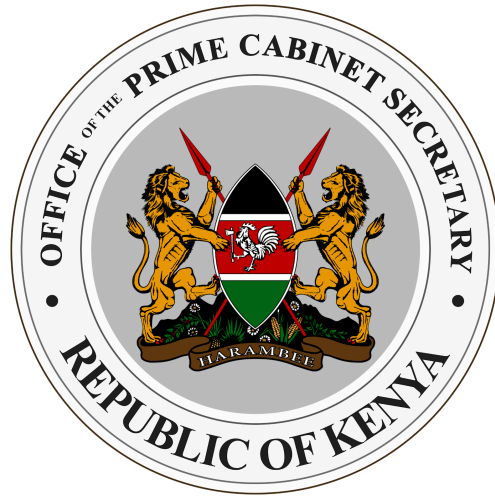




OFFICE OF THE PRIME CABINET SECRETARY
AND MINISTRY OF FOREIGN
& DIASPORA AFFAIRS



**REMARKS BY H.E. DR. MUSALIA MUDAVADI, E.G.H., PRIME
CABINET SECRETARY AND CABINET SECRETARY FOR
FOREIGN AND DIASPORA AFFAIRS, AT THE LAUNCH OF
THE STATE DEPARTMENT FOR DIASPORA AFFAIRS
STRATEGIC PLAN 2023 – 2027 AT THE KENYA SCHOOL OF
GOVERNMENT**

MONDAY 30TH SEPTEMBER 2024

NAIROBI



**Ms. Roseline Kathure Njogu, Principal Secretary for
Diaspora Affairs;**

Other Principal Secretaries present;

**Hon. Lydia Haika, Chairman, Diaspora Affairs & Migrant
Workers Committee of the National Assembly;**

**Hon. Nelson Koech, Chairman, Defence, Intelligence and
Foreign Relations Committee of the National Assembly;**

**H.E. Beyene Russom, Dean of the Diplomatic Corps and
Ambassador of Eritrea to Kenya;**

Distinguished Guests;

Ladies and Gentlemen:

Good morning,

1. It is my great pleasure to join you today for the launch of the State Department for Diaspora Affairs Strategic Plan 2023-2027.
2. This Strategic Plan is particularly important, considering that it is the first for the State Department for Diaspora Affairs, which was established in January 2023.
3. I wish to congratulate you Madam PS and your team for the hard work and enduring process that has made this achievement possible.



4. The Plan we are launching today is informed by the Constitution of Kenya and various policy and legal frameworks that emphasize planning as the basis for budgeting.
5. It reaffirms the Government's commitment towards strengthening partnerships with the diaspora, who are a central part of the Kenyan social fabric.
6. The diaspora have and continue to play a major role in the country's socioeconomic transformation. Besides remittances, the diaspora is a key source of skills, expertise and technology transfer that are necessary ingredients for our economic transformation.
7. Through the diaspora, Kenya is able to attract cutting edge technologies and rare skills that may not be available locally.
8. As a testament to the importance we place on our fast-growing and vibrant diaspora population, Kenya established the State Department for Diaspora Affairs 21 months ago. This has enabled the Government to address the specific and peculiar needs of the Kenyan diaspora in different countries and regions.
9. The Strategic Plan provides a holistic and robust framework for addressing diaspora-related issues with an emphasis on diaspora welfare as opposed to just remittances.
10. Additionally, we have operationalized a 24-hour call center to ensure that our diaspora have access to prompt assistance, regardless of where they are in the world.



11. Taking advantage of the ever-growing digital space, we have also onboarded critical services for the diaspora on the eCitizen platform, making it easier for the diaspora to access government services seamlessly at anytime from anywhere.
12. We have made other key achievements including:
 - a. Development of the Diaspora Policy 2024 to respond better to the needs of the diaspora;
 - b. Evacuation of Kenyans from high conflict areas in various parts of the world, including Sudan, Israel, Palestine and Lebanon;
 - c. Strengthened dialogue and partnership with the diaspora;
 - d. Creation of an enabling environment for diaspora investments; and
 - e. Developing a Global Labour Market Strategy.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

13. Kenyans abroad make direct investments locally, providing social support or creating an enabling environment for Kenyan exports. Their contribution is evident in various sectors of the economy including education, health, housing, agriculture, tourism and trade.
14. It is worth noting that remittances grew to USD 2.8 billion from January to July 2024, compared to USD 2.4 billion during a similar period in 2023. A closer analysis of the trend over the first seven months of 2024 points to a projected rise in annual remittances from USD 4.19 billion in 2023 to USD 4.8 billion in 2024, a remarkable 14.6% increase.



15. This exponential growth puts the country on track towards attaining the remittance target of Kshs. 1 trillion annually by the end of the Strategic Plan period in 2027.
16. The increase in remittances not only enhances investments, but also help to strengthen Kenya's Balance of Payments and reduce the Kenya shilling's vulnerability to external pressure.
17. The Strategic Plan places the Kenyan Diaspora at the core of Government planning and acknowledges their role in enhancing the Bottom-Up Economic Transformation Agenda and achieving the Kenya Vision 2030.
18. It also resonates well with various global, regional and national development frameworks including the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the African Union Agenda 2063 and the East Africa Community Vision 2050.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

19. As the PS has stated, the Government emphasizes the protection, engagement, empowerment and prosperity of our diaspora. We are deliberate about protecting their rights and championing their welfare, creating an enabling environment for diaspora investments, skills and technology transfer and fostering a mutually beneficial and lasting relationship.
20. One of the emerging issues affecting the diaspora's well-being is the portability of social benefits, including health and social security benefits.



21. Whereas some diaspora Kenyans are ready to return home, they grapple with their social benefits tied to their host countries. If they leave, they lose the benefits.
22. Perhaps, it is time for the State Department to take up the leadership role in a conversation about a framework that will allow the diaspora to move back to their countries of origin comfortably.
23. Facilitation of social benefits portability will allow the diaspora to migrate back safely and in an orderly manner, in line with article 22 of the Global Compact for Migration.
24. Social benefits portability has key advantages including reducing the cost of remittances and enabling access to mental health services for those returning home.
25. On the cost of remittances, there has been lengthy discussions on the need to decrease costs associated with sending money from members of the diaspora back to their countries of origin. The focus is on the need to limit the cost of remittance to three percent of the value of the money transfer, in line with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 10 (c).
26. Discussions include policies and initiatives that will ensure that fees, charges and hidden costs that remittance service providers impose are kept at a minimum, thereby maximizing the amount of money that reaches the intended beneficiaries.
27. The remittance costs remain high despite calls for reduction. For the viability of social benefits portability, the transaction costs must reduce.



28. I therefore encourage all stakeholders to join together, in Kenya, regionally and globally, to bring the costs of remittances to the global target.
29. The other issue tied to portability of social benefits is mental health. How? One might ask. This is a domain that has not always received the prominence it deserves, particularly in African societies where mental health remains a stigma and a taboo.
30. We cannot ignore the profound impact that mental health has on the overall well-being and productivity of individuals, including those in the diaspora. More so for those who remain in the host country not willingly, but because they cannot port their social benefits.
31. Knowing that they can enjoy their social benefits even after returning home will definitely give the diaspora the peace of mind to continue working, confident that should the time to go back home come, they will be able to do so in a humane, safe and regular manner. And they will be cushioned.
32. I therefore task the State Department for Diaspora Affairs to lead this conversation and to forge partnerships with countries that have a similar persuasion to negotiate for social benefits portability.

Ladies and Gentlemen,



33. The successful implementation of this Strategic Plan calls for concerted efforts and sound leadership as well effective Monitoring and Evaluation for results.

34. Towards this end, my office commits to:

- **Enhance diaspora trust and confidence by championing their welfare and protecting their rights,**
- **Enhance diaspora contribution to GDP growth through higher remittances,**
- **Spearhead initiatives aimed at positioning Kenya as a global leader in skilled labour export,**
- **Deepen collaboration and Strategic partnerships with the diaspora, and**
- **Strengthen the policy, legal and institutional frameworks underpinning diaspora affairs.**

35. I have no doubt that the State Department for Diaspora Affairs, supported by the parent Ministry of Foreign and Diaspora Affairs, has the requisite capacity for effective implementation of the Strategic Plan.

36. All stakeholders and partners present will in one way or the other contribute to effective delivery of its implementation and outcomes.

37. We look forward to building a vibrant community that will support the Government's agenda of deepening the contribution of the diaspora to Kenya's socioeconomic transformation.



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Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is now my singular honour and duty to declare the State Department for Diaspora Affairs' Strategic Plan 2023-2027 officially launched.

Thank you very much.