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**MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AND DIASPORA AFFAIRS**

**MEDIA AND DIPLOMATIC BRIEFING**

**STATEMENT BY THE CABINET SECRETARY FOR FOREIGN AND DIASPORA AFFAIRS, DR. ALFRED N. MUTUA, E.G.H.,**

**NAIROBI, MONDAY, DECEMBER 5, 2022**

**Your Excellency Ambassador, Dean of European Diplomatic Corps,**

**Your Excellencies Ambassadors and High Commissioners,**

**PS Dr. Korir Sing’oei,**

**PS Madam Roseline Njogu,**

**Ladies and Gentlemen**:

1. I am delighted to welcome you this afternoon to this briefing organized by the Ministry of Foreign and Diaspora Affairs for all our European partners, in recognition of the role Europe has played and continues to play in Kenya’s foreign policy.
2. As this is my first formal session with you as a group, please accept my heartfelt gratitude for your compliments and warm goodwill messages on my appointment as Cabinet Secretary for Foreign and Diaspora Affairs. I also wish to express my most sincere gratitude for honouring our invitation.
3. I have been deeply humbled by your repeated requests to meet with me and my team to discuss ways to strengthen bilateral partnerships between Kenya and your respective countries since I took office.
4. While I intend to honor all of these requests, I felt it was important to first hold this regional briefing and then schedule the specific one-on-ones as we go along.

**Excellencies,**

1. His Excellency President Ruto’s transformative agenda aims to improve the living standards of all Kenyans and put the country on a path of economic growth. To achieve this, Kenya must work closely with all of our major development partners, one of which is Europe.
2. The purpose of this briefing is to highlight some of Kenya’s diplomatic engagements and interactions, as well as to reflect on issues that will contribute to strengthening Kenya’s already strong ties with Europe.
3. I hope that our deliberations today will set the tone for regular consultations, sustained engagements, and closer coordination, as we seek to achieve our common, crosscutting, and collective interests.

**Excellencies:**

1. I take this opportunity to congratulate His Excellency H.E. Dragan Zupanjecvac on his outstanding performance as Dean of the European Diplomatic Corps. I am confident that, under his capable leadership, the European diplomatic community in Kenya will continue to carry out its diplomatic engagements with high competence and success.
2. I would like to take this opportunity to express my desire and willingness to work closely with each of you-and to assist you in achieving your goals here in Kenya.

**BILATERAL AND ECONOMIC RELATIONS**

**Excellencies,**

1. The relationship between Kenya and Europe is based on historical ties, special friendships, shared values, and common aspirations for socioeconomic prosperity.
2. I am aware that many of you will be commemorating sixty (60) years of bilateral relations next year, as we will be commemorating 60 years of independence. I would like to invite you to join us in assessing our achievements so far to enable us understand how to make our relations more meaningful.
3. **Excellencies**, the Kenya Kwanza administration is championing an economic development agenda based on the bottom-up model, in which Kenyans are involved, listened to, and included in economic growth from the ground up.
4. His Excellency President Ruto has set up a highly experienced economic advisory team to forge the right policies and create an enabling environment for foreign investors to partake in Kenya’s economic development agenda.
5. Kenya is eager to work with others to address food insecurity, global health, youth unemployment, peace and security, and a just and sustainable transition through a shared commitment to multilateralism, democracy, peace building dialogue, and mediation to end intolerable and unnecessary human suffering.
6. We encourage our European partners to access diversified business opportunities presented in our 47 counties in order to bring greater balance and increase current flow of investment. Our counties can benefit immensely from sharing ideas, technology and market access in fields as renewable energy as we increase our green energy footprint, mining, agro-processing, ICT, fertilizer production and supply of a wide range of fresh food products to European markets.
7. **Excellencies**, I wish to highlight some of our key Foreign Policy priorities; Firstly, as we seek to deepen our individual bilateral ties, Kenya looks forward to working closely with your countries at various multilateral fora. Kenya is fully committed to a just and rules-based multilateral order that works for the betterment of humanity.
8. Secondly, the Ministry is keen to ensure that existing bilateral agreements and memorandums of understanding (MOUs) are constantly reviewed and updated for maximum benefit. To ensure a mutually beneficial partnership, we will continue to seek more initiatives, particularly for vocational training where young Kenyans can acquire critical innovation skills in agriculture, science and technology, and health systems, among others.
9. Our engineers, doctors, teachers, and other skilled professionals are highly regarded throughout the world, and we wish to strengthen and continue to export labor while also seeking new and greater opportunities as we expand our presence on the European continent.
10. We urge our European partners to consider easing entry visa requirements for this category of visitors to Europe, including diplomats, legislators, and businesspeople, in order to capitalize on these opportunities. This would necessitate a reciprocal agreement for us to ease access to visas into Kenya for Europeans via the evisa (Panabios) system.
11. We also hope to collaborate with European countries to gain support for Kenya's candidacy for various positions in international organizations, such as the International Maritime Organization (IMO) Council. As you may be aware, we have a candidate for IMO Director-General, Amb. Nancy Kariguthu, and we urge you to support her candidacy.

**Excellencies and Distinguished Guests,**

1. Kenya is a pilot country for the Africa Continental Free Trade Agreement, which has grown to become the world's largest free trade zone, with 1.2 billion people and a GDP of $3 trillion. Africa will have a population of 2.5 billion people by 2050, with a middle class of 1 billion. I therefore have no doubt about where Europe should be looking in the future. Kenya continues to be an important AfCTA gateway for your countries, emphasizing the importance of deepening our ties.

**PEACE AND SECURITY**

**Excellencies,**

1. I would like to remind you that Kenya has faithfully carried out continental and regional mandates at the United Nations Security Council since January 2021. We are grateful to the European countries that supported us during our tenure on the UN Security Council, as this allowed us to advance issues of common interest.
2. Kenya’s commitment to peace initiatives is unwavering, as evidenced by our presence in the Eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, where we have deployed 900 troops as part of the East Africa Community Regional Force to assist the region in its ongoing security crisis. I sincerely thank all of your countries for their continued assistance in promoting regional peace and security.

**CLIMATE CHANGE**

**Excellencies,**

1. We welcome your assistance and collaboration in the matter of climate change mitigation. Kenya’s government has pledged to plant more than 5 billion trees (10% forest cover). We must collaborate with our partners and friends like you to shape and finance climate adaptation initiatives in Africa that address the Climate Change-Security nexus.
2. Kenya welcomes the establishment of the Loss and Damage Fund for assisting developing countries that are particularly vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change that was agreed in Sharm El-Sheikh at the conclusion of COP 27.
3. The Horn of Africa is facing intense droughts leading to acute food and water shortages in some parts of Kenya. The government has increased drought interventions in affected areas by forming a private-sector-led drought response Committee to mobilize resources to assist millions of famine-stricken Kenyans across the country's twenty (20) counties. This framework allows the private sector and development partners to address the drought’s effects by delivering food, medicines, and water to the most vulnerable populations.

**CONCLUSION**

**Excellencies and Distinguished Guests,**

1. Let us seize the existing opportunity to come together and build new bridges of cooperation for the future, as our prosperity is dependent on each other's economic success. I believe we can forge a better future for our peoples by working together.
2. Finally, please accept my best wishes as we work on issues of mutual interest and benefit to our countries.

**Thank you!**