

ADDRESS BY H.E DR. DAVID NKEDIANYE, GOVERNOR KAJIADO COUNTY ON THE OCCASION OF THE INAUGURATION OF THE URBAN SECTOR REFERENCE GROUP AT SERENA HOTEL, NAIROBI 07 NOVEMBER 2014

On behalf of the Governors who constitute the Urban Development Committee of the Council of Governors, I extend special welcome to all who responded to our invitation to this breakfast meeting. It is indeed gratifying to be part of this assembly of acclaimed urban professionals and practitioners who have dedicated themselves to bettering the urban conditions in our Country. Your presence here is further testimony of the commitment you have towards shaping the urban agenda to realize the promise it holds in making our devolved states highly competitive regions. We believe that devolution presents a unique stage for this country to reap greater dividend from robust and prosperous urban centers.

Presently, Kenya's urbanization is dominated by the five largest towns - Nairobi, Mombasa, Kisumu, Nakuru and Eldoret - which together account for the bulk of the entire urban population and around 70 per cent of the gross domestic product (GDP). These towns underpin the country's economic growth by raising productivity at the firm and industry levels via agglomeration of economies, increasing household welfare through social mobility and human development, and promoting institutional and political change. They also account for much of the country's physical, financial, intellectual and technological capital. The establishment of 47 counties as self-governing entities that are benefiting from a more equitable distribution of national resources is expected accelerate urbanization and development processes within the country, as county headquarters become administrative/political centers and hubs of economic, social and cultural activities.

Appreciating the accelerated context of urbanization as the County headquarters take shape, the Council of Governors, at its first annual general meeting, established a committee dedicated to urban development affairs. As a member of the Urban Development Committee (UDC), we are fully aware of the magnitude of the urban challenges and recognize the importance of strategic partnerships with competent agencies and authorities. In particular, the committee is keen to harness the knowledge and best practices that exist in the urban development sphere to inspire an era of urban regeneration. It is against these considerations that an early decision was made by the Urban Development Committee to constitute a reference group of professionals that would pool skills, experiences, best practices and resources necessary for the committee to meet its mandate.

Your presence here is an indication of your willingness to serve in the Urban Sector Reference Group (USRG). We acknowledge the fact that a number of governmental and non-governmental agencies have been cooperating in the promotion of sustainable urban development in Kenya. It is further evident that enormous potential lies in the vast repository

of urban knowledge resident in various forms across institutions, organizations and practitioners in the urban sphere of development. CoG seeks to pursue complementarity with these initiatives and envisages deployment of mechanisms that will ensure maximum benefit accrue from an expanded cooperation framework. It suffices to mention that we have already embarked on an agenda aimed at leveraging the urban development matters to occupy prominent space in the devolution discourse.

As I conclude, the setting up of the Urban Sector Reference Group (USRG) to work hand-in-hand with the Council of Governors, through the Urban Development Committee, is a bold attempt to reinforce urban sector as a key development sector in the county order of priority. The urban sector reference group should stimulate this agenda by extending technical support to the Urban Development Committee so as to realize its mandate more effectively and efficiently. Some of the immediate priorities include;

- Development of a framework to guide and assist county governments in the establishment of institutional structures for the management of urban areas, as envisaged in Urban Areas and Cities Act.
- Creating forums for sharing of emerging issues and best practices, including modalities for prioritization and promotion of urban areas as engines of socio-economic growth.
- Providing platform for review and mainstreaming of on-going urban development programmes, within respective county integrated development plans (CIDPs).
- Providing a framework for the review and mainstreaming development partners engagement and support to county governments on urban development and management issues

It is our belief that we are all up to the task and ready to make urbanization work. I wish to assure you of the full cooperation from the committee as we strive to achieve sustainable urban development.

It is now my pleasure to declare this USRG officially opened. I wish you all very fruitful interactions.

Thank You