



**REMARKS BY THE NATIONAL COHESION AND INTEGRATION COMMISSION
CHAIRPERSON, REV. DR. SAMUEL KOBIA, DURING THE LAUNCH OF THE NCIC
STRATEGIC PLAN HELD AT THE BOMAS OF KENYA, NAIROBI, ON
WEDNESDAY 30TH JUNE, 2021.**

Kenya's story is one of a nation that has for many decades grown into a regional powerhouse with a growing economy that is the third largest in sub-Saharan Africa. This is no mean feat, because Kenya is a nation that has built its economy around her people and not an abundant mineral wealth like South Africa, Nigeria and Angola.

Economically speaking, Kenya's future is bright. Yet at the same time there is a specter over our nation: we are haunted by sporadic violence, inter-community tensions and political upheaval every five years. Our bright future demands that we plan, and urgently so, for a more peaceful and cohesive future. Indeed, as the adage goes, to fail to plan is to plan to fail. We at the NCIC are committed to not failing, for if we fail our beautiful country may find itself in ashes.

It is therefore in our culture as an institution to plan, and today we are sharing with you our plan for a better Kenya – a more peaceful Kenya, with more cohesive communities. The plan we are launching is based on intensive introspection and analysis. We have determined what and how the Commission inputs into Kenya's search for a just, peaceful, participatory and cohesive society, living in an ethnically, racially and religiously diverse context.

We are very aware that to succeed in achieving our goals cooperation and partnerships are absolutely vital, and this strategic plan identifies ways of working with a wide variety of stakeholders. Of importance when dealing with hate speech, ethnic contempt and incitement to violence are the Judiciary, EACC, DCI and DPP. Our approach is a multi-agency and multi-disciplinary one, through which we plan to make it very expensive to commit hate crimes and exhibit ethnic contempt in this country. Through our multi-agency framework we intend to create social, political and criminal consequences for any who would dare do so.

We have already established a wall of shame and a wall of fame, and anyone who enters the wall of shame can be assured that they will not run for any elective position in an election. For we will invoke Chapter 6 of our Constitution and the NCIC Act to ensure they are barred. This approach gives us the opportunity to purge our society and our politics of anyone who threatens our cohesion as a society in these ways. To achieve this, our partnership with IEBC, the Registrar of Political Parties, EACC and DCI is vital. Plus with other government organisations such as the Vision 2030 Secretariat and KEPROBA.

Madam Chief Justice, on the criminal consequences front we urgently do need your help. We need a special court, especially during this electioneering period that will expedite trials for suspected hatemongers. In partnership with the office of the DPP, we plan to bring before you watertight cases that will bring about justice swiftly.

Given that peace and security are central in our work, the support of and cooperation with our line ministry, the Ministry of Interior and Coordination of National Government, cannot be overemphasized. We rely heavily on them to provide security and logistical support for our officers, and they have never let us down. The Honorable CS and his PS have proved to be invaluable assets to our peace efforts, and all the government structures are focused on delivering peace to the nation. For that we thank you, sir.

On the same note, we also highly welcomed the creation by the CS of a Multi-Sector Forum which makes it possible to initiate multiple charges against hatemongers and offenders in ethnic contempt. This is a sure step in the right direction of enhancing the criminal consequences faced by those who are by all definitions enemies of Kenya and of her people.

We recognize that we are part and parcel of devolution, seeing that our counties do not become tribal enclaves to the exclusion of others, but also that we need to promote the equality of opportunity across the nation. We are fully aware that shared prosperity is both vital to peace and to the prosperity of our people. With this in mind we are opening up 10 regional offices to ensure that we not only enable peace but also ensure that we deliver on the equality of opportunity in our regions.

We also would not have made it this far without our collaboration with the relevant Parliamentary committees. Not just in terms of budgetary allocation, but also and more critically in supporting the changes to the NCIC Act that will ensure our mandate of peace

and cohesion building is appropriately strengthened and that we are given the teeth and muscle we need to properly do our work.

This act will help us greatly in dealing with elements of hate and intolerance within our society, while the required budgetary support will ensure that we are able to procure the right technological and human resources necessary to deliver on our promises to you, the Kenyan people. I must reinforce what the CEO has already said, that we do need our budget to be enhanced if we are to meet the goals we have set here today.

Networking is a critical way of working for us at the Commission. I would therefore be remiss if I didn't mention the cooperation we have with NGOs, our development partners and the diplomatic community, who have consistently supported us and been part and parcel of our success thus far. Indeed it is with them that we have developed this strategic plan, and even today it is with them that we launch the plan. We also appreciate our collaboration with the private sector, as it too is concerned about seeing a peaceful journey up to and beyond the election.

One of the other great synergies we have is with other Commissions with which we share mutually reinforcing responsibilities to the nation. The chair of the National Lands Commission knows full well that tribal tension and violence are often associated with land disputes; and the IEBC knows full well that elections are flash points for ethnic tensions fueled by political activity. The synergies in how such state commissions work are critical to the success of our strategy, and consequently the success of our nation.

We are also looking to work closely with political parties, to ensure there is quality leadership at all levels of political party structures. We want to work with them to purge and shun political thuggery from all political activities. It should no longer be normal that the term "political mobilizer" means the same as "goons for hire". Thugs are for prisons, not for political parties.

Ladies and gentlemen, I must recognize an important member of our NCIC team. She is popularly known as Wanjiku and she is the chief focus of our planning and our desire for peace. She goes by many names across the country: in some places she is Naliaka, in others she is Khadija, Moraa, Naitu, Kanini... and Kendi in my part of Kenya. It is to her that I would like to extend a special invite to join us in the fight against hate. It is to her that we want to give the power to referee. To kick out elements in our society that sabotage our peace and cohesion. We want her to give a red card to all offending players!

This is why public participation for us is not just a talk shop but rather active citizens who report on hate speech, refuse to make heroes of hatemongers and also actively seek out peace building measures within their communities. We want a Moraa who reaches out to Chepkemoi and Naliaka, and refuses to indulge in ethnic animosity. More than anything else, we want Kendi and Kanini to make peace.

So to you Wanjiku, we ask you to become a peace actor with us, to be part and parcel of our execution of the strategic plan. Don't just ask what NCIC can do for you; ask what you can do for God and for your country.

We also call on all Kenyans to refuse to be used as goons for hire. To refuse to be amplifiers of hate messages and executors of violence. I must warn those who are tempted to go in such a direction that our enhanced capacity means that we will catch them and they will face the full force of the law.

Hate speech and ethnic contempt will not be tolerated among the big fish, and neither will it be tolerated among the small fish. Rest assured that gone are the days where one could cause chaos and return home in peace. If you remove peace from others we will also remove peace from you. You burn other people's homes we will give you a home in prison.

Ladies and gentlemen, we are aware that 2022 looms large over this nation, and that NCIC being there to respond to election-related violence, the Roadmap to Elections Bila Noma is the first major work in our strategic plan. We are committed to a safe pre- and post-election period. To this end we have committed significant resources, and we have activated our networks, as we constantly feel the pulse of the nation to ensure Kenya remains peaceful and prosperous throughout this period.

I wish I could simply float a "peace tender" and procure peace the way we procure roads and other infrastructure. Indeed I wish we could simply inject a peace vaccine, two shots per person, and be assured of peace. But alas we cannot, and it is for this reason that we are all here.

We recognize that the work of peace-building is never complete, and that it cannot be undertaken by one person or even one institution. It takes all of us to work together, hand in hand, to make it possible. Our nursery school teachers were right: the way to be happy is to make someone else happy and to have a little heaven down here. So I ask you to hold our hand as we hold yours, and let us bring a little heaven to our country.