

A SPEECH BY THE CHILD GUEST FOR THE NATIONAL CELEBRATIONS OF THE DAY OF THE AFRICAN CHILD ON 16th JUNE 2021

Our Chief Guest Honourable Justice Teresia Matheka,

Ms. Ruqayya Omar – Our President,

The Cabinet Secretary Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, Hon. Simon Kiprono Chelugui,

The Chairperson, National Council for Children’s Services (NCCS),

The Chief Administrative Secretary, Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, Hon. Ole Ntutu,

The Principal Secretary, State Department of Social Protection,

The Secretary Children’s Services,

Fellow Children,

Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good morning.

I am delighted to join you all as we celebrate the Day of the African Child 2021.

Today we remember our brothers and sisters who were killed and injured in Soweto, South Africa in 1976 as they fought for some of the rights that we freely enjoy today.

Thank you our leaders for setting aside this day so that we can celebrate our heroes of Soweto as we hold ourselves accountable for what we have done to continue their legacy.

On behalf of the children of Kenya, I would like to thank the Government, our parents and all our caregivers for taking care of us.

We are thankful for the laws that make sure that our rights are respected. Thank you for ensuring that we go to school, get good nutritious food, go to hospital when we are sick and that most of our caregivers understand what their responsibilities towards us are.

We also appreciate all the steps that you have taken to ensure that children can access justice when their rights are violated. Thank you also for allowing us to freely express ourselves and for listening to us. We beseech you to continue acting on the ideas that we share with you to improve on our welfare.

On 5th June 2021, children from across the country participated in a webinar with leaders in child protection from state and non-state agencies. It was a wonderful experience and thank you Judge Matheka for leading the team and the National Council for Children's Services (NCCS) for organizing the event. I am happy that even when current circumstances do not allow us to meet physically, you still find avenues for us to ask questions, share our opinions and celebrate our wins.

On behalf of the children, I would like to ask the Government to address the issues that were raised during that event so that we can make our country fit for children. Some of the key issues that were raised by the children include: -

- Access to healthcare - While those of us in Secondary School can be treated using NHIF in hospitals, our younger brothers and sisters in primary school cannot.
- Acquisition of birth certificates - We know how important a birth certificate is to a child, but children in border areas, refugee camps and other areas experience difficulties in getting the same.
- Access to Education – We appreciate that Primary Education is free and that Day Scholars do not pay tuition fees. However, there are a number of schools that need their classrooms better equipped. Other parts of our country also need more schools so that children in those areas do not walk long distances to access their right to education.
- Children in the streets – we empathize with the families and children living in the streets. We urge the Government to bring them back home so that they can enjoy the same rights that we do.
- Sanitary towels – many of our sisters struggle to get sanitary towels and they miss many days of school. We appeal to the Government to ensure that no girl misses out on school because of this.
- Child Pregnancy – it is painful that some girls are defiled and impregnated. On behalf of this offended sisters, we cry that due, diligent justice is accorded to them and appropriate opportunities for continuing with their education are provided.
- Many of us undergo various forms of abuse at home, in institutions of care and other settings. We are sad that we are facing such cruelty from the very people that should protect us.

To my fellow children, be reminded that there is a right there is a responsibility. We are obligated to reciprocate the good that has been done for us with an equally commensurate good behavior. We have a duty: to respect our elders; to be kind to ourselves, the young and frail in society; to uphold our cultural values; and to live in peace and harmony amongst ourselves.

Let us learn from our elders and listen to their wise counsel. Let us look out for one another and speak up when our rights are violated.

As we continue to walk this journey that began many decades ago, I call on our leaders to fulfill their promises to us and lead by example for “**children learn what they live**”.

Thank You and God Bless You All.

Amos Kipyegon – Koiwa Secondary School Sotik.

