



**STATE DEPARTMENT FOR SOCIAL PROTECTION, OFFICE OF
THE CABINET SECRETARY**

**SPEECH BY MINISTRY OF LABOUR AND SOCIAL PROTECTION
CABINET SECRETARY HON. (AMB) UKUR YATANI DURING THE SOCIAL
PROTECTION SECTOR REVIEW LAUNCH AT THE INTERCONTINENTAL
HOTEL NAIROBI ON 11TH OCTOBER, 2019**

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SPEECH BY LABOUR AND SOCIAL PROTECTION CABINET SECRETARY HON. (AMB) UKUR YATANI DURING THE SOCIAL PROTECTION SECTOR REVIEW LAUNCH AT THE INTERCONTINENTAL HOTEL NAIROBI ON 11TH OCTOBER, 2019

**Distinguished Guests,
Development Partners,
Ladies and Gentlemen**

It gives me great pleasure and privilege to join you this morning for the launch of this important document, the **Social Protection Sector Review Report**.

Having read the document, especially its findings, I wish to start by thanking all those who in one way or the other contributed and ensured that this report was put together.

The report correctly finds that the country has made a steady progress in mounting a robust social protection system and embraced a more coordinated approach in the implementation of social protection interventions that have prevented many needy Kenyans from sliding into deep poverty.

To continue cushioning the poor and vulnerable from poverty the Ministry has significantly increased support to households taking care of poor and vulnerable persons through cash transfers. The number of households under the Cash Transfer for Orphans and Vulnerable Children (CT-OVC) increased from 153,000 in 2013 to 353,000 in 2017. On the other hand, the number of persons in the Older Persons Cash Transfer (OPCT) increased from 59,000 beneficiaries to 833,000 households. The significant increase was due to the policy decision in 2017 to have universal coverage of all persons aged 70 years and above who are not receiving Government pension under the Older Persons Cash Transfer. The Persons with Severe Disabilities Cash Transfer (PWSD-CT) increased coverage from 14,700 to 47,000 households over the same period. It is also worthwhile to note that all the cash transfer programmes run by government including the Hunger Safety Net Programme run in northern Kenya are tax financed.

To facilitate graduation from poverty, my ministry is gradually developing a graduation programme that will link tax-financed social transfers to other services. For example, some recipients of transfers are being offered the additional benefit of membership of the National Hospital Insurance Fund, nutritional and livelihood support

Ladies and Gentlemen

Despite our success, we look forward to the time our country will reach the level of investment some developing countries such as South Africa, Mauritius, Brazil and Georgia have made by dedicating more than 3% of their GDP to the social protection programmes and realized huge benefits of investing in social protection. By and large, however, our annual expenditure of Sh26 billion on social protection programmes is proof of our determination to cushion our vulnerable populations against poverty. The aim is therefore to ensure that all Kenyans, irrespective of their social status are able to live a dignified life.

As a government, we are committed to continue reviewing policies and programmes, including legislative reforms, that enhance the capacity and opportunities for the poor and vulnerable to improve and sustain their lives in line with the Constitution of Kenya and the bill of rights. The beneficiaries must be therefore enabled to access affordable healthcare, social security, social assistance and whose overall objective is to support the big 4 agenda.

As a government, we are determined to ensure that all our social assistance, social security and health insurance programmes are run in the most efficient, effective and sustainable manner not only for the current generations but also for those to come and in line with this, my Ministry administers the Presidential Bursary that enable children from poor and vulnerable families access Secondary Education. The Ministry also in collaboration with the National Treasury and development partners is in the process of developing regulations within the Public Finance Management (2012) for operationalization of the Social Assistance Fund.

By offering all citizens with the guarantee of income security, social protection effectively tackles poverty and inequality, helps build a strong and productive workforce, protects against shocks and crises, and builds social cohesion which results in a peaceful society. In line with the above, the NSSF Act No. 45 of 2013, has brought to the arm bit of social security the self employed and other workers in the informal economy. Before the end of this year we shall as Government be launching a unique social security product for the almost 15 million workers in the informal economy.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As Kenya develops and moves towards middle-income country status, its social infrastructure – such as the health, education and social protection sectors – must evolve to ensure that the benefits of progress and growth are shared with all citizens regardless of their economic status. Higher investment in social protection will create greater stability, increased prosperity, a more dynamic and competitive economy and

ensure that every citizen is included in society and can reach their full potential, resulting in a more productive workforce.

Apart from undertaking significant improvements with the gradual expansion of regular and predictable transfers under the Inua Jamii Programme, the Government's move to implement a universal social pension for all older person aged 70 years and above was the most notable. This sprung Kenya into the category of leading countries in Africa in terms of investing in social protection.

In 2016, the country invested around 1.3 per cent of GDP in social protection, while spending on social assistance reached 0.35 per cent of GDP. While this is lower than countries such as South Africa and Namibia, it is however higher than most other countries in the region, and Kenya's investment in social assistance is the highest in East Africa.

We will keep on the positive trajectory by increasing investments and expanding the social protection programmes. This will allow us to beat existing challenges which include increased cases of older persons' abuse and neglect that continue to affect an already vulnerable section of the population as well as inadequate data on Persons with Disability. In the past, the Ministry has also faced the challenge of adhering to timelines for payment of cash transfers to beneficiaries of cash transfer programmes and violation of rights of our children, challenges the Ministry will continue to address.

As I conclude, I wish once again to thank all development partners and other stakeholders who have walked with us on this journey of rolling out social protection programmes in Kenya. We would not be where we are today without you in terms of programme development systems and institutional strengthening. UNICEF, World Food Programme, DFID, World Bank, SIDA Sweden, ILO and many others. We recognize you. We indeed appreciate you. I also wish to assure our development partners that the Kenyan Government will be firm and meticulous in the administration of the social sector resources meant for the poor and vulnerable. Any form of mismanagement of resources in this sector will be mercilessly dealt with.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I now wish to officially launch the Social Protection Sector Review Report.

Thank you all.