



SPEECH OF REV. DR SAMUEL KOBIA, CHAIRPERSON OF THE NATIONAL COHESION AND INTEGRATION COMMISSION, DURING THE NATIONAL LAUNCH OF THE BUILDING BRIDGES TO UNITY REPORT HELD AT THE BOMAS OF KENYA ON MONDAY, OCTOBER 26, 2020

Salutations and Protocols

I am thankful for the opportunity to speak during such an important milestone in our collective quest to refine the way our society is organized and governed. Building a peaceful and cohesive society is an indispensable pillar of this quest, and given that most of the issues in the Building Bridges agenda touch directly or indirectly on our mandate, we at the National Cohesion and Integration Commission have maintained a keen interest in the BBI process. After all, we are the ones who will be spearheading the implementation of a good number of its recommendations in the days and years ahead.

In recent months NCIC has been at the forefront of building peace and mending fences between our communities, and these dialogue processes are happily bearing fruit. The perennial inter-communal conflicts in Narok and at the border of Kakamega and Nandi Counties have ended through peace accords, and the communities are now on the path to true reconciliation. Our interventions have blunted the arrows in these counties, and are silencing the guns in the north – as exemplified by the peace process in Marsabit. Then, during this Year's International Day of Peace commemorated in Nandi County, five Governors led their communities in recommitting to a peaceful future.

Meanwhile we continue to reign in on those engaging in hate speech, and to advocate for an inclusive and equitable society where diversity is honored and peace is cherished.

I now wish to pay tribute to H.E. President Uhuru Kenyatta and the Rt. Hon. Former Prime Minister Raila Odinga for the courageous and statesmanlike role played by them on March 9, 2018 in concluding their historic Handshake. We all recall the highly polarized and tense state of our nation prior to the Handshake, and it is against this backdrop that we should look at today's launch of the BBI Report.

The Handshake has the potential to address the underlying issues that make our elections a deadly affair. So I call upon the President, the Former Prime Minister and indeed our other leaders to promote calmness and inclusivity.

The BBI Report is being launched at a time when we are grappling with the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic which has exposed our class, ethnic and regional inequalities that have long driven political polarization and fed conflict in our country. The pandemic has also amplified fragilities in our health and education systems.

The BBI recommendations should therefore act as a stimulus to invest in systems to promote prosperity for all, ones that will build a cohesive and peaceful society. My hope is that after we flatten the Covid-19 curve, our national revenge to the pandemic will be to also flatten the gaps in our society.

Whereas the BBI has the potential to transform our country by resolving many of the underlying issues that lead us into our cyclical bouts of electoral unrest, no amount of legislation will take us from being “A Nation of Blood Ties to a Nation of Ideals”.

For this we – and in particular our leaders – must bring to life the national values as expressed in our Constitution. The evolution of a national ethos, essential to a “Nation of Ideals”, is critical to the consolidation of our democratic gains and to our quest to build a peaceful, cohesive and prosperous society.

The BBI Report presents the basis on which to build a politically mature society. Kenyans must read and understand the report, and then discuss it constructively and calmly. Not just the sections dealing with political structure, but *all* of its sections.

NCIC will continue working to ensure the process is peaceful, leading to a transformation of our political culture and the infusion of healthy values and an uplifting national ethos into the lives of all Kenyans.

Thank you and God Bless Kenya!

Rev. Dr. Samuel Kobia

Chairperson, National Cohesion and Integration Commission

October 26, 2020