

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

OFFICIAL REPORT

OFFICIAL OPENING OF REFURBISHED PARLIAMENTARY CHAMBER

Tuesday, 7th August, 2012

The House met at 11.20 a.m.

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

ARRIVAL OF HIS EXCELLENCY THE PRESIDENT

(All hon. Members stood up in their places while His Excellency the President took his seat in the Chair of State)

(Prayers were said by the Most Rev. Dr. Eliud Wabukala, Archbishop of the Anglican Church of Kenya and Sheikh Ahmed Mohammed Muhdhar, the Chief Kadhi of Kenya)

(All hon. Members resumed their seats)

Mr. Speaker: Your Excellency and Hon. Members, I now invite the Deputy Speaker, Mr. Farah, who is also the Member of Parliament for Lagdera to log in.

(Mr. Farah took a short while to log in)

Mr. Farah: Mr. Speaker, Sir, I believe now I am logged in. This is the problem of technology but we will get used to it.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, this is the work started by the Ninth Parliament and completed by the Tenth Parliament and I am sure Kenyans will appreciate that the taxpayers' money which has been used here was worth the effort.

Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, allow me to now invite Eng. Gumbo, Member of Parliament for Rarieda and Chairman of the House Broadcasting Committee (HBC) to make a few remarks.

Eng. Gumbo: His Excellency the President of the Republic of Kenya, Mr. Mwai Kibaki, His Excellency the Vice-President, Mr. Stephen Kalonzo Musyoka, the Speaker of the National Assembly, the Vice-Chairman of the Parliamentary Service Commission (PSC), Mr. Adan Keynan, all Commissioners of the PSC, Members of the House Business Committee (HBC), ladies and gentlemen, today marks the culmination of the efforts started many years to provide Members of Parliament with an ultra modern debating chamber whose conceptualization goes back to the beginning of the last decade.

In launching a modern broadcasting congress facility which will provide the following capacity; a sound injection and post-production studio, a radio live broadcast studio, TV production control gallery for the Chamber, two non-linear editing suites, TV live transmission control room, radio central apparatus room and TV master control room, the new Chamber has also incorporated necessary technical infrastructure to facilitate broadcasting by embedding technical systems for signal parts during its construction. Provisions have also been made to ensure seamless integration with other important systems especially the digital congress network system which we are using now. This was done to ensure efficiency and to avoid duplication of systems. The digital congress system has broadcast system with high quality audio and it captures high resolution broadcast video. The design was also done with the future in mind and will be able to take the Senate Chamber when it is officially inaugurated.

The new studios have provided Parliament with a capacity to broadcast radio and TV live as we did just a while ago. We will produce packaged programmes for both radio and television. This is a major milestone for our country and clearly something we should all be proud of as the people of Kenya. To arrive at this point, a number of challenges have had to be overcome and I dare say that one of the challenges was the fact that this project was being implemented for politicians, with politicians and among politicians.

As a firm believer in our country and her people, it gives me immense pleasure to note that this magnificent project has been achieved through technical and facilitation input provided almost exclusively by the people of Kenya. In most African countries, a very highly special project like this one would have invited an army of very expensive foreign consultants. In our case, all consultants and key facilitators have been Kenyans and I want to thank them in a special way.

(Applause)

In this regard, allow me at this early stage, Your Excellency, to thank you most sincerely for providing the enabling environment to make dreams such as this one become realizable. Allow me also to thank the Right Hon. Prime Minister who is my senior colleague in the distinguished profession of Engineering, Eng. Raila, for the key role he played in getting this project off the ground. Not many of us will recall that when this project was conceived, Mr. Raila was the Minister for Roads, Public Works and Housing and he oversaw one of the most transparent consultancy tenders in Kenya where bidders were called and awarded marks purely on merit as the envelopes containing their names were not opened until the marks were scored and tallied.

I also wish to thank the Speaker, hon. Marende, for his very strategic leadership which disentangled the project from endless debates, both within and outside the House. The team from the Ministry of Public Works, led by Architect Maweu, also has to be commended. Your Excellency, on a day like this, it is incumbent upon us to congratulate some of the unsung heroes that Kenya has produced. I know that Architect James Kimathi is sitting somewhere in the Gallery. I want to thank this gallant son of Kenya for what he has achieved in leading the team of consultants. In the field of architecture, a majority live to retire in their advanced years without delivering a notable project, least of all a national monument like this one. But Architect James Kimathi, a Kenyan, a humble and very dedicated Kenyan, has so far delivered two outstanding national monuments in two countries. Not many Kenyans know that Architect Kimathi was the leader of the team that delivered the ultra modern Tanzania Parliament in Dodoma. Your

Excellency, this architectural edifice is acclaimed both in Africa and in the Commonwealth and that is the work of a Kenyan. We truly need to take time to congratulate this gallant son of Kenya. Where is Architect Kimathi? He is up there. I would never pretend to qualify to tell you what you should or should not do, but with ultimate humility, allow me to suggest that this quiet, humble and highly talented Kenyan and his team truly deserve national honours.

Clearly, this development affords immense opportunities to Parliament and the people of Kenya as a whole. Parliament has been allocated television and radio channels on the Government signet digital broadcasting platform, and new studios have the capacity to carry out a 24-hour service on this platform. Upon the digital migration, Parliament will be able to broadcast fully on its own without eating into the Kenya Broadcasting Corporation's (KBC) signals and time. Concerns have been raised that on its own, Parliament may not generate enough content to continuously engage the channel. But I want to assure Your Excellency that this will necessarily be a public access network; as a public access network, Parliament does not need to programme only the programmes of Parliament. It can air programmes from the Judiciary. For example, as you know, we have had a lot of very interesting rulings and judgements from the Judiciary, and Kenyans may need to discuss some of these on a public access network like this one.

I also believe that this channel can be used on matters of national security and food security; but most importantly, for the Members of Parliament this channel is very useful as you can engage directly with your constituents from our studios which we have shown His Excellency. Also, you can interact with the constituents through this channel. Your Excellency, this way, the public can get an opportunity to contribute actively to matters of public interest, whether it is in the Judiciary, the Executive or, of course, Parliament.

The completed project can also be looked at as providing a vital knot in extending broadcast to the county assemblies. We will also be recommending installation of streamers to afford webcasting, so that Members of Parliament and senior Parliamentary staff can follow the proceedings from their laptops and desktops in their offices. We are also aware that we got some donations of flight kits, which we believe will be useful in transmitting from the Committees.

Ultimately, Your Excellency, it is hoped that the business of the House will eventually be paperless. Parliament will, therefore, need to install touch screens at every sitting position in the Chamber, through which Members can make quick reference to Order Papers, Standing Orders and the laws of Kenya.

But, Your Excellency, you cannot go through a major development like this without inviting challenges. The key one, I dare say, has to be technophobia. A lot of Members of Parliament, quite a number in their advanced years, and even the sight of microphones standing on the tables is scaring enough. While it will not be a requirement to try to turn Members into computer whiz kids, Members will necessarily have to improve their ICT skills to be able to fully utilize the new facilities.

The new development is also expected to generate huge amounts of content. We have discussed this with the Speaker; Parliament should, therefore, establish a remote archiving and disaster recovery centre for the Parliamentary Broadcasting Unit content, HANSARD material and other Parliamentary records. This huge volume of data and content generated will also have implications on the revision of the Standing Orders and copy rights of PBU materials broadcast from Parliament. Broadcasting regulations and rules of coverage will also need to be enhanced to protect the dignity of the House, so that unnecessary side shows are avoided and procedures outlined for dealing with media transgressors.

As I conclude, allow me to say that in some countries of the world, Kenya is looked at as a country where some of the best ideas and policies are formulated; unfortunately, up to now, execution and follow ups remain major pain for the people of Kenya. Today, you may be aware that Rwanda has one of the highest computer densities measured in computers per person in Sub-Saharan Africa. In fact, they are now undertaking an ambitious programme to give a computer to each of their 2.5 million, or so, school going children. Your Excellency, you may be aware, but I dare declare here that the foundation for that successful programme was laid by Kenyans. The building blocks were also supplied by Kenyans. I am also informed that some of the best health systems in Sub-Saharan African countries were formulated and executed by Kenyans. That is why, for what we are inaugurating today, reliability in integrity and functionality will be key.

Your Excellency, reliability, integrity and functionality of any system will always be as good as the people who operate it. For our new system to go beyond a mere dream, Parliament will have to aggressively undertake the following: employ very qualified, well trained and experienced staff to operate and manage these systems, organize continuous capacity building for Members of Parliament, PBU and media relations units to create awareness and educate on live broadcast and its implications, and increase the number of qualified PBU staff. Initially the KBC staff in the PBU can be hired or seconded to Parliament based on performance and qualifications in order to achieve continuity and harmonize transition. There is need for training programme to expose staff on expectations of coverage of a bicameral Parliament like ours in accordance with the new Constitution. Here, manufacturers and suppliers of equipment will have to be key resource persons. Parliament will have to institute comprehensive maintenance regimes for all parts of the system, including the building with detailed service level agreements and ensure the most up to date security features are built into the networks for these systems; the same must evolve over time at a pace faster than the needs. Finally, the system must be reviewed and upgraded all the time to avoid early obsolescence.

I thank you.

Mr. Speaker: Order, hon. Members! The Member for Rarieda used 13 minutes. I will now invite the Minister for Public Works, hon. Chris Obure to make his remarks. Mr. Minister, I have not got your request yet. I got the request for the Member for Naivasha.

(Laughter)

The Minister for Public Works (Mr. Obure): Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Sir. Your Excellency the President of the Republic of Kenya, hon. Mwai Kibaki, the Speaker of the National Assembly, hon. Kenneth Marende, the Vice-President and Minister for Home Affairs, hon. Kalonzo Musyoka, the Deputy Prime Minister, hon. Uhuru Kenyatta, honourable Ministers and Assistant Ministers, hon. Members of the Parliamentary Service Commission, hon. Members of this Parliament, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, it is a great honour for me to stand here today in this historic moment on the occasion of the official opening of the newly refurbished and modernized debating Chamber for the National Assembly. We all owe much gratitude to the Government and the Eighth Parliament for their vision to modernize the Chamber in line with trends in modern parliaments.

My Ministry is proud to be associated with the efforts that went into the refurbishment of the Parliament debating Chamber. Not only is it aimed at creating the right and proper atmosphere for debates but it also seeks to improve the Chamber's sitting arrangement and enhance its friendliness to Members with disabilities.

As you all know, the foundation stone for the National Assembly Chamber was laid down on 13th December, 1963 by His Royal Highness, Prince Phillip. The Chamber was completed and officially opened by His Excellency the founding President, Mzee Jomo Kenyatta on Tuesday, 2nd November, 1965. The design of that Chamber with a sitting capacity of 158 Members was based on the Westminster concept which is rectangular in shape but which unfortunately forced us to an adversarial sitting arrangement. Several decades later, it became necessary to refurbish and modernize the debating Chamber. An *ad hoc* Committee of the House chaired by hon. David Musila was appointed to oversee the implementation of the project. The objectives of the initiative were:-

(1) To increase the sitting capacity to accommodate 300 Members of Parliament up from 158.

(2) To provide innovative technical solutions for electronic voting, transmission and recording of deliberations in the Chamber through television and radio broadcast.

(3) To mould the interior decor with appropriate artworks that reflect the national heritage and confer dignity befitting this important civic building.

(4) To provide an internal environment of the highest standards for human safety and comfort.

After the *ad hoc* Committee's Report was adopted by the House, it was resolved that an appropriate design be developed through a design competition involving reputable prequalified firms. The winning design was submitted by a consortium led by K and M Archplans who were thereafter commissioned as consultants for the project. The redesigned Chamber has adopted the horseshoe concept which forced a better interaction between Members of the House and is less confrontational.

The sitting arrangement rises up away from the centre to allow for better visual links among Members of Parliament and between Members of Parliament and the Speaker. Cabling for services has been laid in the space below the Members' sitting areas. As the execution of the refurbishment works was underway, the country adopted a new Constitution heralding a new era for the august House. The Constitution adopted raises the Membership of the House. This appeared to pose a challenge but I am glad that the refurbished Chamber has a capacity to accommodate 350 Members.

The main features of the refurbished Chamber include, among others, facilities allowing Members to vote electronically from their work stations in the Chamber, radio and television broadcasting facilities which will not only ensure live transmission from the debating Chamber but will also make it easier to store and retrieve records of the proceedings; an interior décor that improves sound quality and captures our national, cultural diversity and richness and an automatic fire suspension system to protect this major investment.

The refurbishment of the Chamber commenced in April, 2010 and was completed in May this year within the contract price of Kshs950 million. These works were undertaken by local contractors led by Epco Builders Limited who accomplished the task in accordance with the specifications and standards stipulated. I am pleased to report that all the professionals, the contractor, the various sub-contractors and all categories of workers involved in this project are Kenyans.

(Applause)

Indeed, most of the materials utilized in the refurbishment were locally sourced with the exception of those related to the electronic systems. I am particularly pleased to report that the high quality seats in the Chamber have been manufactured and installed by our own Prisons Industries, again, utilizing and enhancing skills and talents available locally this time from within the country's correctional institutions.

Other projects which my Ministry is currently overseeing for the National Assembly include the remodeling and modernization of the Old Chamber to accommodate the Senate as well as the proposed multi storey office block to be constructed next to Continental House both of which are at an early preparatory stage. It has been a rewarding and fulfilling experience for us, as the Ministry of Public Works as, indeed, all the people involved in this project to work with you, Mr. Speaker, the Parliamentary Service Commission, the Clerk and Staff of the National Assembly and look forward to more collaboration with the Legislature in other projects. I hope that this facility will be enjoyed by all honourable Members and enhance debates for the benefit of all Kenyans.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Sir.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, hon. Chris Obure. You did 12 minutes. I now wish to invite hon. Robinson Githae, the Minister for Finance and Member for Parliament for Ndia to make remarks on behalf of the Leader of Government Business.

The Minister for Finance (Mr. Githae): Your Excellency the President, the Speaker, Members of Parliament, Ladies and gentlemen, on behalf of the Vice-President and Leader of Government Business who unfortunately was with us a few minutes ago but had to go to Kampala to represent His Excellency the President on a Heads of State Conference on the Great Lakes Conference, I would like to say two things.

One, you have seen the standards that can be done here locally. The seats you are sitting on were done by the prison's industry. They can even do better if they are given a chance.

I would like to ask Kenyans and other Ministries to please give our local industries a chance and they will prove themselves. Not only that, we have other institutions that can do a great job. Give land to the National Youth Service and they can be able to produce maize for our Strategic Grain Reserve. We need to recognize local talent.

His Excellency the President sometimes last year issued directives for Ministries to be purchasing their furniture here locally. Unfortunately, that directive has not been complied with by quite a number of Ministries on the basis that our local furniture is not up to standard. I think the prison's industry has proved them wrong. Please, let us give our local industries a chance and they will prove themselves. You have seen it here today. Except for the electrical equipment, everything has been done here locally. Let us give them a chance.

In addition to that, His Excellency the President has also directed that 10 per cent of all Government procurement must be reserved for youth enterprises; not *Kazi Kwa Vijana* but youth enterprises. They are being registered and it would be a requirement in the performance contracting agreement that each Ministry, including Parliament, will be required to show what you have given to the youth enterprises. This is in an effort to realize that dream of His Excellency the President; that the youth be involved in the economy of this country.

Lastly, I would just like to assure the Speaker and Members of Parliament here that in the Treasury, we support the modernization efforts of Parliament as evidenced by the funds that we released to the Parliamentary Service Commission for the modernization of this Chamber. We will also raise funds so that we can be able to put up a high office tower block for Members of

Parliament. Otherwise, the offices are not enough. Members of Parliament also need offices. We will release funds so that we can proceed with the office tower.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Sir, for giving me this chance.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Member for Ndia. A good example; you did just about six minutes.

I will now invite hon. James Orengo who is the Minister for Lands and also Member of Parliament for Ugenya to make remarks on behalf of the Right hon. Prime Minister.

The Minister for Lands (Mr. Orengo): Your Excellency the President of the Republic of Kenya and Commander in Chief of the Defence Forces; the hon. Speaker, the hon. Deputy Speaker; the hon. Deputy Prime Minister, hon. Uhuru Kenyatta; the Commissioners. I have been asked by the Prime Minister to read this very short Statement. He is out on official business in the United Kingdom including witnessing the closure of the Olympic Games in which Kenyans are participating in a big way.

I join on this occasion to salute the House and hon. Members as we mark this achievement of the opening of this ultra modern chamber of our Houses of Parliament. Today signifies the end of one era that started almost 50 years ago and ushering in the advent of a new one. It ushers in the best that modern technology can do in facilitating the business of law-making for the country.

It brings in much needed space and comfort that the National Assembly has not had for some time now. It also shows that with commitment and dedication we in Kenya can actually realize the dream of a modern, efficient and user-friendly facility here in Parliament. I have no doubt that this achievement is not common even among our peers.

I applaud the manner in which this project has been executed and commend the Speaker and the parliamentary staff including the Clerk and the Parliamentary Service Commission.

What is more important, however, is the manner in which this modern Chamber symbolizes the deepening of our democratic standing in the community of nations in line with the Constitution as promulgated in August, 2010.

This new Parliament should facilitate and expedite the transactions of this House in the well-known tradition of the best democracies in the world. In particular, I hope that it will usher in an era in which we debate issues soberly and with unity of purpose as a country in the best tradition for which those democratic parliaments are known.

I also note that the new Parliament has made provisions for the new set-up occasioned by devolution. We are moving to a bicameral Parliament which will bring issues of concern by the Kenyan people to the national table much more formidably.

Finally, I urge that as leaders, we roll up our sleeves to embrace the best of technology that the new House has provided and also to remember that we have a historic responsibility to steer this country to a peaceful transition into the new constitutional dispensation.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Sir.

WELCOME TO HIS EXCELLENCY THE PRESIDENT

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, as I proceed to make my remarks, allow me to restate the following:

These are the basic steps that you will take to use the system.

1. Insert the card.
2. Put in the pin provided to you. It has four figures.

3. Press microphone button to accept the pin.
4. Press the microphone button once to request the hon. Speaker for the Floor.
5. If you wish to rise on a point of order or a point of information, press the intervention button marked INP.

Your Excellency the President of the Republic of Kenya and Commander-In-Chief of the Kenya Defence Forces, hon. Mwai Kibaki; your Lordship the Chief Justice, hon. Willy Mutunga; the Speaker of the East African Legislative Assembly; your Excellencies, High Commissioners and Ambassadors; distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, it is my honour to welcome you to the inauguration of our refurbished debating chamber.

On behalf of the Parliamentary Service Commission (PSC) and the House, I thank you, your Excellency, for accepting to grace this historic occasion. Today, we mark yet another indelible entry to the annals of Parliament in the Republic of Kenya.

Hon. Members, I report authoritatively this afternoon that the chamber refurbishment that we embarked on in 2010 is fully completed to our satisfaction as prescribed and within the set budgetary constraints.

Your Excellency, hon. Members; allow me to recoup the history of the refurbished chamber as is within my knowledge. The extension to the first building that was the Legislative Council Chamber commonly known as the “Old Chamber” became necessary because the Independence Constitution created a bicameral Parliament. Whereas the House of Representatives used the Old Chamber, the Senate used County Hall from the Nairobi City Council. Though so close by, it was felt that a Senate Chamber within Parliament Square would greatly enhance the serenity expected of the two chambers.

Construction of the new Chamber to the South of the Old Chamber began in 1964 through the Harambee spirit. The building was designed by Architect Amias Connell and constructed by M/s Benson Brothers. The foundation stone was laid on 13th December, 1963 by His Royal Highness Prince Phillip and was completed and officially opened by the founding father of the nation, the late President, in Kenyan parlance, *Hayati Mzee* Jomo Kenyatta; on Tuesday, 2nd November, 1965. The opening ceremony was held in this same Chamber, which became the Chamber of the House of Representatives. Following the passage of a constitutional amendment on 21st December, 1966 to merge the two Houses, it became the National Assembly Chamber.

Your Excellency, Sir, we note that you have lived all this history, having been in the House then as the Member for Donholm and later, Bahati Constituency. The project was funded by the Kenya National Fund, or the Harambee Fund, to which *wananchi* of all walks of life contributed, raising the equivalent of Kenya Pounds 100,000. Converted at the rate of Kshs20 per pound, it would be Kshs2 million. According to our computation today, it would be approximately Kshs2 billion.

The renovation of the chamber has been in the plans of Parliament since 2004. The Third Parliamentary Service Commission, which I have had the privilege to chair, prioritised the refurbishment in its Strategic Plan, running over the period 2008-2018 and, after enlisting the support of hon. Members of the Tenth of Parliament, put on track actualisation of the dream of having a modern chamber. For this, I want to commend and thank all hon. Members. This spectacular infrastructure joins the list of many landmarks that have been made to happen in the recent past, under your Excellency’s very able stewardship.

Looking around, you all no doubt see that this is an atmosphere to behold. The ambience is pleasantly amicable, if not enabling. It is obviously a very conducive environment to motivate

the people's representatives to discharge their onerous and yet admirable and respectable role in governance, bringing to the national table, legislation, representation and oversight. The completion of this Chamber comes with a great technological leap and presents a unique opportunity for this Parliament to reach out to the electorate faster and efficiently. It is noteworthy that the Chamber has in-built radio and TV broadcasting studios, first meeting live feed straight from here. We are on high speed Internet connection within the precincts of Parliament. Hon. Members can access high speed Internet connection on their laptops, iPads or any other device with suitable capacity configuration.

Hon. Members, this Chamber can accommodate 352 Members seated. The digital congress system provides for public address, an electronic voting component and log-in that is useful for collecting statistical data such as Members' attendance. Hereafter, you may envision the Speaker controlling debate and voting by Members at the click of a button.

It is significant to mention that the seats fitted in the Chamber have been made by our own Prisons Industries at half the cost of the commercial rates we would have had to pay for the seats. Allow me at this point to acknowledge and appreciate the presence of the Commissioner of Prisons, Mr. Isaiah Osugo.

Hon. Members, so that you know the budgeted estimates as per the Bills of Quantities, the price of the seats was Kshs167 million. The Prisons Industries have been able to fabricate and deliver these seats at a cost of Kshs77 million, therefore, saving 54 per cent of the total cost. We believe that this deliberate action has contributed to enhancement of the capacity of the Kenya Prison Industries and in affirming the faith of our leaders in locally made goods. Your Excellency, you have personally called on the Public Service to give priority to local entrepreneurs to supply locally manufactured furniture. Without doubt, I believe that to build Kenya, we have to buy Kenyan products and, at the same time, brand and sell Kenyan products overseas.

I would like to thank our Government for availing the requisite financial resources and technical support, through the Ministry of Public Works; that have ensured successful completion of this project. I wish to convey my gratitude to the PSC commissioners, who spearheaded this project; all Members of the Tenth Parliament, who supported our effort; our staff led by the Clerk of the National Assembly, Mr. Patrick Gichohi, for co-ordinating the implementation process; and the consultants, the contractor and sub-contractors for a job-well-done.

Your Excellency, sometimes we do not get satisfaction that easily. But for me, I have derived satisfaction from acknowledgement occasionally, of the citizenry of this country. I wish, at this point, to share a message that I received, among many others, by this morning. The message says:-

"I wish to congratulate you for your determination, and take courage in directing the implementation of modernisation of our parliamentary Chamber. For sure, this project would either have stalled or not started at all, if it was not for your leadership. Prayerfully wishing you every blessing as you facilitate the opening."

This message comes from our lead consultant, James Kimathi. For a professional of that standing to give us commendation, obviously, it gives us a lot of joy and satisfaction.

Your Excellency, we plan to have similar refurbishment for the Old Chamber in readiness for use by the Senate. The project will include expansion of the catering facilities. Before we wind up, and pretty soon, we intend to construct a multipurpose office block that will constitute a Parliamentary Annex with offices for Members and Committee Rooms.

As this is likely to be the last major event that brings all of us together before the end of the Tenth Parliament, allow me, hon. Members and distinguished guests, to put on record and reiterate the following: First, the Tenth Parliament has enjoyed productive working relations with the Executive, headed by your Excellency, Sir, in consultation with the Right Hon. Prime Minister. It is worthy of note that a lot of business has been transacted in the House, including the successful passage of the Constitution, because of the close co-operation we have had between the Executive and the Legislature.

Your Excellency, Sir, I have had an excellent working relationship with you, the Rt. hon. Prime Minister, the Vice-President and Minister for Home Affairs and the Cabinet, except for a few occasions scattered far apart, we have together resolved sticky issues and challenges for the greater good, always putting the interests of Kenya first.

(Applause)

For me, Your Excellency, in my humble assessment, we have collectively scored well above average.

(Applause)

Two, the Grand Coalition Government has worked well beyond what cynics and doomsayers would have expected. We have made our invaluable contribution to ensure that the Government works and delivers services to the people. Moving forward, our expectation is that we shall remain on course and ensure a smooth transition to a new Government in the run up to and after the next elections.

Three, the Legislature endeavours to complete any residual business, including passage of all remaining Bills on the transition to the new constitutional dispensation expected from March 2013. Allow me, Your Excellency, to demonstrate how far we have travelled by reciting the oath administered to hon. Members on 16th August, 1907 on the occasion of inauguration of the first Parliament of the Protectorate of Kenya then known as the Legislative Council (Legco). I quote:-

“I, Wafula Kamau, (addition mine) do sincerely promise and swear that I will be faithful and bear true allegiance to His Majesty the King Edward the VII, his heirs and successors according to law. So, help me God.”

Your Excellency and hon. Members, it is now my humble duty to invite your Excellency to address us and to officially inaugurate the refurbished Chamber. Welcome Sir.

(Applause)

Hon. Members, His Excellency the President will have a break of just about two minutes and will proceed soon thereafter.

(His Excellency the President left the Chamber)

Order, hon. Members! The sitting is still on. Hon. Members, allow me to take advantage of this opportunity to just re-emphasise what our institutional memory says, so that the events of the 10th Parliament are properly fully recorded. The Committee that was in-charge of the

refurbishment project during the year 2004 was a Committee known as the National Assembly Rehabilitation Committee and it was chaired by hon. David Musila, Member of Parliament for Mwingi South.

(Applause)

Hon. Kirwa chaired the Committee on Broadcasting.

(Applause)

So, the person actually providing leadership then on the rehabilitation or refurbishment of the Chamber was hon. David Musila.

(Applause)

Thank you.

(His Excellency the President re-entered the Chamber)

Hon. Members, as it is our tradition, let us now welcome His Excellency the President to make his remarks.

(Applause)

His Excellency the President (Mr. Kibaki): Thank you. Mr. Speaker, Sir, hon. Members and invited guests. It is my joy to join you for this historic occasion of the opening of the refurbished Chamber that moves our Parliament into a new era. This Chamber will greatly aid the legislative and representative roles of Members of Parliament. I commend the Speaker and the Clerk of the House as well as all those involved in this refurbishment project for their good work. I also thank Kenyan taxpayers for paying their taxes that enables us to undertake such projects.

(Applause)

The Government will work closely with Parliament to facilitate the implementation of the next phase of the modernisation programme. This will include preparation of facilities necessary for the Senate as well as increased staff members. We are committed to provide resources for the two-chamber legislature to function effectively. The Ministry of Finance will allocate the necessary funds for this endeavour. We are also committed to providing resources for a devolved Government as stipulated in the Constitution.

(Applause)

The next Parliament will also need to hire more professional and technical capacity to facilitate the work of the various committees. This is critical because the future Ministers who will be called Cabinet Secretaries will not be Members of Parliament. It is also important that we

have experienced membership into those committees. I, therefore, encourage the current Members of Parliament to seek re-election because the next Parliament will be an important pillar of the Government.

(Laughter)

Despite the new Constitution and devolution of the responsibilities to the 47 counties, the role of Parliament will not be diminished. The status and place of Parliament will remain paramount. Devolution is with us to stay. We must, however, remain sensitive to our nation's economic well being. We want devolved units of Government that deliver services to the public. Devolution is critical and must be fully supported by this Parliament that should put in place the necessary structures that will guarantee a smooth transition to the next form of Government. It is, therefore, important that counties are adequately staffed in readiness for the new structures of devolution.

I must, however, note that devolution does not stop Kenya from being a unitary state. National resources must, therefore, continue to be used for the benefit of all Kenyans. With the discovery of oil and other mineral resources, mechanisms should be put in place to ensure that locals benefit, while the national good is put in place for the benefit of future and current generations.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the completion of this Chamber upgrading project marks an important mile stone for the people of Kenya. Parliament is one of the three State organs to which the sovereign power of the people of Kenya is delegated. One of Parliament's most important roles is to manifest the diversity of our nation, represent the will of the people and exercise their sovereignty. It is, therefore, an institution for governing as well as defending the rights of Kenyans, particularly the under-privileged. The facilities in this refurbished Chamber will aid Members to fulfill their responsibilities to the people of Kenya more effectively. Of more significance than the physical facilities, however, is the character and conduct of the Members of this House. We must remember that we have a responsibility not only to our constituents but to the entire nation. We should set examples of hard work, integrity and nation building to our fellow citizens. Most importantly, we must actively promote peace, unity and national cohesion in all corners of our country.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the modernization of the Chamber comes at a time when we are fully engaged in implementation of our Constitution. I commend Members of Parliament for rising to the occasion and passing the necessary legislation needed to anchor our Constitution since its promulgation two years ago. In the next few days a number of Bills related to our Constitution will be presented. I am confident that you will give them their due attention as we stick to the timelines provided for under the Fifth Schedule of the Constitution.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, after serving the people of Kenya in Parliament for 50 years I can confidently state that the destiny and future of our beloved nation depends a great deal on the character and composition of Parliament. As leaders, we have tremendous capacity to transform the lives of our people. I call upon Members to use the remaining time of their parliamentary term to ensure that this House goes down in history for its role in improving and uplifting the quality of life of Kenyan workers, farmers, business people, youth and children. Let us use the time left to entrench reforms, and to put in place structures that future leaders will use to transform Kenya into a haven of prosperity as envisaged under our Vision 2030.

I also call upon Kenyans to carefully consider those whom they will elect to serve in this House during the forthcoming general election. Let us choose men and women of integrity, who have the people's interests at heart and who are diligent and selfless. The power to determine the destiny of our nation is in our vote. Let us use that power wisely.

As we prepare the forthcoming elections I wish to assure all Kenyans that we are putting in place measures to ensure free, fair and peaceful elections. The Government will support the IEBC to acquire the Biometric Voter Registration (BVR) System and contribute to the credibility of the electoral process. We will also fast track the issuance of national identification cards to Kenyan youths.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, our democracy has come of age. Let us all play our individual and collective roles, so that we entrench our democratic ideals through peaceful and just elections. To ensure peaceful elections I encourage Members of Parliament, other leaders and citizens to actively participate in the forthcoming county peace conference on the 13th and 14th of August, and the national peace conference on the 30th and 31st August and beyond. I also recommit myself to guaranteeing that our country has a smooth transition to the leadership that Kenyans will vote into office next March.

I now declare the refurbished Chamber of the National Assembly officially open.

(Applause)

Before, I resume my seat I wish to present a copy of the original Constitution that I signed on the 27th of August, 2010, and the pen I appended my signature with for safe custody in this august House.

Thank you and may God bless you.

(Applause)

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, as I move to the next item, allow me for the completeness of our records to appreciate the services of Mr. Jamleck Irungu Kamau when he served as Commissioner on the Parliamentary Service Commission and chaired the sub-Committee that was responsible for development. He now serves as the Minister for Nairobi Metropolitan Development.

May I at this point invite the Vice-Chairman of the PSC, Mr. Keynan, to give the vote of thanks.

VOTE OF THANKS

Mr. Keynan: Your Excellency, the President of the Republic of Kenya and the Commander-in-Chief of the Kenya Defence Forces, Mr. Mwai Kibaki, the Speaker of the National Assembly, the Deputy Prime Minister, Mr. Kenyatta, the Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly, your excellencies, ambassadors and high commissioners, distinguished Members of Parliament, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, mine is fairly simple; just to pass a vote of thanks.

On behalf of the Parliamentary Service Commission, allow me to thank you, Your Excellency, for gracing today's occasion in inaugurating our refurbished debating chamber. The Commission and the entire Tenth Parliament appreciates most sincerely your Government's

effort in refurbishing as well as other projects that have been implemented as captured in the Commission's 2008 to 2018 Strategic Plan.

I remember with nostalgia in 1999, when you were the Leader of the Official Opposition, Hon. Oloo Aringo decided to initiate a Private Member's Bill and you know then things were very difficult, and you eloquently and fervently contributed and used your position as the Official Leader of Opposition to support.; Today what we are seeing is the fruit of that bold initiative at a time when, politically, things were not very good.

(Applause)

Your Excellency, we recognize the first Parliamentary Service Commission which was a product of the enactment of that Bill as a result of that struggle. The Parliamentary Service Commission of 2003 and 2008 which laid the foundation for the attainment of Parliament as the Third Arm of the Government of Kenya and as set out in the strategic direction of Parliament including the refurbishment of its buildings. Up to that time, Parliament was listed as a small department in the Office of the President until 1999 when, though constitutionally recognized as one of the three independent entities of the Republic of Kenya, the Clerk and the entire staff were seconded from the Public Service Commission and you can imagine that kind of direction. It is a result of this and, it was not an easy struggle, that today I stand here on behalf of the Commission to salute the first Commission of 2003 and 2008 for the job well done and for laying the foundation for the refurbishment of this Chamber.

We particularly thank the hon. ole Kaparo, the then Speaker of the National Assembly, Hon. Oloo Aringo, the then Commission's first Vice-Chairman and the person who moved the Motion. I can say that everything that we have initiated in this Parliament; from the Eight Parliament to the Ninth Parliament, I greatly personally attribute to the genius and determination of hon. Oloo Aringo. Actually he was to be de-whipped from his party at that particular time simply because of initiating this very bold move. We salute him and all the Commissioners who were there then, who served in the Eighth and Ninth Parliament.

Under Agenda Number Four of the National Accord, one of the issues we are required to do as a country is the strengthening of the technical capacity of our institution; Parliament. That includes research, budget and legal offices. As you have rightly said, Parliament, courtesy of the new Constitution is now part and parcel of the Mid-term Expenditure Review Framework and, therefore, parliamentarians will be expected, as you have said, to participate in the implementation and design of the Budget. Therefore, Parliament will not only be an end consumer. That process will require budget offices, technical staff and this will require a lot of resources. Your support on this particular venture will be greatly appreciated, by not only this Parliament but also the next Parliament.

Your Excellency, as you have rightly pointed out, the next Parliament - as we have seen the performance of Members of Parliament has been improving – which will be the Eleventh Parliament, will be far much better than the Tenth Parliament and, therefore, you expect a modest and more challenging role and Members who will be up to the task.

Join me in appreciating the third Commission under the Chairmanship of Hon. Kenneth Marende for actualizing the actual renovation works that we celebrate today. It is, indeed, a bold step taking into account that Parliament is a political institution that represents parliamentarians and, therefore, anything that is initiated here, you normally get many questions and interrogations. It is because of this that sometimes some of the issues are--- I want to

congratulate the Speaker for his boldness and this required a bold decision. I am sure in the next few months, we appreciate that our term is coming to an end. We are in a rush and we hope the remaining seven months, so that we do not let down those who will succeed us and those of us who will be lucky to come back, we will work very hard so that we continue using this magnificent facility as Members of the Eleventh Parliament.

The Commission is steadily preparing for the Eleventh Parliament expected in 2013. We appreciate your Government's support with the acquisition of Protection House which is going to provide the needed office accommodation for our staff. As you realize, courtesy of the new Constitution, Parliament is expected to provide office space. You will remember when you were the Leader of the Official Opposition, we used the boots of our cars as our offices. We did not have any research assistants or constituency offices. All these have changed, courtesy of the determination and support of your Government.

I must appreciate at this juncture, that you are one person who has been resilient. You are one person who has been patient and, indeed, I have not heard you at any given time criticize a Member of Parliament or Parliament for that matter for functioning as a people's representative in their pursuit of legislation, oversight and other activities they are interested to do. I therefore want to commend you and I think it is one of the legacies that I will fervently remember as an individual. We hope that the next President will do the same.

Your Excellency, looking ahead, our biggest challenge is office accommodation for the next Members of Parliament.

Your Excellency, we need your support to acquire the following two buildings, the Harambee SACCO and Ukulima Houses, so that, at least, the next group will have a decent place to work from. I want to tell the Members of Parliament, and others who are here, that providing office space for 418 Members - and you compare the same with the facilities that are there right now - is not easy.

Finally, Your Excellency and hon. Members, the inauguration of this ultra modern refurbished Chamber and broadcast studios heralds the Commission's drive in ensuring that the Members of Parliament fulfill their role as people's representatives in line with Articles 1, 95 and 125 of the Constitution. It is our hope that you will find the Chamber and its modern ICT equipment and broadcasting facilities appropriate for your use and comfort.

Lastly but not least, we thank all those who have made this occasion a success; long life and success for the people of Kenya; long life for the President, the Prime Minister, the Tenth Parliament and long life for Adan Keynan.

Thank you so much.

Mr. Speaker: Order, hon. Members! I had two requests for intervention, but because of the occasion, I did not permit them. I had a request for intervention from hon. Rachael Shebesh and hon. William Kabogo, but the Vice-Chairman of the Commission had to have his day.

We will now do two things; first, I will kindly request His Excellency the President to accept his log in card from me.

*(His Excellency the President received his
Log in card from the Speaker)*

Hon. Members, we will then do the second thing: As I escort His Excellency the President to log in his card and have the Floor, I will invite all the Members to a State Luncheon, which is the only State Luncheon that is going to be hosted by the Tenth Parliament in honour of

His Excellency the President, and in the accompaniment of the Members of the Tenth Parliament and our invited guests. As we proceed for His Excellency the President to log in, all Members will remain seated. As he finishes, you will all be up standing, so that His Excellency the President can leave at his pleasure. You will remain standing, so that our spiritual leaders leave, and then the rest of us can follow. Your Excellency the President, we will proceed to your seat.

(His Excellency the President logged in)

DEPARTURE OF HIS EXCELLENCY THE PRESIDENT

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, you may now all be upstanding. His Excellency the President will leave.

*(Hon. Members rose in their places while
His Excellency the President left the Chamber)*

ADJOURNMENT

The House rose at 12.45 p.m.