

Speech by the Cabinet Secretary, Lands, Housing and Urban Development at the Ground Breaking Ceremony for Karibu Homes, Athi River

20TH March 2015,

The Governor, Machakos County,

The Chairman, Board of Directors, Shelter Afrique.

The Managing Director and Senior Management, Shelter Afrique

The Chairman, Founding Members, Karibu Homes,

Distinguished Guests,

Members of the Press.

Good Afternoon,

I would like to begin by noting my delight at being a part of this ceremony today, it is always noteworthy when we can take significant strides to making housing more affordable and accessible for all Kenyans.

There is a new and prosperous Kenya and that is evident for all to see, the challenge of this government and those of the future will be how to maintain that prosperity and make sure that it is equitable and widespread. This is a challenge that this government has taken on robustly and we will not relent.

When we address equity and prosperity in society we must acknowledge that housing is at the forefront of that discussion, the right to affordable housing, to decent housing with access to amenities and social services is just that; a right.

It is incumbent on us all to stop viewing housing and access to housing as a reward at the end of a career, as the final hallmark of prosperity, as something you attain after many years of toil and labour. Housing must be at the very beginning, access to housing must be the benchmark on which further prosperity is built.

Owning a home shouldn't be something associated with retirees, pensioners or the well-of, we would do well to demystify homeownership and make it accessible to all, to women, to the young, to the lower-income families, to members of Saccos, to everyone.

Distinguished Guests, the truth is prosperity comes with a cost, and in our case that is rapid urbanisation and population growth, according to UN reports, 60 percent of the population in Kenya will live in urban centres, the same report also states that by 2020 the population would have grown to over 50 million people. What that means in practical terms is more houses in the Nairobi Metropolis, more houses in Mombasa, in Kisumu, in Eldoret, and Nakuru, infrastructure and roads to connect all these urban centres.

Beyond this we also note that we have an annual deficit 2 million housing units, with at least 150,000 units required in urban centres annually, so for this government the real and immediate challenge will be housing a growing and prosperous Kenya.

Like I mentioned, earlier this is a challenge we will meet with verve and vigour, but in stating this we must also admit that government cannot do this alone, these are not objectives that cannot be met by a sole agency, which brings today's ceremony into sharp relief.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I commend the efforts of Shelter Afrique and Karibu Homes, we cannot have too much of these kinds of ceremonies, we need more private developers and financiers to embark on affordable housing projects of scale.

Shelter Afrique has had its headquarters here in Kenya for over 30 years and indeed my ministry has worked closely with them; I am aware of their many activities not just here in Kenya but across Africa. I am aware that they have begun shaping the conversation around Affordable Rental Housing, around Alternative Building Technologies and Integrated Sustainable neighbourhoods, I am also aware they have extended line of credits to multiple micro-finance institutions here in Kenya.

While we certainly note their effort, I would like to take the challenge to the management of Shelter Afrique, I want to see more and I am sure I speak for the people of Kenya, they want to see more. There is still more to be done; we want you to be more visible, we want you to continue actively seeking partners like Karibu Homes for financing, I would also like to see you test the market yourselves and arrange more joint venture projects.

To Karibu Homes, I will also pose a challenge, while commending you for this ambitious project of 1074 housing units, we also want to see more. I am told housing units here in Riverview will range from KSH1.6M to KSH5M with mortgage products also readily available, this is progress, however Mombasa is waiting for you, Kisumu is waiting for you, Eldoret is waiting for you, gentlemen Kenya is waiting for you.

Ladies and Gentlemen, we should all leave here today understanding the challenge that is before us, this Jubilee government certainly understands the many challenges we have to confront and I can assure that we place housing at the centre of our programmes, we see access to decent, affordable housing as a right of every Kenyan citizen.

We have made strides to make the process of constructing houses more equitable and transparent, recently we announced the migration of the Nairobi Land registry online, and we are queueing 52 other land registry's across the country for the same migration.

The task of government is to create a conducive environment for private enterprise to flourish and we take this task very seriously; I want to use this medium to sound out a clarion call to all stakeholders in the housing sector, government is ready to work with you but we want to see more! We want to see scale! We want to see affordability!

Ladies and Gentlemen, Thank you for your time and audience and let's do more.