

**THE FOURTEENTH [14TH] PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS ON THE
CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC**

ON

FRIDAY 12TH MARCH, 2021

AT

**STATE HOUSE
NAIROBI**

Fellow Kenyans,

1. Today we mark **exactly one year** since Kenya recorded its first case of COVID-19 on **12th March, 2020**. That new global threat that was sweeping across the world had arrived at our doorstep.
2. In its wake, the coronavirus disease has left our **national consciousness wounded** and scarred; every aspect of our life tested to the limit.
3. As part of our national response; to contain the spread of this virus, for instance, we had to partly close those business activities prone to people crowding. To secure the **future** of our children, who are Kenya's most valuable treasure, we had to **close our schools**. To **preserve the lives** of our loved ones, especially the elderly, we had to **isolate them** as part of physical and social distancing.
4. These measures heralded a new normal. This new normal **did not expose weaknesses** in our nation, but rather it has revealed the **amazing strength, civic responsibility, and resilience** that is in the heart of every Kenyan and at the heart of our nation.
5. During this long year, our economy was in **distress**, but it did not **cave in**; our health system was **overstretched**, but was never **overwhelmed**; and our nation **wounded**, but remained **unbowed**.
6. We lost **1,879 compatriots** to this pandemic in one year. These are not mere numbers. Each represents a life, a lighting candle

amidst us dimmed, a dream cut short, a loved one, a parent, a sibling, a friend, a neighbour, a colleague, a fellow Kenyan and a Child of God.

7. Similarly, the pandemic **afflicted and wounded** many businesses to the point of collapse. **While** some are still recovering, others remained **unbowed**.

8. **Instead** of giving in to the shock of lockdown and other COVID Protocols, they decided to **re-tool** their business models and **re-engineer** their approach. **Today**, these enterprises, especially SMEs have sprung back with incredible innovations, capable of **anticipating** and **responding** to market shocks.

9. **The** county governments have been affected as well; **COVID** had threatened to overstretch and **'wound'** our county health infrastructure. **However**, the county governments stood **strong** and **unbowed**.

10. **Moreover**, with the help of my Administration, they expanded their health facilities to a level unprecedented since independence. **Now** the county governments are ready to roll out our **Universal Health Coverage initiative**.

Fellow Kenyans,

11. **Although** we were **wounded**, but **unbowed** in the last one year, we are yet to emerge from what I referred to as the **'Fog of War'** in my **11th COVID-19 address** of **August 2020**.

12. **In addition,** I called it a '**Fog of War**' because the COVID enemy has remained **unseen**; its '**theatres of war**' are still **undefined** and its **rules of engagement** are **erratic, miscellaneous** and **unwritten**. What is worse is that the enemy has developed **mutations**. If we were dealing with one **Variant of the virus** in the last one year, a **new strain** has **emerged** in **Britain, Brazil** and **South Africa**. We do not know how it will spread; and the **havoc it will wreck** on our population.

13. **In the face of this unparalleled enemy,** therefore, the approach of both the national and county governments has been that of **speedy action**. We have chosen this approach because "... **an average plan** executed with **speed** is superior to an **excellent plan** executed **slowly**". **Because** of our speedy approach, the **multi-lateral agencies**, like the World Bank, have credited our COVID containment success to **swift policy action** and **bold programme choices**.

14. **However,** our approach has also been a **mixed bag of fortunes**. We have paid the high **cost** of bold decisions and **profited** from the benefits of **swift actions**.

15. **Take the first six months** of the pandemic, for instance, we imposed **curfews**, declared **secession of movement** from certain counties like **Nairobi** and **Mombasa**, and enforced specific lockdowns in areas like **Eastleigh** in **Nairobi**.

16. The cost of this bold decision to our **economy was hefty. Nevertheless,** the profit of the **swift policy action** is **immeasurable** in terms of human lives saved.

17. The experts had warned us that if we did not take bold decisions, we would have approximately **one million infections** nationally by **Christmas 2020** and **150,000 deaths**. Other models had actually predicted even worse results.

18. In this regard, between protecting the economy and losing an average of **2,000 people daily** as per these projections, **we chose life over the economy**. The logic here, for the last one year, was that you can always **revive the economy**, but you **cannot** revive a lost life. **If** you take care of the people, they will take care and revive the economy.

19. The Kenyan economy was projected to grow by **6.2%** in **2020**, it grew by only **0.6%**; thanks to COVID-19 Pandemic.

20. This translates to a loss of approximately **Ksh 560 billion** of GDP arising from the resultant economic downturn. **And** this is the **price** we had to pay in 2020 for the **bold decisions** we made to contain this economic free fall.

21. The **profit** we made as a nation from this **swift action** was the prevention of an average of **2,000 deaths per day** and **one million infections** by **Christmas 2020**. The **opportunity cost** of saving these lives was therefore the foregoing of **Ksh 560 billion** of GDP in order to preserve life. **Indeed**, it was worth every cent.

22. In fact, data the world over, indicates that our **0.6% growth rate** and a loss in GDP, was an acceptable economic reality under COVID. If our economy grew by **+0.6%**, the global economy grew at a rate of **-3.5%**, that of the **Euro Area by -7.2%**, the **United Kingdom by -10%** and **sub-Saharan African** economies grew by at a negative rate of **2.6%**. This means that economies around the world shrunk, but Kenya's did not despite our major sacrifices.

23. Further, projections indicate that, in spite of the COVID plunge, our economy is likely to bounce back and grow **7%** in **2021**. If we had not made the bold decisions **of 2020**, as is projected, our economy would, in **2021** contract by **15%**. This would be worse than the **Euro Area, -7.2%; India, -11.5%;** and the **United Kingdom, -10%**.

Fellow Kenyans,

24. The issue before us this **Friday, the 12 March 2021**, is that of '**degrees of de-escalation**'.

25. How much of the country should we open up and how much should we keep shut? **More so given the new COVID strand from Britain, Brazil and South Africa.**

26. And because in the past, **our policy decisions have been guided by science, data and evidence**, we will continue to be guided by the scientific evidence. Empirical evidence over the last one year shows us that, **when we escalate measures, levels of community infections and positivity rates go down.**

27. **When we escalated measures in July 2020, the positivity rate fell from 13% in June to 4% in September. And when we relaxed the measures in September 2020, the positivity rate rose to its highest level in November 2020 at 19%.**

28. **If decision-making follows data, and sound policy actions speak to science, what does this pattern tell us? In January this year, the positivity rate was at 2%, partly because of the civic duty and responsibility of our citizens.**

29. **But by March this year, it has climbed to 13% and is still rising. What does this trend invite from a government that embraces science and evidence?**

Fellow Kenyans,

30. **To secure the gains we are making in the war against the virus, whilst also addressing the current evolution of the disease and particularly to address measures in regard to the third wave of the pandemic, and on the advice of the National Security Council, The Council of Governors and in keeping with the recommendations of the National Emergency Response Committee on Coronavirus, I, issue the First Coronavirus Public Order of 2021 as follows:**

- I. Cognizant** that the propagation of the coronavirus disease within our borders has been fuelled by political gatherings and large social gatherings, **I** direct that all forms of political gatherings **be and**

are hereby prohibited for a period of 30 days,
effective midnight on this **12th March, 2021;**

- II.** **That** the escalation or de-escalation of the containment measure in regard to Prohibition of Political Gatherings is dependent on whether the national endeavour to break the chain of transmissions will have been achieved.
- III.** **To** secure the implementation of the Order on political gatherings, public ceremonies, I, hereby further direct the National Government **Administration Officers** (NGAO) jointly with the **National Police Service** and **County Governments Enforcements Officers to** strictly enforce this Public **Order** regardless of the social and political status of the convenors of the political gatherings.
- IV.** **In** regard to funerals, cremations and other interment ceremonies, it is directed that these ceremonies shall be conducted strictly within **72 hours** of confirmation of death;

Further it is ordered as follows:

- V.** **That** attendees for funerals and gravesides/crematoria ceremonies, shall be limited to the immediate family of the deceased, with the number capped at no more than **100 persons;**

- VI.** **That** attendees of celebration of Weddings and other traditional unions and rites is hereby capped at **100 persons;**
- VII.** There shall continue to be **strict maintenance and enforcement** of public **social health measures**, including regular washing of hands with soap and water or use of sanitizers, physical/social distancing in all public places;
- VIII.** **THAT**, in line with the guidelines issued by the Inter-Faith Council, only a maximum of **one-third of the capacity of places of worship** will be allowed at each worship ceremony;
- IX.** The Ministry of Health, working closely with the **National Government Administration Officers** (NGAO), are directed to enhance and **strictly enforce border health security**, with a greater emphasis on informal entry points; as the country remains at **high risk of importation of new variants of COVID-19;**
- X.** The Ministry of Health shall strengthen the **existing COVID-19 genomic surveillance** so as to monitor the circulating strains in the country for the purpose of informing policy decisions and public health interventions;

- XI.** All **isolation facilities** in the country must be **maintained at a high state of preparedness** through continuous capacity-building and provision of adequate PPE for healthcare workers; supported by the continuous implementation of Infection Prevention and Control measures;
- XII.** The County Governments shall **enhance investment in piped and portable oxygen to isolation and critical care treatment** facilities for the management of severe cases;
- XIII.** The Nationwide Curfew is hereby extended for a further containment of **60 days**. In that regard, all bars, restaurants, and other establishments open to the public, must, close by **9.00 p.m**;
- XIV.** To provide **business continuity** during the containment period, **exemption on the application of curfew** is hereby granted to essential services providers, factories and construction sites to operate night shifts;

XV. To secure the implementation of the revised Containment Measures and to ensure effective enforcements of the same, an **Inter-Governmental Co-ordination Framework** is hereby established in each of the nation's **47 Counties**;

XVI. The **Counties Inter-Governmental Committee** will be co-chaired by the respective **County Governors** and **County Commissioners**, and feature representatives of the County Security Teams, County Health Chiefs and County Governments Enforcements Units;

XVII. The Counties Inter-Governmental Committee shall be convened at least once every week to assess the County specific compliance levels; and

XVIII. **The** Cabinet Secretary for Transport jointly with the Cabinet Secretary for Health are directed to develop revised protocols for Public transport in consultation with all stakeholders in the transport sector.

Fellow Kenyans,

31. **I** will conclude with two thoughts. **One**, Kenya is entering a **critical phase** in the **management and control of the pandemic**, with the arrival of WHO prequalified COVID-19 vaccines.

32. This vaccine has been tested and our **medical experts are persuaded that its safety profile is bankable.**

33. The vaccine **roll out** will be **done** in **phases** as **guided** by the **National Deployment Vaccination Plan (NDVP)**; with the **first phase** targeting **front line health workers, uniformed personnel, and teachers**. The **second phase** will target the **elderly people** and those with **pre-existing conditions**. And, I must make it clear; the vaccination is voluntary.

34. The **second thought** has to do with what explains our success against this invisible enemy in the last one year.

35. **Subconsciously**, Kenyans have developed a **culture of civic duty** and **responsibility**. The culture of **'minding yourself'** and **'becoming your brother's keeper'** is getting entrenched as a **norm** and **practice under COVID conditions**. And this culture of civic responsibility may explain, in part, the drop of COVID positivity rate from **19%** in **November 2020** to **2%** in **January 2021**.

36. I must remind you that Government will do its part to protect Kenyans; but the **first line of defence against an invisible enemy like COVID is the people**.

37. If we **exercise civic responsibility** and **act as our 'brother's keeper'**, we will have **won half the battle** against this pandemic.

Finally,

38. **I** know our students who will be sitting for their national examinations in the coming week, are busy preparing. **Let me say,** as a father and as your President, I know you have arrived at the examination desk following a road marred by challenges.

39. **Sitting** for your examinations after having been out of class for over **six (6) months,** know that the entire country and I are rooting for you. **To our Grade 4, Class 8, and Form 4 Candidates;** I convey my best wishes to you all and I pray that your efforts will bear a bountiful harvest.

God Bless You, God Bless Kenya.

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