



MINISTRY OF LABOUR AND SOCIAL PROTECTION
OFFICE OF THE CABINET SECRETARY

SPEECH BY

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**DURING THE INCLUSIVE AND JUST SOCIAL PROTECTION
IN AFRICA CONFERENCE COVID – 19**

***THEME: INNOVATIVE, INCLUSIVE AND AFROCENTRIC
SOCIAL PROTECTION: LEVERAGING VOICES AND
REPRESENTATION IN THE ERA OF THE PANDEMIC***

**DATE: THURSDAY, 26TH AND FRIDAY 27TH AUGUST 2021
VENUE: TAMARIND TREE HOTEL, NAIROBI**

Chief Administrative Secretary, Labour and Social Protection

Hon Patrick Ole Ntutu

The Executive Director of the Partnership for African Social and Governance Research, **Dr. Anthony Mveyange;**

The Chairman of the Board of Directors, of the Partnership for African Social and Governance Research, **Prof. Narciso Matos;**

The Chairman of the Board of the Africa Platform for Social Protection
Dr. Boniface Deagbo;

The Advisor to the African Union Commission; **Dr. Thomas Ongolo**

The Board Members of the African Platform for Social Protection
Participating virtually, representing East Africa, North Africa, West
Africa, Southern Africa and Special needs group;
Representatives of the Diplomatic Community;
All Government Officials present;
The Research community,
Civil Society groups represented from Across Africa,
Grass root mobilizers
Humanitarian organizations present,
Recipients of social protection in Africa,
The fourth Estate

Distinguished Guests and participants;
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good morning from Nairobi, Kenya;

Allow me to welcome those visiting Kenya & Nairobi for the very first time, and everyone else who has joined this conference today, including virtually. **KARIBU**

It is indeed with great appreciation that I join all of you this morning to open this auspicious Pan African conference on “**Inclusive and Just Social Protection in Africa**”.

Convening this conference is indeed timely, when we consider the impacts of COVID – 19 pandemic on social protection support structures that have been stretched to the limit in every society across our continent and even globally.

Despite the significant efforts that have been put in place by many governments in Africa to cushion our people from the negative economic consequences of this pandemic, **it is estimated that unemployment rates in the continent have increased by 0.7%, resulting in about 40 million “newly” poor Africans**, thus eroding the progress on poverty reduction efforts across the continent.

Faced with this common struggle and a common desire to emerge stronger as a people, it is hence important to come together as a Pan African community to deliberate, exchange ideas and **build the Africa We Want.**

Ladies and Gentlemen:

Kenya has made progress in the social protection sector; Being the host country for this conference, allow me to start by sharing with you the remarkable evolution and expansion of social protection in Kenya.

Our government, through the State Department of Social Protection under my ministry seeks to ensure that all Kenyans live in dignity and can exploit their full human capabilities for their own social and economic wellbeing.

As part of these efforts, the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection launched the National Safety Net Programme in year 2012, with the aim to consolidate and enhance efficiency in the delivery of the four, public funded cash transfer programmes, namely; **the Older Persons Cash Transfer; The Orphans and Vulnerable Children Cash Transfer; the Persons with Severe Disability Cash Transfer; and the Hunger Safety Net Programme** which had been operating individually for over a decade.

The **Hunger Safety Net Programme in particular** demonstrates our government's commitment to reduce poverty as articulated in Kenya Vision 2030.

The National Safety Net Programme currently covers over 1.3 Million vulnerable households who receive a monthly cash transfer of **Kshs. 2000** paid through contracted Payment Service Providers under a “*Choice Payment Model*”, with payments being made every two months to beneficiary accounts to ensure dignity in the provision of services.

Currently, these programmes are reaching an estimated 12% of vulnerable populations in our country, which is a substantial increase from the 500 households of orphans and vulnerable children targeted at the start of the programme, two decades ago.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

My Ministry continues to come up with strategies and systems aimed at ensuring that the existing social protection programmes continue to contribute to improved livelihoods among the target vulnerable populations.

To further strengthen provision of social protection services, my Ministry with the support from the World Bank and the Foreign Commonwealth Development Office, started the Kenya Social and Economic Inclusion Project (KSEIP) in March, 2019.

The objective the KSEIP is to strengthen social protection delivery systems for enhanced access to social and economic inclusion services, and shock-responsive safety nets for poor and vulnerable households.

Importantly, the KSEIP will enable establishment of an Enhanced Single Registry that will contain data not just for beneficiaries of the cash transfer programmes of government, but also data on potential beneficiaries for social protection programmes.

Fellow participants, these efforts will go a long way in promoting evidence-based programming in the social protection sector, and further enable effective vertical and horizontal expansion in provision of social protection services. The Enhanced Single Registry will further support roll out of timely shock responsive interventions in the country.

Through the KSEIP, Government will roll out a-nutrition sensitive cash transfer programme to counties with high levels of stunting and malnutrition, pilot economic inclusion interventions, and promote structured increase and enrolment of National Safety Net Programme beneficiaries under the National Hospital Insurance Fund.

The National Safety Net Programme and the KSEIP set a good foundation to guide strategies that can inform cushioning of our people from the negative economic consequences of poverty and without a doubt, the COVID 19 pandemic.

Distinguished participants,

Allow me to report here today, that beyond the now regular and predictable provision of cash transfers to the National Safety Net Programme beneficiaries by government, in July, 2021 the government provided **Kshs. 26.3 million** top-up payments to **12,054** National Safety Net Programme benefiting households, who met the eligibility criteria for the Nutrition through Cash and Health Education (NICHE) programme under the KSEIP.

To further protect and mitigate on the impacts of the COVID 19 pandemic on majority of households in the country, and as part of the response mechanism, in April, 2020 our government introduced the pandemic Response and Management Bill, 2020.

Article 30 of the bill prohibits employers from terminating contracts or dismissing employees during the pandemic.

In addition, revisions have been made on the Kenya National Social Protection Policy, 2011 to provide for adoption of a life-cycle based approach in provision of social protection services. This will ensure essential protection will be availed to citizens as established by law under the International Labour Organization's recommendations.

Unlike the 2011 policy, the revised social protection policy comprises of four key pillars, namely: **Income Security, Social Health Protection, Shock-responsive Social Protection, and Complementary Services.**

This approach challenges Kenya to position social protection beyond a short-lived cash stipend instrument to a transformative instrument with potential for economic and resilience building, hence creating opportunities for those who are vulnerable in our society.

Distinguished Participants,

This significant transformation in social protection, is not limited to Kenya. Across Africa, positive news on innovative strategies and programmes to deliver social protection to the poor and vulnerable abound. The Africa Union’s Agenda 2063 Framework, “**The Africa We Want**”, and Specifically, ***Aspiration 1*** of “**A prosperous Africa** based on inclusive growth and sustainable development” with three national targets set by 2023 is one such example.

Allow me to remind of us the three national targets which all Countries in Africa need to set by year 2023, these are;

- At least 30% of vulnerable populations including persons with disabilities, older persons, and children be provided with social protection
- All persons working in the formal sector be provided with social security.
- At least 20% of the informal sector and rural labour to have access to social security.

Kenya is one of the nations that have taken heed to this challenge. I commend all other African Nations that have also taken up this challenge. I welcome all other Nations to take up the challenge to ensure realization of our shared aspiration of *the Africa we want*.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Despite these very remarkable success stories, many African nations remain a long way from achieving long-lasting transformation of the individuals and communities targeted by our social protection programmes.

Gaps and Challenges still exist that this conference can deliberate on and provide innovative solutions. My expectation is that during the two days conference, we will foster our collaboration, learn from one another, and reflect holistically on the entire architecture of social protection in Africa. This way, I believe we can jointly articulate a "hybrid" social protection framework that is appropriate for Africa.

I note with confidence, the conference approach to reflect and learn from the resilience of the traditional social protection systems present in all societies in the African. Our realities demonstrate that, the most available and reliable system is one that is embedded in our African value systems for cushioning humanity, reciprocity, and solidarity among our people.

I also note that the conference brings together beneficiaries and recipients of social protection services, grass root mobilizers, civil society actors, and policy makers from across the continent to deliberate on issues on social protection guided by rigorous scientific evidence. This indeed is a solid constructive environment that will help us all realize the “Africa We Want”.

As I open this conference, allow me to commend **the Partnership for Africa Social and Governance Research; The Africa Platform for Social Protection** and **the Open Society Foundations for the research and funding**; for making this important and timely conference possible in these times of great uncertainty in our continent and in the world.

As I conclude, it is my prayer that all the stakeholders will find this conference worth their time, and its outcome “***The Post COVID –19 Social Protection Agenda for Africa***” useful for progressing their efforts in improving social protection in our continent towards our shared aspiration of “**The Africa We Want**”

Ladies and Gentlemen, and distinguished participants,

It is now my honor and joy to declare “**the 2021, Inclusive and Just Social Protection Conference in Africa**”, officially opened.

THANK YOU ALL AND GOD BLESS YOU.