



Delegation of the European Union to the Republic of Kenya

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Speech by Deputy EU Ambassador to Kenya, Marjaana Sall

European Union support to Kenya's devolved government

Laico Regency, Nairobi, 18th September 2013

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Dear Former Principal Secretary,
Ministry Directors and staff,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me say first that I am delighted to be here to mark the first successful results of partnership between the European Union and Government of Kenya in support of the new County administrations.

This year, we are celebrating Kenya's 50th year of independence. In the early 1990s Kenya started the long journey of looking at Constitutional reform. Following the post-election violence of 2008, and the resulting National Accord that brought peace to the country, the process of reform was given particular impetus and the government committed itself to implementing far-reaching reforms. These reforms found their translation in the New Constitution promulgated in 2010 - a great success for Kenya, all Kenyans and the future of the country.

Worldwide, the European Union believes in good governance as an essential requirement for sustainable development. Economic development can only materialise if political stability, property rights and individual freedoms are upheld. Strong institutions of justice, political accountability and representation are the backbone of the system. Governance cannot be seen in isolation but must rather be seen as an integral building block for sustainable development and economic growth.

It is for this reason that the European Union has been a key partner in Kenya's journey of constitutional reform – led by Kenyans, for Kenyans - with our support in this vital area starting ten years ago. Support to implementing the government's constitutional reform agenda is part of a wider programme of support to initiatives led by the Kenyan Government to build and improve governance.

Now let me share a few words on our flagship programme on governance, Bridging Divides Through Accountable Governance, which led to this event today.

Back in 2008, the European Union worked in close partnership with the Kenyan Government, to design a programme to support the next phases of implementation of the constitution, based on the

political pillar of Vision 2030. Rebuilding confidence among Kenyans and taking forward reforms to access to justice, and the judicial and electoral systems were much needed in the wake of the post-election violence of 2008. Implementing the process of devolution is a key element of constitutional reform in Kenya which is why the European Union has given 3.75 billion Kenyan shillings to the process for work over the next five years.

Now, Bridging Divides Through Accountable Governance includes support to devolve power and build local governance by the Department of Devolution and Planning. The relevant component of the programme amounts to Ksh 100 million over 4 years to empower and help develop the new County administrations. Specifically, the programme helps the critical transition phase until 2016, towards governing locally, relations with central government and build awareness amongst people in the counties of their local administrations. I am proud we are marking today the completion of training for county officials with the award of certificates, which demonstrates the growing capacity of devolved government.

Devolution of governance is truly revolutionary as it transforms how public services are delivered and how accountability happens, transferring responsibility from the centre to the local. At the same time, counties will have more responsibility and fiscal autonomy and are themselves being legitimised by direct elections. This is a long and challenging process, experience from around the world tells us. In many countries of Europe it took decades sometimes even hundreds of years to materialise!

We have welcomed President Kenyatta's public and repeated commitments to the devolution journey. We are all aware that the task ahead is huge and complicated, requiring patience and support from all stakeholders. Sustainable, adequate and predictable funding is vital to successfully completing the journey.

There is hard work to do for the new and still developing County administrations, as they take up their new responsibilities. This will take time. Experience from other countries has shown that clarity and political will is required to overcome the many hurdles, overlaps and ambiguities in the division of responsibilities and resources. So rigorous planning, implementation and accountability will be critical to the successful operation of the County governments.

That is why we believe that continued work by the Department of Devolution and Planning in supervising to grow the Counties will be critical. We look forward to continuing our support to the Department – support which started in 2010 - to train and develop the many county executive officials and members of the county assemblies.

The European Union and the Government of Kenya plan to initiate in early 2014 a joint project on devolution, supporting the process of bringing government closer to the people. Amounting to 3.3 billion Shillings over the next five years it will include technical assistance, training of staff and the awards of grants – all in close cooperation with the Department of Devolution and Planning. Grants to counties will help turn devolution into reality, enabling the local administrations to take the lead

on areas that matter to Kenyans, including agri-business, rural development and helping to increase availability of food.

Equally important is the need for citizens themselves to participate in decision-making at the county level and have a say in issues that will directly affect their lives. We welcome the Department for Devolution and Planning leadership role in providing civic education to the people. Civil Society Organisations also have a positive role in this process, acting as bridges and forums for engagement between citizens and county authorities.

Generating an understanding of the responsibilities of different tiers of government in Kenya today is vital, to ensure citizens know how to engage with the right administration and have their expectations managed, a critical part of retaining confidence in the new system in the early phases. That is why on the 2nd of September the European Union launched 290 million Kshs worth of call for proposals for support to civil society organisations, who could work in partnership with county authorities, to monitor public financial management and local development by counties.

The guidebook we are launching today is a key part of developing the understanding of officials, civil society and the people about devolution – answering key questions around who does what, where are the resources, who is responsible and how best to engage.

Let me conclude by saying that Kenya's new Constitution was an important milestone in decades of reform, creating hope and expectation for a new era of politics. It has been a difficult journey but the Kenyan Constitution today is perhaps one of the most progressive in Africa, and it is the concept of devolved government that makes Kenya a leader on the continent in this respect.

The European Union itself involves several tiers governance, providing a strong mechanism for peace and unity, together with economic growth, for all citizens on the continent. With our 28 Member States, as Kenya's single largest trading and development partner, we are excited about the opportunities that devolution will produce for Kenya and Kenyan enterprise. There is huge potential that devolution will unlock. For this reason, we in the European Union are a committed partner to Kenya and look forward to standing by your to support the devolution process in the years to come.

Thank you for your time today.

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