

MY SPEECH DURING THE LAUNCH OF THE KENYA-SOMALIA-ETHIOPIA  
BORDERLANDS PROJECT.

Your Excellency Deputy President Rigathi Gachagua and his team,

U.K. High Commissioner Jane Marriot and her team,

Cabinet Secretary Internal Security Kenya, Mr. Kindiki Kithure

Minister of Internal Security Somalia, Mohamed Ali and his team,

Minister Peace and Security Ethiopia Binalf Andualem and his team,

Deputy President Jubbaland State, Mohamud Sayid and his team,

Regional Commissioner, Mr John Otieno & his team,

Deputy Governors from Mandera H.E. Dr Ali Mohamud.

Members of Parliament present,

PS Internal Security Mr. Raymond Omollo,

PS Youth & Arts, Ismael Madey,

Distinguished guests, ladies & gentlemen,

As-salamu Aleykum, Good morning.

**Your excellencies and distinguished guests,**

It is my utmost pleasure to welcome all of you here today as we gather to witness the launch of a significant project; the Kenya-Somalia-Ethiopia Borderlands Project.

It is an honour to have you all present, and I express my sincere gratitude to our esteemed Deputy President, H.E. Rigathi Gachagua, for accepting our invitation to be the chief guest at this important event.

In addition, we are honoured to have Ambassador Jane Marriot, who is visiting Mandera County for the third time. We recognise and appreciate the strong relationship between Mandera County and the U.K. government and hope for it to continue.

Also, I appreciate the Somalian and Ethiopian delegations and the honourable governors & Deputy Governors who graced us with their presence.

**Your excellencies and distinguished guests,**

Mandera County and the wider Mandera Triangle have been grappling with the devastating impact of the prolonged drought on the livelihoods of our communities. During the recent drought, Mandera County stood as a shining example of compassion and solidarity. In the spirit of sharing and humanity, we extended our support to our brothers and sisters from Somalia and Ethiopia, who were also affected by the drought. We opened our hearts and resources to assist those in need, irrespective of borders or nationality.

Through our collective efforts, we provided food, water, and medical assistance to those affected, ensuring that no one was left behind in their time of need. The spirit of sharing exhibited during the drought is a powerful reminder that compassion knows no borders. It highlights the interconnectedness of our lives and the importance of standing together during challenging times. Through acts of kindness and solidarity, we build bridges and foster community goodwill and understanding.

**Your excellencies and distinguished guests,**

I want to express my deepest gratitude to H.E. the President Dr William Samoei Ruto, our esteemed deputy president and various development actors for their unwavering support in response to the recent drought. Their commitment and assistance have played a crucial role in cushioning our communities. But, most importantly, I want to confirm that their support was not limited to Mandera County but extended to our neighbouring countries.

Your excellencies and distinguished guests,

Inspired by the desire to alleviate the impact of the devastating drought my people faced, I launched the "Elimu Kwa Wote" bursary initiative, which subsidised secondary education in Mandera County. The initiative was meant to bring back hope, as the people were barely meeting their basic needs due to the severe impacts of the prolonged drought.

Through the "Elimu kwa Wote" initiative, we aim to remove the financial barriers that hinder students from pursuing their educational dreams. Because of this initiative, we have witnessed a significant increase in enrolment.

Recently, we have been blessed with rainfall in Mandera, mercy for which we express our gratitude to Allah and all those who joined us in prayers for rain.

**Your excellencies and distinguished guests**

Despite the recurring droughts which often negatively impact our livestock, our region has the potential to be the breadbasket for our country. We have huge tracks of arable land and extensive watersheds and aquifers to expand agricultural production. What we need, your excellency is an investment in infrastructure such as mega dams and connection to the national grid.

**Your excellencies and distinguished guests,**

I sincerely appreciate the British government's generous support for the project we are launching today.

This project is a testament to the importance of peace in driving sustainable development. Our region cannot progress and flourish without peace and stability.

Furthermore, this project emphasises the significance of good neighbourliness and cooperation within the Mandera Triangle. By working together, we can create an environment that fosters peace, understanding and shared prosperity.

**Your excellencies and distinguished guests,**

As a county, we understand the importance of supporting national police reserves as a vital component of our security apparatus. The County government, therefore, have been providing the necessary support to them to keep our county and country safe.

The collaboration between the county government, law enforcement agencies, civil society organisations and communities is crucial to achieve sustainable development and prevent the radicalisation of our youth.

I thank all those organisations working in the peacebuilding space, such as Interpeace, for their continuous support.

**Your excellencies and distinguished guests,**

The project we are launching today, the Kenya-Somalia-Ethiopia Borderlands Project, is a cross-border endeavour to enhance peace, stability and socio-economic development in the border areas between Kenya, Somalia, and Ethiopia.

It recognises the need for increased collaboration between these three countries, their local administrations and the communities residing along the borders.

By integrating security, development and peacebuilding efforts, this project seeks to strengthen national responses to insecurity, support local conflict resolution mechanisms and build individual and community resilience against violent extremist influences.

The project's objectives are clear: to support effective policy and programming, strengthen formal and informal cross-border mechanisms, and address the needs of our communities to mitigate the drivers of instability and violent extremism.

**Your excellencies and distinguished guests,**

The opening of the borders of Kenya, Somalia, and Ethiopia will mark a significant milestone in regional development and the facilitation of vital humanitarian support to communities affected by various challenges, such as natural disasters, conflict, and poverty.

As we embark on this new chapter, let us embrace the opportunities ahead and harness the power of collaboration to uplift our communities, promote sustainable development, and foster lasting peace and stability.

**Your excellencies and distinguished guests,**

Our region's untapped potential is key to enhancing food security in our country. Therefore, we request the national government to prioritise resilience-building efforts and capitalise on the abundant opportunities and resources present in Northern Kenya.

Empowering local farmers and agribusinesses in Northern Kenya is crucial to achieving sustainable food security. As a county, we are doing our best with the limited resources at our disposal.

Your excellencies and distinguished guests,

We are committed to working hand in hand with our national and sub-national partners, reaching out to marginalised communities and engaging civil society organisations to ensure lasting changes beyond the project's lifetime.

In conclusion, I extend my most profound appreciation to the implementing partners, Adam Smith International (ASI), the Danish Refugee Council (DRC), and the Royal United Services Institute (RUSI), for their commitment to this project.

Together, we will strive to achieve a future where peace and stability prevail, prosperity knows no boundaries, and where the aspirations of our people are realised.

Thank you, and may this project bring about a brighter and more peaceful future for all.

**H.E Mohamed Adan Khalif**

**Governor**

**Mandera County**

County Government of Mandera