



SPEECH BY MR. JAMES SINGH, CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD OF THE YOUTH ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT FUND DURING THE OFFICIAL OPENING OF THE THIRD NATIONAL YOUTH TRADE FAIR AT KICC NAIROBI ON 1ST JULY 2011

Members of the Board of the Youth Enterprise Development Fund

Mr. Mwatata Juma Mwangala, CEO of the Youth Fund

Staff of the Fund

Our hardworking youth

Distinguished Guests

Ladies and gentlemen,

I wish to welcome you all to this third National Youth Trade Fair organized by the Youth Enterprise Development Fund. It gives me great pleasure to preside over this function which aims at empowering our young entrepreneurs.

Since the Youth Enterprise Development Fund was launched four years ago it has been known more for loans than for any other products. I am glad that today we are opening our other products to the people of Kenya

Besides providing loans the Fund also facilitates young entrepreneurs to market their products through various channels such as the trade fair we are attending today. The Fund also trains young entrepreneurs and facilitates the youth to obtain employment in the foreign labour markets

This is the third national trade fair that the Youth Enterprise Development Fund is organizing since its inception. It has however been sponsoring youth trade fairs at district and provincial levels. This is besides sponsoring our youth to exhibit in the ASK organized trade fairs.

The Fund is working with the Export Promotion Council to expose our youth to foreign markets through international trade fairs. In the past we have

sponsored youth identified in the national fairs to attend international exhibitions outside the country.

The thousands of youth who have exhibited in our past fairs have reported improved business with some graduating from village traders to exporters. For instance we supported one group from Kikuyu to exhibit in Dar es Saalam. They made such many and useful contacts that today they participate in international exhibitions on their own.

The best exhibitors in this fair will be sponsored to exhibit outside the country as a way of linking them to the export market

So far the Fund has financed over 120,000 youth enterprises to the tune of Kshs. 3.3 billion and trained over 150,000 youth. It has also supported over 3,000 youth to obtain jobs abroad, and hundreds others to market their products.

To achieve its mandate the Fund has forged strategic partnerships with agencies such as financial institutions, local authorities, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the Institute of Certified Public Accountants of Kenya (ICPAK), among others.

We continue to receive attention from across the borders with delegations coming to learn from us. Among those who have been keen to learn from us are Burundi, Rwanda, Malawi, Namibia, Zambia and the UN Economic Commission for Africa.

We continue to listen to the youth, to ensure that our products are relevant to their needs. To close the gap between the Fund and the youth we have recently launched a grassroots mobilization programme which we are calling ***Mashinani***. Through this programme we hope to reach the youth and other stakeholders in their localities where they express their challenges and how they want to be served. We have so far reached four counties and plan to do another twenty in this financial year that begins today.

Recently we have also provided every constituency with a motorbike for use by our youth officers. We have also employed two youth interns in every constituency. These efforts are geared towards ensuring that our services are available within reach of the youth, especially in the rural areas.

In a bid to build the next generation of young entrepreneurs we are in discussions with several partners to introduce the youth to greenhouse farming and business franchises. For a start we intend to introduce two greenhouses in

every constituency. In regard to franchising we want to ensure that young people own reputable and successful brands within the shortest time possible.

The challenge of economically engaging the youth is enormous. It should not be left to the Youth Enterprise Development Fund, or indeed the Ministry of Youth Affairs. Notwithstanding the efforts this government continues to make the youth population is very high and these efforts may therefore take time to touch every youth. All government departments should have a component of youth in their programmes.

As a Board therefore, we are recommending that youth issues be included in the performance contracts of government ministries and departments. Performance contracting has become the government's way of quantifying the contribution of its agencies to national development. We believe that through this measure the government can leverage on the resources it allocates to youth programmes and that there will be a massive trickledown effect.

I wish to request the private sector to play a greater role in empowering young people to sustain their enterprises. The private sector could do this by way of buying from the youth, running mentorship programmes and providing entrepreneurship training.

The private sector spends huge sums of money annually on corporate social responsibility. We would be glad to see a deliberate focus on youth programmes.

I also wish to challenge our youth to be more proactive in taking advantage of the opportunities that the government provides through initiatives such as the Youth Enterprise Development Fund.

My Board will do everything possible to ensure that the Fund fulfill its promise to the youth of Kenya.

Ladies and Gentlemen

The National Youth Trade Fair is another *Poa Plan* from the Youth Enterprise Development Fund.

It is now my pleasure to declare the third National Youth Trade Fair officially open.

JAMES G SINGH