**KEYNOTE REMARKS BY CS, MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AND DIASPORA AFFAIRS AT THE 9TH ANNUAL KENYA DIASPORA HOMECOMING CONVENTION (KDHC) AT OLE SERENI HOTEL ON 7TH DECEMBER, 2022**

Kenya Diaspora Alliance Chairperson, Dr Shem Ochuodho

Kenya Diaspora Association members present both in person and virtual,

Distinguished ladies and gentlemen,

1. It gives me great pleasure to be able to attend in person, and to speak at the 9th annual Kenya diaspora homecoming convention, particularly so coming at a point when I have just been appointed to the cabinet as Cabinet Secretary for Foreign and Diaspora Affairs.
2. The reorganisation of this Ministry to include the Diaspora and its affairs is a testament to the growing importance and role of the diaspora in enhancing the country’s development. I am informed that the theme of the convention this year is **“Inclusive Growth, Leveraging Diaspora Resources.”** The theme is apt and timely coming at a time when the new Kenya Kwanza administration has acknowledged the role of the diaspora and its potential by dedicating a state department in order to mainstream and empower Kenyans abroad to effectively make a significant contribution to the country’s development.
3. As a firm believer in a rule based ethos, Kenya has ratified the AU Constitutive Act Article 3 (q) that calls on the participation of the African Diaspora in Africa’s development. Kenya’s development Blueprint Vision 2030, among others acknowledges the role of the diaspora remittances and encourages it’s critical role in the achievement of the Big Four Agenda which prioritises, affordable housing, Infrastructure, manufacturing, food security and universal health. I am confident that your convention is timely and your deliberations will no doubt address these priorities and the manner in which the diaspora will play a part.
4. The Foreign Policy is anchored on five inter-linked pillars which include Peace, Economic, Diaspora, Environment and Cultural. **The Kenya Diaspora Policy 2014** was aimed at informing the government on measures and incentives to attract and use the diaspora’s diverse skills and resources as well as to fully integrate into the national development agenda. It prioritises areas of engagement by establishing mechanisms for co-ordination and administration while enhancing capacity for consular services by increasing representation through Kenya Missions, Consulates and Honorary Consulates abroad. In protecting the Kenyan Diaspora, the Ministry will review existing **Bilateral Labour Agreements (BLA’s)** while negotiating new and appropriate ones in areas with strategic interests and feasible population. This will be done in collaboration with our existing 60 diplomatic missions and Consulates, including some 15 Honorary Consuls around the world.
5. An estimated 3 million Kenyans live in the diaspora and contribute significantly to the country’s development especially through remittances. According to the recent Central Bank report (2020), and estimated Ksh 350 billion was remitted surpassing tourism and exports as Kenya’s leading revenue earner. More Kenyans are leaving the country for opportunities abroad leading to the growth of the Diaspora. This is the reason why the new administration saw the need to have structured mechanisms to promote Diaspora affairs and to encourage investment, skills transfer, expertise and knowledge. The Diaspora can invest in treasury bonds and bills through their Diaspora Central Depository System. These bonds can be a source of development funds for the country and boost infrastructural development.
6. I am encouraged that through this convention, session discussions will involve smart/secure investments, project finance, saving culture (a critical discussion for economic growth), diaspora Sacco’s and cooperatives, “mama mboga” Diaspora Fund, affordable housing and climate change. In partnership with the government it is a promising objective to double remittances and investments to US$ 6 billion per year by 2030.
7. **The Kenya Diaspora Policy 2014** is set to be reviewed soon in order to reflect the new administration’s directives and also to include recommendations that will be reached at this convention. It is envisioned that the **National Diaspora Council of Kenya (NADICOK)** will soon be operationalised in order to secure Kenyan diaspora interests abroad. I wish to sincerely thank and congratulate the Diaspora for their contribution to the Diaspora Policy over the years. I promise to enhance this dialogue with free flow of ideas.
8. There are several institutional, legal and policy frameworks related to migration and labour issues hence the need to align the new Policy in the context of these developments. With experience from Kenyans all over the globe we hope to tap in to best practices in order to enrich and inform our outcomes, conclusions and recommendations. Going forward, it is the conviction of this Ministry and State Department to seamlessly integrate with the various Diaspora associations representing Kenyans in the various geographical or territorial parts of the world. It is our objective to create a Monitoring and Evaluation framework for the implementation of the Diaspora Policy by among others, establishing a Diaspora Web Portal to enhance engagement.
9. One of the visions of the current administration is to improve delivery of government services through decentralising services and functions of Kenya Missions abroad. It is for this reason that the government plans to establish new and enhance trade and investment channels in order to promote local investment by Kenyans in the diaspora. The government will also work on facilitating the portability of knowledge, skills, innovation and technical resources available in the diaspora for national development.
10. The Kenyan Diaspora plays an important role in projecting Kenya’s image to the world. The government will other sportsmen and women and other eminent Kenyans to promote patriotism and social cohesion globally.
11. Kenya hosts the headquarters of **African Institute of Remittances** and we hope that our engagement with them will help mobilise savings for investments and together with the Central Bank of Kenya and other financial/commercial institutions, address the high cost of remitting money.
12. The Ministry will also look at engaging county governments in order to come up with a curriculum guide for interaction with the Kenyan diaspora.
13. It is my hope that the deliberations in this convention through the various topical sessions will come up with a raft of recommendations that will guide the Kenya Diaspora Policy and propose a structure that can effectively engage and liaise with and between government and the wider Diaspora associations in the spirit of **Inclusive growth**.
14. In due course the Ministry will also engage the various stakeholders in the private sector and MDA’s in order to achieve an all-inclusive coherent policy guideline.

I thank you and wish you a successful convention.

**DECEMBER 2022**

**STATE DEPARTMENT FOR DIASPORA AFFAIRS**

**MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AND DIASPORA AFFIARS**