



THE JUDICIARY

OFFICE OF THE CHIEF JUSTICE AND PRESIDENT
OF THE SUPREME COURT OF KENYA

HONOURABLE CHIEF JUSTICE'S KEYNOTE ADDRESS DURING THE WOMEN'S CONFERENCE AT THE KENYA SCHOOL OF GOVERNMENT - 7TH MARCH 2025

THEME: BRIDGING GENERATIONS: ADVANCING GENDER, HARNESSING INNOVATION

1. **Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen**, it is a great honor to stand before you at the close of what has been an inspiring, thought-provoking, and action-oriented Women's Conference. Over the past three days, we have gathered not just to speak, but to listen, learn, and collectively reimagine a Kenya where **gender equality**, **justice**, and **innovation** work hand in hand to create a fairer, more inclusive society.

2. Let me begin by thanking the Kenya School of Government, especially the **Director General, my dear friend, Prof. Nura Mohammed**, for convening this timely forum and for its unwavering commitment to gender equality and women's empowerment. This conference has brought together a remarkable cross-section of leaders — from policymakers to grassroots advocates, from young innovators to veteran champions — united by a shared purpose: to **bridge generations**, advance gender equality, and harness innovation for lasting impact.

3. Our theme — *Bridging Generations: Advancing Gender Equality, Harnessing Innovation* — speaks to the heart of the constitutional promise of **equity, inclusion, and justice for all**. It reminds us that the quest for gender equality is not isolated from the broader fight for **justice**, nor can it be detached from the transformative potential of

innovation. The future of women in Kenya is, at its core, a **justice issue**.

4. Justice is not confined to courtrooms and legal texts; it lives in the everyday experiences of women and girls — in the fairness of economic opportunities, in the safety of homes and public spaces, in access to education, and in the ability to participate fully in governance, innovation, and **leadership without fear or bias**.

5. This conference has provided an essential platform to review how far we have come and how much further we must go. It is a fact that despite **constitutional guarantees** and **global commitments**, women in Kenya still face profound barriers to **justice and equality**. Women make up only **23.3% of parliamentarians**, far below the constitutional two-thirds gender rule. Economic disparities remain glaring, and **gender-**

based violence — a **fundamental societal and justice failure** — continues to affect **nearly half of all women in Sub-Saharan Africa.**

6. Over the past days, we revisited the **Beijing Declaration +30**, a cornerstone in the global pursuit of gender equality, and reflected on Kenya's progress and persistent gaps. We heard from legal scholars, policymakers, business leaders, and technology experts who reminded us that **without justice, there can be no equality**, and without equality, there can be no **sustainable development.**

7. One clear message has emerged — **justice for women cannot be compartmentalized.** It is not just about resolving individual cases of discrimination or violence, but about addressing the **structural inequalities** that prevent women from accessing economic opportunities,

technology, leadership positions, and even **basic protections under the law.**

8. Throughout the conference, we were reminded that **gender-based violence is not a women's issue; it is a societal crime that reflects the failure of systems to protect the vulnerable.**

Justice means ensuring that **perpetrators are held accountable** and survivors have access to **holistic support services**, including legal representation, healthcare, and economic empowerment opportunities to rebuild their lives.

9. We also confronted the **digital divide**, which has emerged as a new frontier of exclusion and injustice. While innovation holds immense promise, **women and girls are significantly underrepresented in technology creation and governance.** Worse still, online spaces, which should offer **empowerment and expression**, are

too often arenas of **cyberbullying, harassment, and digital violence** targeted at women leaders, activists, and professionals.

10. We must treat **digital exclusion and online violence** as justice issues — because exclusion from technology is exclusion from **economic power, political influence, and civic participation**. Ensuring **safe, inclusive, and equitable digital spaces** is part of the broader justice agenda that guarantees women and girls their **full rights** in the modern world.

11. Another major theme of our deliberations has been the need to **bridge generations** — to create **intergenerational alliances** where **pioneering trailblazers, the bridge generation, and emerging young leaders** learn from and **lift each other**. The struggles for justice evolve with each

generation — but they are rooted in the same fight for dignity, equal opportunity, and respect.

12. Our younger generation, particularly women entering fields like law, business, technology, and politics, must not be left to **navigate these challenges alone**. Mentorship, solidarity, and **accessible justice systems** that recognize evolving forms of discrimination and exclusion are critical to accelerating progress. Justice is not just **a personal triumph**; it is the **collective inheritance** of every girl who dares to dream beyond imposed limits.

13. As Chief Justice, I am reminded daily that the Constitution of Kenya envisions a society based on **human dignity, equality, and social justice**. This conference has reinforced that **gender equality is not a side agenda** — it is a **constitutional demand** and a **moral obligation**

for every institution and citizen. The **justice sector**, from law enforcement to the courts, has a responsibility to **actively dismantle systemic barriers** to gender equality and ensure that the promise of **justice for all** becomes a lived reality for women and girls.

14. As we celebrate **International Women's Day tomorrow**, let us remember that **justice and gender equality are indivisible**. You cannot have one without the other. Every legal reform, every technological innovation, every leadership opportunity opened to a woman is a **building block in the edifice of justice** — a justice that does not merely **correct past wrongs**, but **prevents future injustices**.

15. Let this conference mark the **beginning of a new chapter**, where we not only measure our success by the **number of women in leadership**, but by

the **fairness of the systems** that allow women and girls to thrive. Where we judge technology not just by its sophistication, but by its **inclusiveness and safety**. And where **the true measure of progress** is how accessible **justice** is to the woman in the village, the girl in school, the entrepreneur in the market, the mother in prison and the innovator in the tech hub.

16. As we conclude, I urge all of us — from policymakers to civil society, from judges to innovators, and everyone committed to justice, equity and equality — to recognize that **gender equality is the work of justice**, and **justice is the foundation of a prosperous, inclusive Kenya**. Each of us has a role to play in ensuring that **the law protects, empowers, and uplifts every woman and girl** — not as a favor, but as **a right**.

17. Let us leave here not just with commitments, but with **action plans** that translate into **policies, partnerships, and programs** that outlive this conference. Let us promise that when we gather again, it will be to celebrate **milestones achieved**, not to lament **opportunities missed**.

18. Together, we can ensure that the spirit of **Beijing**, the promise of our **Constitution**, and the vision of this conference **become a lived reality** — where **justice and equality walk hand in hand**, and where no woman or girl is left behind.

19. Finally, I wish to take a special moment to **celebrate and express my heartfelt appreciation to the Beyond Zero Team**, whose vision, leadership, and unwavering commitment continue to transform lives across Kenya. Beyond Zero has become more than an initiative — it is a **beacon of hope and a symbol of what is possible when compassion, innovation, and action come**

together in the spirit of sisterhood and solidarity. Through your tireless efforts, you have not only advanced **maternal and child health**, but also elevated the voices and potential of **women and girls in every corner of our nation.**

20. I also extend my profound gratitude to **the Kenya School of Government, UN Women, development partners, civil society, and every individual and organization** whose dedication and collaborative spirit made this **conference and its rich programme** possible. This is the power of partnership — a collective force determined to break barriers, build bridges, and pave the way for a **future where every woman and girl has the opportunity to thrive.**

21. Thank you all, and may we move forward with **courage, urgency, and unwavering commitment** to justice and equality for all.

22. Happy International Women's Day, and may our collective action transform the future of every woman and girl in Kenya and beyond.

Thank you, and God bless you all!

**Hon. Justice Martha K. Koome, EGH,
Chief Justice and President of the Supreme Court
of Kenya**
