

**SPEECH BY HIS EXCELLENCY HON. MWAI KIBAKI, C.G.H., M.P., PRESIDENT AND COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF OF THE DEFENCE FORCES OF THE REPUBLIC OF KENYA DURING THE 5TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS OF THE YOUTH ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT FUND, BOMAS OF KENYA, NAIROBI, 7TH FEBRUARY, 2012**

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am pleased to welcome you all to the 5th anniversary celebrations of the Youth Enterprise Development Fund. On this occasion, we celebrate the progress we have made in empowering the youth through the Youth Enterprise Development Fund which we launched five years ago.

I am glad that in the short time it has been in operation, the Youth Fund has recorded tremendous achievements. For instance, the Fund so far disbursed 5.9 billion shillings to over 157,000 youth enterprises across the country. Some of these enterprises have grown and are employing many Kenyans as well as contributing to the exchequer. These efforts have also resulted in the creation of over 300,000 new jobs.

Furthermore, the Fund has, with its partners, trained over 200,000 youth in entrepreneurship besides facilitating them with access to markets for their products. It has also helped to integrate thousands of young Kenyans into mainstream financial services. Moreover 6,000 young people have been facilitated to obtain employment outside Kenya through the fund.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Moving forward, I am happy that the Youth Enterprise Development Fund Board has forged strategic partnerships with other agencies, both public and private. This is the only way to leverage on the resources that the Government provides. I am also encouraged that the Youth Enterprise Fund is already working on modalities of introducing a credit guarantee scheme. This initiative will make credit available to the youth, even from the private sector. I direct the relevant Government departments to facilitate this process so that we can achieve the benefits of this initiative sooner than later.

In recognition of its potential to transform the lives of the youth, my Government will continue to support growth of the Fund. In this regard, my Government has continued to allocate more resources to the Fund. Indeed, having started with an initial capital allocation of one billion shillings, the capitalization of the Fund now stands at 3.8 billion Shillings.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Beyond the Fund, and in order to further empower our young people, I directed, five years ago, that 10 per cent of all Government procurement be allocated to our youth. The youth are yet to fully enjoy this benefit. I direct the Attorney General and the Minister for Finance to remove the legal bottlenecks that hinder the youth from being able to access Government contracts. This way we shall accelerate the growth of youth owned enterprises.

I acknowledge the fact that the Youth Enterprise Development Fund, or indeed the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports, cannot deal with all youth issues single handedly. We need concerted efforts from all Government departments and the private sector. Consequently, I direct all Ministries to ensure they include youth focused targets in the performance contracts of all their departments.

Similarly, I invite Non-Governmental actors who wish to partner with us in securing the future of our youth to come forward and join us in these efforts, so that we can leverage each other's efforts.

In conclusion, I encourage young people with viable business ideas to take advantage of the Fund. In particular, I encourage the youth to take advantage of the newly launched AgriVijana loan to engage in modern farming which will guarantee them income and enhance our country's food security. I also urge borrowers to ensure that the loans are fully serviced so that more young business people can benefit from the programme.

As a government we will continue supporting the youth because they are our nation's best hope. I urge the youth to remain disciplined, and stay focused on their goals, so as to enable them take up their rightful roles in our society.

Thank you and God bless you all.