

REPUBLIC OF KENYA



COUNTY GOVERNMENT OF SIAYA

THIRD ASSEMBLY

(FIRST SESSION)

GOVERNOR'S ADDRESS AT THE OFFICIAL OPENING OF THE 3RD ASSEMBLY

OCTOBER 11, 2022

THIRD COUNTY ASSEMBLY OF SIIAYA

Mr Speaker Sir,

Honourable and distinguished members of the County Assembly,

It is my distinct honour and privilege to give this inaugural address to the County Assembly, which is the third Assembly since the inception and establishment of devolution, a key pillar and structure in Kenya's democratic constitutional architecture and system. This address also marks the beginning of the working sessions of the Assembly having been previously convened formally as required by the law.

Let me begin by congratulating you Mr. Speaker, for being elected a record three times as the Speaker of the Siaya County Assembly. No individual in the current legislative bodies at the national or county levels has achieved this feat and accomplishment. You acted as the Governor of Siaya County in the very early days following the creation of county governments. Well done. I also wish to congratulate each and every member of the County Assembly for being elected and nominated to the County Assembly. I wish each one of you success in attaining the dreams of your vision and legitimate ambitions in serving the people.

The powers of this Assembly are derived directly from the people, who are sovereign, and each one of you, through the ballot obtained your mandate and the collective legislative authority from the people of Siaya. You exercise the sovereign will of the people at the county level. Article 175(a) of the Constitution provides that county governments shall be based on democratic principles and on the doctrine of separation of powers. In the establishment of county governments, constitutional law requires that devolved governments decentralise functions to the extent that it is efficient and practicable to do so. In addition, the many objects of devolution include the promotion of democratic and accountable exercise of power, grant of powers of self-governance

to the people and enhancement of the participation of the people in the exercise of the powers of the State in making decisions affecting them. The purposes of devolution also include the promotion of social and economic development and the provision of proximate, easily accessible services.

Mr Speaker Sir,

Things are not looking bright at the economic front. The economies of the world are confronted with conflicts and substantial challenges, making it difficult to spur growth and achieve sustainable development. The drums of war are not close to our borders but the crisis in Ukraine has spanned the globe. Kenya is affected and despite campaign promises made during the general elections, the prices of oil and related commodities are up. The removal of subsidies has resulted in increased costs for essential everyday commodities including unga. With oil and food costs up so are services including transport. This is the environment in which we are going to work and live in. At least for some time. Yet it is our solemn duty as elected leaders to make life bearable and to uplift the standard of living of our people.

Mr Speaker Sir,

Siaya has great potential. Our land is generally arable and both agriculture and livestock farming have a place. We have the largest expanses of Lake Victoria within the territory of Kenya. Providence has blessed Siaya with Lake Kanyaboli, and two of the major rivers feeding Lake Victoria; Nzoia and Yala. Deposits of gold exist in Gem and Alego as part of the belt that runs through parts of Rarieda and Bondo. There was a time when Siaya was the land of cotton and robusta coffee was grown in Ugenya, Ugunja and Gem. Sugarcane does well in a myriad of areas in the county. Crops like maize, sorghum, millet, cassava, sweet potatoes and a variety of fruits and vegetables have great potential and cultivation can be upgraded beyond the scope of mere economies of subsistence agriculture. Siaya can be food secure and commercial farming or agriculture is not only possible but has great potential.

Mr Speaker Sir,

Food security and farming for business (kilimo biashara) in Siaya was a central theme in our manifesto during the campaigns. The Deputy Governor and I will engage you on how to make this dream a reality. We hope to take decisive measures, with your support, to supply certified seeds and fertilizers to registered farmers in the next planting season during the long rains. We are making plans for provision of reliable and affordable tractor services so that we can expand the horizons of agriculture beyond subsistence. We need qualified personnel and extension workers to be on hand in the villages and wards to improve and modernize agriculture and livestock keeping and husbandry.

The fish stocks in our lakes and rivers are getting depleted at an alarming rate due to activities upstream and within or inside the water bodies. There are no fish processing plants in the county thus limiting optimum incomes and revenue that can be generated through value addition. Fishing farming, sustainable activities in the lake and fish ponds offer limitless opportunities and our policies and strategies in matters relating to the blue economy must now be mainstreamed in order to improve incomes and livelihoods.

Mr Speaker Sir,

I am hoping that within a reasonable time we should be able to resolve issues concerning and affecting the Yala Swamp. It is the greatest ecosystem in the region both as a wetland and as habitat. Its diversity is unique and its potential greatly significant. We must protect the right of communities living in or in the proximity of the swamp as a first step in realising its vitality as a source of abundant resources and without disturbing its dynamic nature as a habitat. It is possible to conserve the swamp while at the same time positively exploit its resources for farming and industry. There are studies that have been carried out that can be used to create an equilibrium between the imperatives and dictates of environmental protection and the need for well-planned human activities and investment.

We will look at Yala Swamp with the prism of our commitment to protect the environment, increase the forest cover in Siaya (which is below the national average) and our determination to engage our people in the climate change agenda as one of the

defining issues of our time as a human race.

Mr Speaker Sir and Honourable Members of the Assembly,

We have just faced and gone through a major global health crisis, the COVID 19 pandemic. The virus has caused untold human suffering and destabilized the global economy – Kenya included. This has been exacerbated by the lingering health havoc- of HIV-Aids, the outbreak of Ebola in neighbouring Uganda and the persistence of tropical diseases like malaria and malnutrition particularly amongst children. Malnourished children, particularly those suffering from severe malnutrition have a higher risk of common childhood illnesses such as diarrhoea, pneumonia and malaria. Most of our people, at all ages, die from preventable ailments. Many of our women also die from preventable causes related to pregnancy and childbirth. Kenya has fully embraced the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals including Good Health and Well Being, to ensure healthy lives and to promote well-being for all at all ages. Since health is devolved, the counties have a huge health agenda to undertake and accomplish.

In Siaya, we must try to attain prevention of common diseases by making great strides towards achieving this noble goal. Water is core in this regard and I will say more about it in a little while. We must be food secure. We must grow our own food, protect the poor and vulnerable, and eradicate hunger. All these are important needs and factors, which are correlated in meeting our health agenda. We propose to provide a universal school feeding programme in the established ECDE centres in the entire county as a health and well being strategy from next year, and for this, we will seek support from development partners and stakeholders including the National Government.

Mr Speaker Sir,

The health sector in the county has been adversely affected by the consequences of financial indiscipline and lack of prudent use of public money. It has contributed to frequent shortages of drugs and medical commodities in our health institutions. There are many instances when funds secured in the budget for the purchase of essential drugs have been raided and spent in less deserving cases. I have directed that money

allocated for buying medicines and other non-pharmaceuticals for our medical facilities must be ring fenced for that purpose, and that purpose only, and not transferred to other uses whatever the emergency. I must confess that there are also cases of pilferage of medicine in the health institutions some of which are eventually found in private healthcare outlets including pharmacies. Sale of public health supplies sometimes take place even in private homes. I appeal to the members of the public to report to us or other appropriate authority if they find medicines branded with the KEMSA logo in any such places. Those involved in this business are committing the most heinous crimes against our people.

We have a serious deficit of doctors, nurses, health technicians, specialists and paramedical staff in all our health institutions. The services provided by our over worked medical staff must not be considered in real terms merely as part of the wage bill. The emoluments paid to a doctor, a nurse or health technician cannot be just a component of a wage bill. It is money paid for an extremely essential service, service to save lives. Siaya Referral Hospital is still a referral hospital in name. We need more doctors, more specialists, better-trained nurses, better modern facilities and equipment. We need an ICU, a modern ICU, and surgical theatres. The same can be said about Bondo, Yala, Madiany, Ambira, Ukwala and Ruambwa. We should now change strategy and instead of building more and more dispensaries and health centres, we should concentrate on recruiting medical personnel, providing medicine and equipping the facilities in Siaya with needed health infrastructure.

Mr Speaker Sir,

I am happy to report that we have broken ground for the construction of a modern surgical theatre complex with an ICU wing to be properly equipped and furnished. It should be ready in the next eight months at the Siaya Referral Hospital. We are planning to construct a modern Hospital Complex building in Siaya that complies with the requirements of a modern referral hospital. Siaya Referral Hospital and Bondo Hospital should in the future become fully-fledged teaching hospitals.

Within five years, as Siaya County's own source revenue collection grows we can build modern hospital complexes in at least Yala, Bondo and Ambira in the next five years. The mortuaries at Siaya, Bondo, Ambira and Ukwala must be refrigerated not only for the purpose of preservation of bodies, but in the world of pandemics, life threatening infections can begin from anywhere, and the belly of a medical hospital is not excluded. The refrigeration programs for Siaya, Bondo, Ambira and Ukwala are therefore a priority.

Finally, on this subject, I wish to report that we shall be digitizing and automating our in-house processes and procedures in order to secure and save our medicines from theft and wastage. It is my administration's declared objective to ensure that the drugs we need for pains and critical cure and therapy must be procured and made available all the time. It is all about prudent use of resources, planning and safeguarding our supply of medical commodities.

Mr Speaker Sir and the Honourable Members of the Assembly,

The five pillars of our manifesto are governance, food security, health, water and infrastructure. Let me now talk about water.

We recently launched the rehabilitation of Abura Dam in North Alego. The works involve desiltation of the dam and installing new pumps and other equipment to ensure pumping and reticulation of water. It will be completed in the next eight months. Once complete, it will cater for the water supply needed in Siaya Town, Central Alego and parts of North Alego, South East Alego, West Alego and Usonga. It will ease the pressure on the Yala Sindindi Water project in supplying water to parts of Ugunja, Gem and Bondo Town. Large areas in North Sakwa and West Sakwa will be fully catered for. Currently there is water rationing in Siaya and Bondo towns and water is pumped to these high population areas on alternate days or periods. This will come to an end. We are also working on the old water pipeline and pump from Yala River to make sure there

are no water shortages in Bondo and institutions like the hospital will benefit.

There is the extensive water project covering Ugunja – Ukwala - Sega, which is currently under construction. We also have the lower Nzoia River Water Supply and Irrigation, which will cover many parts of Ugunja, Alego Usonga and Ugenya Sub-counties and individual water projects all over the county. These will make it possible to guarantee clean-piped water in every home in the fullness of time. The National government in collaboration with Siaya County government recently commissioned the construction of a 400m multi-purpose Anyiko Ujwanga Kathieno Irrigation project, in East Ugenya. This should spur economic activity once completed and improve the living standards of the residents of this area.

Proper infrastructure is the stimuli for development. The National Government is currently involved in the construction, to bitumen standard, of the Bondo-Wagusu road and the Got Nanga-Bar Ober-Uhuru Market –Sihay road. There are also key roads along the lakefront and those connecting our sub-counties that will require the intervention of the National Government. There are incomplete sections of our road networks examples of which are Wang’ Arot-Akado-Kalandin-Ka Elijah Road, Rang’ala-Wuoroya Bridge Road, Segere-Umina Road, Siranga-Yenga-Sega Road that were commenced and undertaken by the National Government. We will seek interventions by the National Government to agitate for completion of these national projects. On the docket of the County Government, I want to assure the Assembly of my robust and committed intervention for the improvement and expansion of county roads and the opening up of new road networks. I have a clear vision of the places that have terrible roads or no roads at all in all the six sub-counties. Above all, contractors must construct and repair roads to acceptable standards so that the taxpayer can get value for money spent.

We shall continue to modernize our market centres and provide requisite facilities. We want to decentralize the management and operations of our urban centres. I recently gave Siaya Municipality financial autonomy in its operations so that they can administer the town’s budget. The creation of Bondo and Ugunja municipalities is at an advanced

stage and with your approval; the towns will soon have their respective charters and operate as municipalities. Waste management and sanitation in all our centres is a big problem but we are soon coming up with a more reliable system of waste management and the construction of appropriate sewerage plants. We are committed to empowering the youths and creating jobs which largely must come from the private sector. The pillars enumerated in our manifesto and our vision are all aimed at establishing an enabling environment for economic growth and prosperity.

Mr Speaker Sir,

At my inauguration as the Governor of Siaya, I promised that governance, that is good governance, would be the cornerstone of my administration. That I may achieve nothing else during my tenure but instil good governance. I am going through a reality check. I anticipate that it will be a difficult task to attain the standards and principles envisaged under Article 10 of the Constitution which standards bind all State Organs, State Officers, Public officers and all persons. Certainly we have no choice. Good governance is a constitutional prerogative.

As a starting point, I appreciate the fact the County Assembly, albeit being part and parcel of the County Government, is separate and independent and consists of elected representatives of the people. The vast majority of you Honourable members belong to my political party and coalition. The membership and partners in Azimio la Umoja One Kenya Alliance and ODM share the same vision and political blueprint. Yet you have an independent role to enact legislation. You have an oversight role, which you exercise over the county executive committee and county executive organs. You approve certain executive appointments and you may receive and approve plans and policies for the management and exploitation of the county's resources and the development and management of the county's infrastructure and institutions. In a sentence, you exercise legislative authority of the county. These provisions are clear in Article 185 of the Constitution. Legislative authority and oversight in the County, falls within your jurisdiction and domain. Straight and simple.

You, as a County Assembly, must exercise your powers robustly without let or hindrance. It is my deeply held conviction that for Siaya to reap the fruits and democratic dividends of devolution, good governance, integrity, transparency and accountability and for us to attain sustainable development, the legislative authority, which is vested in the County Assembly, must be respected, upheld, defended and protected. I will never seek to make you an appendage of the county executive and that is why we did not meddle in the election of the speaker. On the same vein, the executive will not micro manage the assembly by seeking to impose house leaders.

I commit myself to ensuring that all the officials working in or for the county executive committee, including county executive committee members and any other county executive organs appear before you when invited or summoned by the Assembly or its committees. As the county administration we shall, in accordance with the law, open all books, ledgers, bank accounts, records and documents and make any material available to this august assembly when called upon to do so in the exercise of your lawful duties and responsibility. I welcome the decision of the Supreme Court to the effect that governors must appear before the Senate when invited or summoned to do so. I have no qualms about that. Nevertheless, I think the Senate should also defer to the County Assemblies as the first port of call except in the exercise of oversight over national revenue allocated to the county governments as provided in Article 96(3) of the Constitution.

Mr Speaker Sir,

I also wish to report that the financial records of our Finance Department have been wanting. Forget about this year. The Special Interim Audit Report on Financial Management for the Financial Year 2020/2021 prepared by the Director of Internal Audit of the County Government of Siaya painted a tragic picture of financial mismanagement, misuse of county revenue, waste of resources, and manipulation of records and the same trajectory has continued this financial year. We have taken deliberate steps to stop this downward trend.

We stopped the payment of pending bills, procurement processes and award of tenders to enable us understand the obtaining objective financial situation in the Finance Department. We have established the existence of unauthorised or unjustified pending bills and questionable contracts. I think we have saved some resources through this exercise. We know that non-payment of legitimate pending bills, which are due and payable, is unfair and unjust. It also affects development projects and compromises our absorption capacity and rate. I have now authorized payment of pending bills and urged that payments be expedited. We stopped the construction of the Governor's and Deputy Governor's residences because this Assembly had not allocated a budget for the contracts which were entered into without an appropriation. Hit by the current hard financial realities, the projects cannot be considered as priority undertakings by the County Government.

The County Government is putting a premium on e-governance. In the area of revenue collection, we are studying plans to have cashless transactions. Huge cash payments have been abused in the area of payment of imprests and maintenance of petty cash. Our payroll is like a balloon, without constancy and regularity. To this end and because of the dire state of our financial records I appointed a taskforce of eminent professionals and its work is ongoing. The report of the taskforce will be placed before the County Assembly for debate and approval.

There are several unfinished projects undertaken by the previous administration including the Siaya stadium. The money expended exceeded the budget for the construction of the said sports arena. With the approval of the county assembly, we will mobilize sufficient funds to complete it and other projects.

Mr Speaker Sir and the Honourable Members of the Assembly,

In a matter of days, I will nominate and place before you the persons to be appointed as the County Executive Committee members. The nominees will only qualify for appointment after the County Assembly has approved their names consequent upon scrutiny and vetting. This process requires public participation just like all aspects of

decision-making that affects the people. Together we can make public participation real and concrete, and not merely a symbolic and theoretical ritual.

Finally, on governance and public participation I will seek your approval of the interventions we intend to make to ensure that our women, the youth and people living with disability are prominent in running the affairs of the county at all levels from the grassroots to the upper echelons of the Executive.

My administration will seek you out Mr Speaker Sir, the leadership of the Assembly and the members of the august House in the preparation of proposed legislation for consideration by the County Assembly. Our administration will not bring a finished product to the Assembly. We must engage in a consultative process so that for Bills prepared by the Executive, engagement must start at the time of conception, drafting and general preparation of legislation. This makes sense because Bills can never be moved in the Assembly by members of Executive even when prepared by the County Executive Committee.

Let me not conclude my speech without expressing my administration's support for ward funds as it falls within the realm of devolution and embraces the notion of taking resources to the people at the grassroot. The debate should not be about necessity of ward fund but about the extent of increasing the fund without jeopardizing other needs and responsibilities assigned to the Governor under the Fourth Schedule of the Constitution.

Because of the exigencies and stresses brought about by the change of administration, we may soon seek your indulgence in the consideration, approval and enactment of a Supplementary Appropriation Bill. We will consult and hopefully draft legislation for uplifting the status and incomes of ECDE teachers and the Community Health Volunteers. We have also been approached to initiate legislation to deal with the problem and challenges of widows and we can engage each other in discussing the draft legislation prepared by stakeholders in this regard. Together we must strive to

domesticate environmental protection law and create a framework for dealing with climate change to complement national initiatives and legislation.

We must raise Siaya to the next level, from a county without a single viable factory into an industrial hub. We can change the lives of our people by transforming livelihoods, by ensuring subsistence farming and petty trades evolve into stable and high level income generating occupations and jobs. We can build on the blue economy, expand our service industry, attract investments, create jobs and raise the standard of living in Siaya. As we said, NYALORE. INAWEZEKANA. We can turn Siaya green by planting trees and protect our environment. We must encourage research and innovation, turn to the magic of science and technology and mobilize the goodwill and energy of our people to MAKE SIAYA GREAT. NYALORE.

Mr Speaker Sir and the Honourable Members of the Assembly,

I thank you and the County Assembly.

**God Bless You
God Bless Siaya County
And God Bless Kenya**