
15. An Africa of the 21st Century will be powered by Youth, Technology and Public Private Partnerships.

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DEPUTY PRESIDENT**