

PRESS STATEMENT ON CABINET SECRETARY'S TWO-DAY WORKING VISIT TO THE SULTANATE OF OMAN- 13TH-15TH MARCH 2022

1. On the invitation of the Foreign Minister of the Sultanate of Oman, H.E. Sayyid Badr Albusaidi, the Cabinet Secretary for Foreign Affairs, Amb. Raychelle Omamo, SC, EGH successfully undertook a two-day working visit to the Sultanate of Oman from 13th to 15th March 2022. During the visit she held extensive consultations with her host the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Oman.
2. Deliberations during the bilateral meeting with the Minister of Foreign Affairs:
 - The meeting focused on reinvigorating the strong bilateral relations that exists between Kenya and Oman courtesy of the rich historical ties. The two Ministers welcomed the initiative by the two governments towards the initiation of a Kenya - Oman Joint Trade Cooperation (JTC) especially following the recently successful Kenya-Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Business Forum in Dubai held from 14th – 18th February, 2022 on the sidelines of the Dubai 2020 Expo.
 - The Cabinet Secretary appreciated the recently increased market access in Oman for Kenyan livestock and milk. Their Excellencies appreciated the ongoing efforts of the technical teams and noted the need to expeditiously finalize the pending MoUs and Agreements for mutual benefits of the peoples of the two countries.
 - They agreed on the need to strengthen the relations between Oman and Kenya in view of the current focus of Oman's foreign policy to strengthen and deepen relations with the countries of the horn and East Africa region owing to Oman's historical relations with these countries underpinned by a common language-Kiswahili, an ingredient which cements the bond.

- The Foreign minister of Oman explained to the Cabinet secretary Oman's moderate and balanced foreign policy which has enabled it to maintain neutrality within the region. He also informed the Cabinet Secretary of Oman's current focus on building up its Economy under its vision 2040 and as such looking for partnership in trade and tourism. He emphasized the need to finalize pending MoUs and Agreements in the areas of; double taxation, promotion and protection of investment, labour agreement; removal of visa restrictions to ease travel within the two countries; MoU between the port of Mombasa and port of Salalah, Agreement in the area of Agriculture and Livestock and blue economy. The two Ministers agreed on need for strategic and purposeful engagements- establishment of strong focal points so as to focus on areas of mutual interest which include; the blue economy, energy especially renewables- (wind & solar) trade, investment, labour, Agriculture, irrigation, logistics and infrastructure, fisheries and food products and circuit tourism.
 - The Cabinet Secretary and her counterpart also deliberated on the challenges confronting both countries in their regions mainly terrorism in Somalia, Mozambique and some parts of the Gulf and the conflicts in Ethiopia, Sudan, South Sudan and Yemen. The Foreign Minister of Oman emphasized on the need for a home-grown solution especially in Yemen as opposed to imposed solutions.
3. The Cabinet Secretary also met with the Minister for Trade, Industry & Investment of Oman, H.E. Qais Al Yousef.
- During the meeting the Cabinet Secretary underscored Kenya's readiness to work with Oman to improve Market Access of Kenya's Agricultural fresh produce; - Cut flowers, tea, coffee and fruits as well as the expansion of the recently opened market access for livestock imports from Kenya.

- The two Ministers agreed to designate focal points from both sides so as to explore possibilities of cooperation and ensure progress is achieved in trade and investment. To this end the Oman Minister designated Dr. Salah, the Undersecretary for Commerce while on the Kenya side will be Amb. Johson Weru, the Principal Secretary for Trade.
 - The Minister of Oman informed the Cabinet Secretary of the critical sectors of investment espoused in Oman's vision 2040 which includes; Mining & Minerals, Logistics – (three International Airports, modern roads), Agriculture/Blue Economy; Tourism & Heritage, Industrialization & Manufacturing, Health, Education, ICT, renewable and secular economy. Other areas of potential cooperation highlighted in the meeting include investments in the green energy sector.
 - The meeting observed the need to ease the process of acquiring business and tourist visas as a key tool of improving trade relations. The two Ministers agreed on the need for the two countries to undertake at least one trade delegation from Oman to Kenya and from Kenya to Oman and more importantly to expediate on the conclusion of the Agreements on; double taxation and promotion & protection of investments. The Minister of Oman undertook to extend an invitation to the Cabinet Secretary of Trade and Enterprise development of Kenya.
4. On her day two of the visit, the Cabinet Secretary met with the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries Wealth and Water Resources of Oman, H.E. Dr. Saud bin Ahmed Al Habsi.
- The Cabinet Secretary lauded the cooperation between the two Ministries of Agriculture and Livestock which she noted has recently born fruits with Oman importing approximately 500,000 livestock from Kenya annually. Their Excellencies noted the huge potential that exists in the food security sector of the two countries as envisioned in the vision 2030 and 2040 for Kenya and Oman respectively. They observed the imperative need to diversify market access of both countries taking into account the experiences of Covid-19 pandemic.

- The Cabinet Secretary urged for Oman investors to take advantage of the investment opportunities offered by the Kenya Government under the Big Four Agenda and particularly the Tana River Food Security project where one million acres have been earmarked for irrigation; Agro-processing, export of fruits, vegetables, cut flowers, tea, coffee and live animals to Oman for consumption in Oman and redistribution to wider Gulf Region; investments in shipping and fishing industries in Kenya by the Oman investors; export of skilled manpower in Kenya; investment by Omani businesses in additional quarantine centres the two current existing ones Makindu and Balchuma. Further, she highlighted the huge potential in the blue economy specifically the fishing industry and invited Oman to partner with Kenya in the development of Shimoni port which has been designated for the fishing industry.

5. In addition, the Cabinet secretary met with the Minister for Heritage and Tourism, H.E. Salim Bin Mohamed Al-Mahrouqi.

- During the meeting the Cabinet Secretary appreciated the rich cultural historical ties between Oman and East Africa. The two Ministers agreed on the need to finalize the pending MoU on Cooperation in the field of Tourism and heritage as it is vital in harnessing the huge investment opportunities in the tourism sector.
- The two Ministers underscored the significance of strengthening collaboration in Regional and International bodies like UNESCO and World Tourism Organization. To this end the Cabinet Secretary sought the support of Oman in Kenya's candidature to join the World Heritage Committee and Oman agreed to support. The Oman Minister also informed that Oman will send a delegation to Nairobi to meet with the relevant authorities and the private sector players in tourism sector so as to explore and identify key areas of partnership in tourism business and hospitality sector. They agreed to explore circuit tourism between Oman and Kenya

along the old trade routes that connect Oman to Mombasa and Zanzibar.

- They observed the need to strengthen relations between the national museums of the two countries so as to preserve Oman heritage in Kenya; develop tourism packages and hold mutual exhibitions to exhibit tangible and non-tangible products both in Nairobi and Oman.
6. During the visit, the Cabinet secretary also met with the Omani Women's Association where she underscored the role of women in leadership and transformation of economies especially during this critical period of post covid-19 pandemic recovery.
 7. The Cabinet Secretary also had the opportunity to visit the Kenya Embassy Muscat where she thanked the staff for their hard work in strengthening the fraternal relations and increasing the quantum of business between Kenya and Oman.

MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS
MARCH 15, 2022