

SPEECH BY HIS EXCELLENCY PRESIDENT UHURU KENYATTA, CGH, COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF OF THE KENYA DEFENCE FORCES, DURING THE 37TH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING AND 2018 ANNUAL SYMPOSIUM OF SHELTER AFRIQUE ON 19TH JULY, 2018 AT WINDSOR HOTEL NAIROBI KENYA.

Distinguished delegates,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure to join you for this 37th Annual General Meeting and the 28th Symposium of Shelter Afrique.

Let me start with a special word of welcome for all our visitors. *Karibuni!* I'd also like to congratulate Shelter Afrique for organizing this symposium: I know that organizing an event of this magnitude is no easy matter; I fully appreciate the momentous challenge you meet to overcome.

In 1950 fewer than 15 percent of Africans lived in cities; by 2050 an estimated 60% of us will. That's 1.2 billion Africans, give or take. We need to build the systems that will give each and every single one of that billion safe water, safe transport, and safe, dignified housing. That, starkly stated, is the challenge.

Are we up to it? Well, Africa has the resources and tranquility to address it. We have the expertise, we have the people, and we have the administrative ability to build every African a dignified home. What we need now is to settle on a clear, achievable plan, and to secure the funds we need for it. But let me also insist that we must will the end too, for we will get nowhere if we don't believe that we can get to the end of this journey.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let's turn our attention, then, to the plans before us.

Sustainable development goal number 11 asks us to “**Make cities inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable**”. Is that consistent with the deep desires of the Africans whom we were chosen to serve? Of course it is.

And I note, also, that working cities are hubs for ideas, business, culture, productivity, innovation, social development, and overall social economic advancement. All the more reason, then, to make them work for us.

So we must ask ourselves the hard question: why has our rapid urbanization yielded so little change in the economic structure of our countries? Honest reflection suggests an uncomfortable answer: we have focused more on urban growth, than on physical infrastructure and services to the people who actually live in our towns and cities. These two components are crucial in driving economic recovery and transformation in our continent; it’s time to turn our attention to them.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We’re here to learn from each other’s experience and expertise. So let me share what we have done to meet these challenges.

Recall that the theme of your 2018 Annual Symposium was “moving from talk to action: institutional Investment in Affordable Housing”. We took it to heart. My Government has created an elaborate support system for growth of the housing sector: we have invested heavily in city-to-city connectivity, in improved access to services within informal settlements, and in the provision of power.

Now, a major highlight of our connectivity and accessibility effort is the completion of the first phase of the Standard Gauge Railway. The SGR is already in service: within two years, it will carry up to a million passengers a year, bringing a whole new level of connectivity between our major towns and cities, and spurring the development of housing and business along the corridor.

With regard to housing itself, Kenya has focused on both affordable and social homes. Affordable housing serves the housing needs of the majority of our working people, for whom prevailing market terms don’t make financial sense; social housing is dedicated to those of our people not in

structured employment. We are determined to build affordable and accessible housing in compliance with Sustainable Goal 11 target 11.1, which stipulates “ensuring access for all to adequate, safe, and affordable housing and basic services”. This will contribute towards development of inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable cities for Kenyans.

We, like many African countries, realize that the major impediments to the delivery of affordable housing include complicated land management processes, expensive land and finance, urban poverty and inadequate infrastructure. The key drivers of housing provision have been identified and widely documented; this government has initiated far-reaching and innovative ways to solve these problems. That is why we set out an ambitious building program -- 500,000 affordable homes by 2022 – and why we remain confident we will meet it. Let me add, incidentally, that targets work: they concentrate minds, they direct efforts, and they give a standard against which government efforts can be tested – this is certainly a lesson from our experience that I am especially pleased to share with you.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Now, Shelter Afrique remains one of our leading financiers of affordable housing. But I want to ask you to step up: as governments continue to honor their obligations, your contribution to the sector, your accumulated expertise, your knowledge of our housing needs, our housing markets, and of our prospects, all become more, not less, important.

And there is new and important work for you. Given your experience in the market, we look to you for new, innovative financing models, appropriate and modern building technologies and materials, housing research, and strategic housing development partnerships. I know that none of this will happen without support so I encourage member States to continue financing, restructuring, and positioning Shelter Afrique. Our housing goals depend on it.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Please engage proactively at the symposium and the annual General meeting, and come up with concrete resolutions that will guide shelter Afrique in the delivery of her vision for affordable homes in Africa.

As I close, I take this opportunity to once again extend a warm welcome to our visitors. I would like to invite you to tour and enjoy Kenya's hospitality, after the conference is over. And, as you have rightly said, let's move from talk to action towards affordable housing.

I wish you fruitful deliberations and a delightful stay in Kenya.

Thank you. Asanteni