

REPUBLIC OF KENYA



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
COUNTY GOVERNMENT OF VIHIGA

**H.E. HON. DR. WILBER K. OTTICHILO'S SPEECH DURING THE OFFICIAL
OPENING OF THE 2ND VIHIGA COUNTY ASSEMBLY ON 19TH SEPTEMBER,
2017 AT VIHIGA COUNTY ASSEMBLY CHAMBERS**

**Hon. Speaker Madam Hasna Mbone Mudeizi,
Clerk of the county assembly Mr. Ombaka Kilinga,
Honourable members of the Vihiga County Assembly,
Prominent leaders of Vihiga County in attendance,
Vihiga County Stakeholders and Guests,
Ladies and gentlemen.**

Madam Speaker, Honourable members,

It is an honour to address the first seating of the Second Vihiga County Assembly today, as the second Governor for Vihiga County.

Before I go into details of my speech, I wish to congratulate the Speaker of this assembly, Honourable Hasna Mbone Mudeizi for your election as the 2nd Speaker of Vihiga County Assembly. It is indeed a fete of firsts for this county to elect its first lady speaker. It is my hope that you will guide this assembly in transacting its business diligently and expeditiously for the benefit of the people of Vihiga.

My resounding Congratulations to all the elected Members of the County Assembly from the 25 wards that form Vihiga County for your successful election as the representatives of the people.

Congratulations to 13 nominated MCAs for your nomination to the Vihiga county assembly to represent different interest groups.

To the people of Vihiga County, I say congratulations to you and I applaud you for conducting a very peaceful and successful election. I can indeed feel the resounding

echo of the Vihiga county people shown in the choice of the astute leaders present in this assembly.

Madam Speaker, Honourable members,

Vihiga County is yet to experience the full potential and fruits of devolution. It is incumbent of us to efficiently and expeditiously deliver devolution to our people by working together; the Executive and the Legislative arms of Vihiga County.

The main goal of devolution is to ensure equitable sharing of National resources to all people of Kenya. The promulgation of the Constitution of Kenya in 2010, was a key milestone moment that completely changed the way our Country is governed.

Devolution is enshrined in Chapter 11 of the Constitution of Kenya. It gives the constitutional authority for the formation of the 47 Counties of Kenya, whereby the National and County Governments are distinct but interdependent. The County Government Act of 2012 spells out in detail how County Governments should be governed.

The County Government has executive and legislative authority, including the accompanying mandate and power, to raise revenue, formulate policies and laws, planning and budgeting and governance. The Constitution of Kenya obliges the National Government to equitably support the County Governments by disbursing at least 15% of the annual national revenue to the Counties.

Madam Speaker, Honourable members,

Devolution was instituted in Kenya to ensure:

1. Equitable distribution of resources
2. Provision of governance and public service to the smallest units of the Counties (wards)
3. Timely and efficient delivery of public services e.g. healthcare, education and infrastructure
4. Public participations; allowing Kenyans to take charge of their development initiatives at the grassroot level through prioritizing of their needs

Madam Speaker, Honourable members,

My vision and dream as your Governor, is to learn from the mistakes and challenges of the previous County Government and transform Vihiga County to greater heights in terms of; Socio-Economic Development and Political Maturity; Promote Cohesion and Integration of the County for accelerated development; Promote the Principles of Chapter 6 of our constitution particularly as regards to Transparency and

Accountability; Enact Policies and Laws that will form pillars for the transformational process through public participation; Develop and Implement County Integrated Development Plan (CIDP); Monitor and Evaluate Development projects and programs; and be Accountable to the people of Vihiga County.

Madam Speaker, Honourable members,

The County Assembly is a very important arm of Vihiga County and its role is important and crucial in achieving my vision and dream. The three main roles of the legislature are: Representation; Legislation; and Oversight.

Representation entails ensuring that the rights and benefits of the people are upheld as enshrined in the constitution while **Legislation** entails the enacting of policies and laws that are used in the governance and development of the county as well as the budgeting and approval processes. The **Oversight** role of the members of the County Assembly mainly involves; ensuring that the governance and implementation of development activities by the executive adhere to the Constitution and Laws of Kenya as well as the policies and laws of the County Government. Therefore, I expect this assembly to deliver diligently on these mandates; particularly the budgeting and approval processes which are crucial for accelerated development of the County. Further, I expect this assembly to play a crucial role in overseeing the development activities and programs that will be implemented by my Administration in the next five years.

I wish to take this opportunity, to Advise the members of this assembly not to make the mistake of their predecessors of getting involved directly in the implementation of development programs in the county. However, it is in order for you to participate directly in formulation of development initiatives and activities at the ward level and ensure that you play the oversight role in their implementation.

Madam Speaker, Honourable members,

My development agenda as the Chief Executive of the County is covered in detail in my manifesto, which I prepared and used in my campaign and is readily available in both hard and soft copies. For the soft copy, you can access it on www.wilberottichilo.co.ke or www.vihiga.go.ke .

In this speech, I wish to briefly mention the main highlights of the manifesto and how I intend to implement the same in the short, medium and long-term periods.

Prior to implementation of the manifesto, there are a number of actions and activities that have to be addressed to form the basis or foundation for the implementation of the same. These activities include but are not limited to; **the promotion of cohesion and integration of the leadership and communities of Vihiga County; The formulation and implementation of good and transparent**

governance system for the County and The preparation of the County Integrated development plan (CIDP). I am happy to inform you that since my being sworn in as the Governor of Vihiga County on 21st August this year, I have embarked on the implementation of the aforementioned activities. During mid-August, this year in Mbale town I met all of you, the elected MCAs of Vihiga County, and we had a cordial and fruitful discussion on how we should cooperate and coordinate in the fast tracking of development in our County. We all agreed that although The Executive and Legislature of the County Government are distinct but interdependent, we should foster a good working and consultative environment to ensure that the requisite legislation and budgeting processes are not overly delayed in the County Assembly due to personal interests or external influence to ensure fast tracking of development in our County.

Madam Speaker, Honourable members,

During the first week of September, the party leader of ANC, H.E. Wycliffe Musalia Mudavadi, convened a meeting of Members of Parliament of both the Senate and National Assembly from Vihiga County; to discuss on how to work as a team and support the Governor; in implementing my development agenda for the County. The meeting reaffirmed its commitment to promote Cohesion and Integration of all communities residing in Vihiga County for accelerated development. Further, it was agreed that all development activities being undertaken in the County by various players including the County Government should be coordinated to avoid duplication of efforts and ensure value for money.

Madam Speaker, Honourable members,

Good governance system is essential for accelerated development. The pioneer Vihiga Government faced numerous governance challenges. The main challenges included but were not limited to the following; Lack of lean and well-thought out effective county governance structure; Lack of appropriate policies and laws to be used in the fast tracking of development; Less qualified and experienced human capacity; Poor public participation in development planning processes; Availability of County Integrated Development Plan (CIDP) that was not well thought out and was not prepared in a participatory manner; Lack of Coordinated budgeting process and implementation of projects; Poor Human, Financial and Procurement Management; and Lack of transparency and Accountability in most departments particularly in Finance and Treasury.

In particular, I am sorry to note that Corruption has been the main impediment to the development of our County. **My Government is committed to fight this vice without relenting or compromise. Anybody in my Government who will be found to condone this vice will be speedily punished according to the law.**

Madam Speaker, Honourable members,

Since my assumption of office, I have directed my energies to address these challenges. I have invited experts from the Directorate of Personnel Management in the Office of the President in Nairobi to come and undertake staff audit and job evaluation and help in the formulation of appropriate County Management Structure. This exercise is commencing this week and is expected to be concluded in one months' time. The outcome of the study will inform the formation of my Government which I expect to be Lean, Effective and Efficient. To improve service delivery by the senior staff of the County Government including County Executive Committee Members (CECM), Chief Officers and Directors, my Government will hire this staff on contract basis and put them on performance contracting terms.

We have further commenced on the preparation of County Integrated Development Plan (CIDP) which is expected to be completed early next month. The preparation of the plan is focussing on public participation and is informed by data and information.

To enhance public participation, my Government has established an online web-based portal that is available to everyone everywhere to contribute to this process by suggesting projects that have prospects of positive impact to the welfare of the people of Vihiga County. I invite you to use this important and innovative facility by logging onto www.countyprojects.or.ke . Further, I invite you to participate in the sessions that will be held in your respective wards by our staff from Planning and Budgeting Division. When completed and approved by this assembly hopefully by end of October, this plan will form the basis of development for the people of Vihiga County for the next five years.

Madam Speaker, Honourable members,

I am happy also to inform you that we have embarked on the preparation of the 2017/18 supplementary budget and 2018/19 budget. The supplementary budget is expected to be ready and tabled in this assembly one week from today. The focus of the supplementary budget is to reallocate financial resources from projects with less social impact to projects with higher and immediate social impact e.g. provision of drugs in our health facilities and water to our strategic institutions and communities. The 2018/19 budget will focus on the implementation of the 2017-2022 County Integrated Development Plan (CIDP).

We have also analysed the Ward Development Fund Bill and have made the necessary amendments. The bill will be presented to this assembly in the next two weeks. When enacted into law, the ward will become our smallest planning unit and this will devolve development activities to that level.

Madam Speaker, Honourable members,

As regards the endemic Corruption that has been reported in the County Government, I am happy to report that under the initiative of the Management of this Assembly, the Kenya National Audit Office (KENAO) was invited three weeks ago to come and investigate this matter. The office presented its preliminary report to me and the senior staff of the Government on 12th September, 2017 and they are expected to finalize the report in a weeks' time before they present it to the Auditor-General. On approval by the Auditor-General it will be presented to this assembly for discussion and decision. I am optimistic when this report is tabled in this assembly any time before the end of this year, you will discuss it in a sober and non-partisan manner and make recommendations that will be forwarded to my Government for implementation.

Madam Speaker, Honourable members,

Without innovative and transformative policies and laws, our county is not likely to fast track its Socio-Economic Development. Currently, there is serious acute unavailability of important Sectoral Policies and Laws that are a requisite by National laws to implement projects and programs in the respective sectors at County level.

My Government has embarked on the preparation of these policies and bills and we are hopeful that we shall soon be presenting a number of these documents in this assembly for legislation and approval. In particular, we shall soon be presenting to this assembly bills on Revenue collection and Ward Development Fund for your discussion and approval. These bills will require urgent attention because they are essential for improved collection of our local revenue and devolution of development at ward level. Equally, I expect you, members of this assembly, to come up with various motions and bills that will address various socio-economic challenges and issues that face our County now and in the near future.

Madam Speaker, Honourable members,

I now wish to present to you in a nutshell, my development agenda for Vihiga County for the next five years. My manifesto has details on various general and flagship projects that I have planned to implement during my tenure of leadership and if fully implemented, the socio-economic welfare of the people of Vihiga County will be greatly enhanced. Among the key sectors that I have planned to urgently address as a matter of priority are:

1. HEALTH

To rapidly and sustainably improve the health of the people of Vihiga County, my Government will invest more in public/community health work to ensure that the people live in a clean environment and adopt healthy living lifestyle. This will drastically reduce the number of people contracting both communicable and non-communicable diseases. In this regard, my government has created a fully-fledged Directorate within its structure that will address the issue of Public Health and Sanitation.

My Administration also recognizes the role played by the Community Health Volunteers (CHVs) in creating public awareness and offering advice on common diseases and healthy living as well as offering first aid services at community level. Therefore, we shall offer them the requisite medical kits and other equipment to enable them perform their duties effectively. Further, resources permitting, we plan to give them a monthly stipend.

As regards Medical Services, my Government has planned to improve the existing Healthcare facilities through renovation, expansion and provision of the necessary Medical Equipment and drugs for better delivery of services to the people. It should be noted that there are several dispensaries and Health centres that were started by the previous Government and were not completed. My Government will ensure that these facilities are completed and operationalized. Further, my Government has planned to procure an ambulance for each of the five sub-counties of Vihiga County as well as providing a telephone Toll-Free number for Emergencies. So far, my Administration has already signed an MOU with KEMSA for the supply of drugs to our health facilities. Further, my Administration will promote child immunization program.

The County Referral Hospital in Mbale is well known in the County for its poor provision of Medical Services. My Administration has planned to invest in this facility in order to transform it into a National Level 5 Hospital that offers Medical Services of National and International standard. This will entail the renovation of the infrastructure and purchase of requisite equipment and materials as well as having qualified medical and support staff. The previous County Government started the construction of a 260-patient bed capacity building that has since stalled at the foundation level. My Administration has planned to source funds and complete this very important project in the next two years. Further, the Funeral Home that has stalled will be completed and operationalized.

Medical capacity building is essential for the provision of Quality Medical Services. The Kenya Medical Training College (KMTC) that was started by the previous Government is facing a lot of challenges; mainly Lack of classes, Hostels and Social amenities. In a nutshell, the College lacks its own campus or home. My Administration and the Management of KMTC as well as Medical Stakeholders will soon find a permanent home for the College and initiate the construction of the requisite infrastructure.

Cancer, a disease that has a devastating impact on its victims and their families is increasingly becoming a major disease of concern in our county. Currently, there is very little awareness regarding this terrible disease. My Government has planned to create a sustained awareness campaign regarding the disease with the aim of people knowing their status on the same before it is too late for treatment.

Healthcare and treatment has become very expensive and unaffordable to many families and this has led to many people dying or having heavy medical bills which they are unable to settle. To address this problem, my Government in collaboration with NHIF will launch an aggressive campaign to convince people to take medical insurance.

To achieve the above, it is a legal requirement that requisite policies and laws must be enacted. Therefore, my Administration will engage the Healthcare stakeholders and Professionals to participate in the formulation and implementation of the same and present it to this County Assembly for Legislation and approval.

2. EDUCATION

Madam Speaker, Honourable members,

Education is the foundation of development in any society. Any society that does not embrace and promote the education of its people is bound not to develop. The most important resource that the people of Vihiga have is human resource and particularly the Youth.

Therefore, my Administration will target capacity building of the youth in various professional disciplines. In particular, we shall focus on Technical and Vocational Training in order to empower our youth to create their own jobs rather than seeking office employment. We shall therefore soon undertake a baseline survey of manpower requirement in our county and use the outcome of the survey to formulate a twenty-year Education Master Plan for the County which will be implemented through the preparation five-year Strategic Plans.

During the 2017/18 and 2018/19 County Budgets, my Administration will allocate more resources for the Renovation, Staffing and Equipping of the main Youth Polytechnics and Technical Training Institutes in the County. Further, we shall offer Bursaries to the student who will choose to join these institutions for training in different skills. On completion of their training, my Government will encourage them to form their own companies and offer them start-up funds through Empowerment Fund and contracts under the Affirmative Action in the award of Government Tenders.

To mainstream Technical and Vocational Training in the County, my Administration has created a fully-fledged Directorate of Technical and Vocational Training (TVET) within the Government structure to implement the above.

Madam Speaker, Honourable members,

Early Childhood Development Education (ECDE) is a devolved function and is very important and crucial as the foundation of the education learning process. The previous Government did not give the requisite priority to this important sector. My Administration therefore, decided to give the prominence ECDE merits by creating a fully-fledged Directorate for it within the Government structure. The main activities that are planned to be implemented by the directorate are; **Construction of a model ECDE centre in each Sub-County; Construction of ECDE classrooms in various Primary Schools; Equipping the ECDE classrooms; and hiring of qualified ECDE teachers.**

Apart from Technical and Vocational Training and ECDE, my Administration will also focus on the development and performance in our Primary and Secondary Schools. Specifically, we shall focus on Development of Infrastructure, Provision of Bursaries for those in Secondary Schools and Tertiary Institutions and promotion of ICT as a main platform for learning.

Many schools have a serious problem of shortage of teachers. In collaboration with the Ministry of Education, we shall work out the modalities on how to hire teachers in schools that have acute shortage of teachers. Further, **to encourage Creativity and Innovation, my Administration will support and promote the teaching of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) in our Institutions.**

3. AGRICULTURE AND FOOD SECURITY

Madam Speaker, Honourable members,

Subsistence Agriculture is the main economic activity of the people of Vihiga County. Therefore, to make Agriculture a profitable venture particularly for the youth, there is an urgent need to introduce Agribusiness in our Agricultural production system. This is possible because Vihiga County has suitable climate; many permanent rivers; relatively fertile soils; generally good road network; densely populated and is strategically located. For example, it only takes a maximum of about 30 minutes from anywhere in Vihiga County to Kisumu International Airport.

My Administration has therefore planned to support and promote Dairy farming; Poultry farming, Bee-keeping, Aquaculture (Fish Farming) and Vegetable farming as well as Value Addition through Agro-processing. To offer support to the farmers, Agricultural Extension Services will be enhanced, respective contact farmers and demonstration farms established. Further, due to climate change impact on Agricultural production, efforts will be made to come up with adaptation and mitigation measures to alleviate the impact of climate change. In this regard, Smart Agriculture practices will be introduced and small scale to medium scale irrigation programs and practices will be promoted by my Government.

To address the issue of Food Security, my Administration will provide subsidized agricultural inputs to identified needy farmers early enough before the commencement of the planting season. The Cereals Board Stores in Chavakali will be rehabilitated, renovated and used for storing Agricultural inputs and Strategic Grain Reserves.

To promote Agribusiness in the County, Cooperative Movement which is the engine of development in the Agricultural sector, will be enhanced. In this regard, my Administration has created a fully-fledged Cooperative Directorate in the Government structure. The Directorate will be responsible for building capacity for various Cooperative Societies in the County since many Cooperatives have failed or collapsed due to poor leadership and management.

Cooperative Saccos will be legible to access to soft loans offered under the County Empowerment Fund and other Funds. To access County Empowerment Fund, beneficiaries will be expected to be members of Saccos registered by the Directorate. Efforts will also be made to introduce online internet Sacco to for those members who do not belong to traditional Saccos.

A number of important policies and bills will be prepared and submitted to this assembly for approval. This will include the policies and bills on Food Security, Nutrition, Agribusiness, Micro-Finance and Cooperatives.

4. WATER

Madam Speaker, Honourable members,

Our county is endowed with many rivers and streams as well as underground water. However, most of the populace in the County have no access to clean water since most of the traditional water sources have been destroyed and polluted. Most of the diseases affecting the people of Vihiga County are water borne diseases. If our people had access to clean water, then more than 50% of the diseases that afflict them e.g. malaria, cholera and typhoid cases would be considerably reduced saving millions of shillings that would have been used to treat them.

Therefore, my Administration has planned to provide clean water to most residents of Vihiga County in the next five years. Our main focus will be to complete and operationalize stalled water projects; Sink water boreholes in various communities; Protect traditional water springs and Support roof water harvesting and storage. This will be undertaken in collaboration with various development partners.

My Administration in collaboration with the Lake Victoria North Water Service Board will ensure that the Kshs. 1.3 Billion Belgium water project for Vihiga County is successfully implemented. Already the implementation of the project has commenced and is expected to greatly improve the provision of water from Kaimosi, Lunyerere and Maseno Water Supplies.

5. INFRASTRUCTURE

Madam Speaker, Honourable members,

Good **Roads** are necessary for the development of any community.

Vihiga County has fairly good motorable roads during the dry season but are impassable during the rainy season. My Government will take an inventory of all important roads in the County and their status and come up with a Master Plan on their rehabilitation and maintenance on a long-term basis.

Important economic roads that cut across the county will be identified for tarmacking. For example; **Luanda-Magada-Mbale road** and **Majengo-Hamisi-Shamakhokho road** among others.

Also, my Government will ensure that the road networks in our important towns and markets are tarmacked in collaboration with KURRA. In this regard, we have already agreed that the contractors of Kisumu-Kakamega Highway will tarmac certain roads in Gambogi, Majengo, Mbale and Chavakali markets as well as providing for street lighting. Further, **we shall soon formulate a road maintenance strategy to ensure that our roads are not frequently destroyed during rainy seasons.**

To enhance 24-hour business activities in our towns and markets, my Government has partnered with the Chinese Overseas Construction Company (COVEC) to install street lighting in Gambogi, Majengo, Mbale and Chavakali.

Madam Speaker, Honourable members,

My Government will formulate **Transport** policy that will be used to enact transport law that is crucial for the management of transport activities in the County.

My Government will work with the stakeholders in the transport industry to formulate transport laws and regulations that will be enforced both by the County Government and the industry. Further, my administration will endeavour in consultation with the stakeholders to build Bodaboda and Matatu stages and Bus Parks in most of our main markets and towns.

Madam Speaker, Honourable members,

Most of Vihiga is covered by GSM network. However, there are certain few areas in valleys and hilly parts of the County e.g. Musunguti and Buhani where there is no network. My Administration will liaise with the various network providers, in an effort to build up the County's **Communication** infrastructure, to provide this service to those areas.

My Administration has already realigned and redesigned the official Vihiga County Website (www.vihiga.go.ke), established and launched the new County Integrated Development Plan (CIDP) web based Online Portal to enhance Public Participation (www.countyprojects.or.ke). These Websites provide current and updated information of the on-going and proposed development activities in the County. They also provide a platform for the residents of Vihiga and the general public to raise their concerns and proposals on various Economic, Social and Political issues.

To support these communication platforms, my Government has already set up its official Social Media platforms for regular updates and engagement with the public.

Facebook:

- H.E. Dr. Wilber Ottichilo – Governor Vihiga County Page
- County Government of Vihiga Page

Twitter:

- H.E. Dr. Wilber Ottichilo (@GovernorVihiga)
- Vihiga County Government (@VihigaCountyGov)

Information Communication Technology (ICT)

My government will develop and establish ICT as a platform for the county development agenda. We shall introduce faster internet connectivity through upgrading of our facilities to fibre optic connection. All the county business transactions and activities will be ICT based and supported. All ward and sub-county offices will be connected to the county headquarter for ease of communication through the internet.

6. TRADE, INDUSTRY AND COMMERCE

Madam Speaker, Honourable members,

Trade, Industry and Commerce is the backbone of wealth and job creation in any community. Our County currently does not have big businesses except it is dominated mainly by small scale traders and consequently our County is unable to raise its own Revenue for Development. It only depends on its allocated remissions from Treasury for recurrent and development costs.

The only industry in the County is the Mudete Tea Factory which unfortunately is not performing well and urgently needs to restructure its mode of operation in order to directly benefit the farmers. Therefore, there is an urgent need to explore the possibilities of establishing small to medium scale industries that can create jobs and wealth for our Youth who are currently unemployed.

The main potential opportunities are available in Agribusiness, Chain store supermarkets, Hides and skin processing, cottage industry and Granite stone

processing. Therefore, my Government in collaboration with the Chamber of Commerce and other stakeholders, will organize early next year an Investment Forum where investment opportunities in the County will be presented to prospective investors. We shall also soon undertake an inventory of trade and commerce businesses within Vihiga County with an aim of using the information to improve our revenue collection.

To promote local trade and commerce, my Administration will amend the Empowerment Fund Act and come up with respective regulations to enhance ease access to soft loans by the business community especially the Youth and Women.

7. ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES

Madam Speaker, Honourable members,

Matters of the Environment are of very great concern to me because clean and healthy environment forms the basis of life on this planet. The environment in our Country is greatly degraded due to the destruction of our natural forests and pollution menace. The environment in our County is equally highly degraded, particularly Forests, Wetlands and Riverine (riparian) areas. Soil erosion is equally rampant in our County leading to pollution and siltation of our rivers and streams.

To address these environmental problems in our County, my Government in collaboration with other key stakeholders will initiate Programs for the rehabilitation and restoration of these degraded areas.

Bamboo is used worldwide for the restoration of degraded areas and also for commercial production of various products like furniture, paper, building and fencing poles and general interior design. Therefore, my Government will promote the growing of bamboo in the County because of its environmental and industrial potential.

To create awareness on the importance of the environment in our lives, we shall establish a long-term education and awareness programs targeting mainly the youth. Further, I will involve all the people in the County in keeping their environment clean as per Article 42 of our Constitution by preparing a Policy on Environment which among other issues will set aside a day every Month where everybody will be involved in cleaning of their environment. Equally, we shall come up with regular Mass Cleaning Programs for our markets and towns.

Waste management in our markets and towns is a major challenge in our county. **Therefore, there is an urgent need to come up with waste management policy and law and to identify safe dumpsites and new technologies of dealing with solid waste.** My Government will work in collaboration with the National Environmental Management Authority (NEMA) to address these challenges.

Natural Resources

Our County is rich with granite stones, particularly in Hamisi and Bunyore areas. These stones can be used to produce many products including road and house construction materials. Currently these stones remain unexploited and are in fact viewed as impediment to agriculture. In collaboration with the Ministry of Mining, my Government will explore the possibility of establishing an environmentally friendly stone crushing and polishing factory in the county to process the stones into different finished products for use in construction and interior decor.

Vihiga County is also rich with sand in river valleys. My Government will set up and enact sustainable environmental policies and regulations which when enacted into law will ensure that sand and marrum is sustainably harvested and used without leaving behind environmental hazards like huge and dangerous quarries and drying of rivers and springs.

It is worth noting that, Gold is found in various areas in our County, particularly in river valleys and areas bordering Kaimosi Forest. In collaboration with the Ministry of Mining, gold mining will be organized and regularized, artisanal miners will be organized in groups in order to acquire mining equipment and favourable markets for their gold. Safety measures will also be introduced and enforced in the industry.

Brick making is also widely practiced in the County. However, this activity has led to the serious environmental degradation in the areas where it's practiced. Therefore, my Administration will introduce regulations and technologies that will make this industry sustainable and initiate rehabilitation programs for the degraded areas.

8. YOUTH, CULTURE, TOURISM AND SOCIAL SERVICES

Madam Speaker, Honourable members,

Vihiga County has a population of about 604,000 of which 60% are **Youth**. Most of this youth are unemployed and lack lifelong skills. Those who have certificates and degrees continue to desperately look for white collar jobs which are not forthcoming.

My Government plans to change this state of affairs of our youth seeking employment. Instead my Government plans to empower them to create jobs for themselves and their colleagues. In this regard, my Administration will focus on Technical and Vocational Training so that the graduates from our Youth Polytechnics and Technical Institutes can be self-employed through the help of my Government.

My Government will establish an Empowerment Fund to provide soft loans for those youth who upon completion of Technical Training will wish to establish companies. The companies will be given top priority under the 30% Public Tender Affirmative Action by my Government to County contracts.

My Administration will further create Incentives for the Youth to get involved in Entrepreneurship activities – particularly Agribusiness, ICT and Transport. Also, youth mentorship programs will be conducted on regular basis.

Lastly, the problem of drug and substance abuse is rampant in our County and is impacting negatively to the lives of the Youth. My Administration in collaboration with the National Government and NACADA will put in place a strategy to address this problem. In particular, my Administration will mount aggressive awareness programs targeting the youth to educate them on the dangers of alcohol and drug abuse on their lives. Further, my Administration in collaboration with NACADA will endeavour to establish a County Alcohol and Drug Rehabilitation Centre to address the vice.

Gambling is increasingly becoming an addictive occupation of most of our youth and it is having a devastating impact on their mind-sets regarding work. Most of them think there is no need to work if you can make easy money. To address this challenge, my Government will not allow set up of any gambling establishment within Vihiga County and will launch aggressive campaign to discourage people from gambling.

Madam Speaker, Honourable members,

Vihiga County has rich **Culture** as a result of the diverse communities that reside in it i.e. The Maragoli, Tiriki, Banyore, Terik and Luo cultures. These cultures can be used to Promote Cohesion and Integration in the County as well as promote the County Tourism Sector. My Government will therefore, establish a fully-fledged Cultural Department to promote culture and heritage in the County and especially the organization of cultural festivals at Sub-county levels in the course of every year and at the end of the year. Between 24th-27th December of every year, we shall have Vihiga Cultural Festival, which will form part of tourism promotion in Vihiga County. We also plan to construct Cultural Centres in every Sub-county and the main one at the County headquarters in Mbale.

Further, in the course of my tenure as your Governor, I intend to build a cultural museum in Vihiga County at Mbale that will showcase to the people of Vihiga County and our visitors the rich historical culture of our people and their historical artefacts. For example; the unique circumcision rites of the Tiriki community, The rain-making prowess of the Abasiekwe in Bunyore, the Maragoli culture and the unique cultural beliefs of the Terik community.

Madam Speaker, Honourable members,

Vihiga County has a lot of potential to gain from domestic and international **Tourism**, particularly Cultural and Eco-tourism. My government will promote tourism in the County through invitation and attraction of investors to build hotels and eco-lodges

in the County. We shall particularly promote cultural tourism through Vihiga annual cultural festival and through National marketing of our tourism attraction.

Further, my Administration will explore the feasibility of establishing a large amphitheatre for use for various activities e.g. conferences, meetings, weddings, music festivals, performance arts etc. Lastly, we plan to rehabilitate roads and sites of tourism interest in the county e.g. the Maragoli hills, Mungoma caves

Social Services are essential for the common good of the people of the County and for development and nurturing of diverse talents. Among the social services that any Government needs to provide to its general populace are; Social halls, Theatres, Resource centres, Stadia, Rehabilitation and Rescue centres, Public Libraries, Public Parks and Gardens, Cemeteries etc.

To develop these social facilities, my Government will establish a fully-fledged Directorate to plan, implement and manage their development and operation. Among the facilities that would be accorded priority are:

- Construction of County stadium of National standard,
- One stadium in each Sub-county,
- Talent development centre to promote music, Sports and athletics,
- Construction of a County Rehabilitation and Rescue centre.

In particular, my Government will promote Sports (athletics, soccer, volleyball, basketball, rugby etc.) where tournaments will commence at the ward level and culminate at the county level on annual basis. Further, my Government will prepare and implement Sports Policy.

Madam Speaker, Honourable members,

My Government will not overlook the elderly in our society. My Government will establish a program to provide National Hospital Insurance for the needy elderly of over 65 years.

My Government will also mainstream the needs of **People with Disability** in all sectors of the County economy as spelled out in our constitution. It will further establish facilities in our learning and social institutions to create an enabling environment for their effective participation.

Further, my Administration will accord them Affirmative Action when it comes to employment and access to opportunities.

Madam Speaker, Honourable members,

Gender principles are comprehensively covered in our Constitution and it is mandatory that both the National and County Governments must implement them to

the letter. Therefore, my Government will work in collaboration with National and Non-Governmental Institutions that deal with gender issues to ensure that gender principles are implemented by my Government.

Sexual Violence is a serious offence and efforts must be made by all of us to discourage it and have those involved apprehended and punished according to the law. My Government will put in place a program to create awareness on the seriousness of the offence and punitive punishment that will be minted on people who will be found guilty of the offence. Further, the Government will establish a rescue centre where the victims of the offence will be guided and counselled.

9. LAND AND PHYSICAL PLANNING

Madam Speaker, Honourable members,

Land is the resource on which all development initiatives take place. It is therefore important for our County to acquire land and reserve it for future use for public facilities. According to the Constitution, the County Governments are custodians of public lands within their jurisdiction. The unfortunate thing in our County is that public lands have not been properly surveyed and titled. As a consequence, most of the public lands including wetlands and riverine areas have been grabbed. Therefore, there is an urgent need to reclaim these lands through surveying and titling. I have established a fully-fledged Directorate for Lands and Physical Planning to undertake this task. Because land matters are very emotive, for this exercise to succeed, I shall need full cooperation and support from the elected leadership of Vihiga County.

The Cities and Towns Act of 2012 requires that our towns have physical plans and those with certain threshold population are managed independently by town management committees. The County Government Act of 2012 also makes it mandatory for County Governments to regularly prepare spatial development plans for their Counties. Currently, there are no physical and spatial plans for our cities and towns as well as the county in general. Therefore, my Government plans to embark on the preparation of these plans as soon as possible. Once completed they will be tabled in this assembly for approval and eventual implementation. To fast track the preparation of these plans, my Government will establish a spatial planning unit within the directorate with full Geographical Information System (GIS) capacity and capability.

Further, to enhance revenue collection from land rates, development plan approvals and other properties, we urgently need to prepare a Land and Property Register Roll and respective Revenue Collection Rates and Regulations that should be presented and approved by this assembly. Therefore, my Government will embark on this very important task as soon as possible.

10. REVENUE COLLECTION

Madam Speaker, Honourable members,

Efficient and effective revenue collection in our County is a must if we have to fast track our development agenda. In the last five years of County Government, our county has performed dismally in revenue collection. Instead of increase in revenue collection, the revenue collection has continued to decline since 2013 to date. For example; the former Vihiga Municipal council in 2011/12 collected Kshs 377 million, while in 2016/17 the Vihiga county government collected only Kshs 98 million and on average for the four years it has been collecting about Kshs 112 million. It is clear from these figures that the former county government failed in revenue collection and as a consequence the county has lost for the said period annually about 2% of the total revenue allocated to counties by the Revenue Allocation Commission for good fiscal management and revenue collection. This amounts to hundreds of millions of shillings.

To address this problem, my government is placing a high premium on the collection of local revenue which is necessary for funding of the development initiatives in the county. To improve the collection of revenue, my government will establish a revenue collection unit domiciled in the department of Finance and Treasury and prepare the requisite policies and laws. Further, it will consider the possibility of outsourcing this activity to entities like KRA, Chamber of commerce and other Private Revenue collection entities through negotiated agreements.

11. COUNTY BUILDINGS

Madam Speaker, Honourable members,

Currently, the county government as a whole has serious inadequate office space at the county headquarters, sub-county and ward levels. Also, the county has no house for the Governor and consequently your current Governor is a squatter. Therefore, it is prudent that urgent action is taken to fast track the construction of the house for the Governor which should act as a symbol of County Unity, Governance and Pride.

Further, my administration is committed to budget and construct offices at sub-county and ward levels as part of the devolution of county government. This will stop the need for people to travel from wards to the county headquarters to seek services that they could easily access at the ward level.

12. COUNTY DISASTER MANAGEMENT PLAN

Madam Speaker, Honourable members,

Disasters are inevitable. They occur when least expected. My government will therefore formulate and implement county disaster management policy and plan.

Among the disasters to be considered are; fire, fatal accidents, landslides and disease outbreaks e.g. cholera etc. My government will procure firefighting engines and emergency vehicles and equipment which will operate on a 24/7 basis.

13. SECURITY

Although security is the responsibility of the national government, it impacts directly on the activities of the county government. Therefore, my administration will work in collaboration with the national government to ensure that insecurity in our county is minimized. In particular we shall work together in the areas of community policing and Nyumba Kumi. We shall also provide a toll-free telephone number for reporting of emergencies and security incidences.

14. GRANTS

The resources for the development of the county will remain limiting. Therefore, my administration through public-private partnerships and donor agencies will identify projects that could be funded externally. This will be achieved through project proposal writing and soliciting for prospective donors of the same. Also, my administration will work in collaboration with the national government in accessing to such grants.

15. COUNTY VALUES

Madam Speaker, Honourable members,

All of us are created to differentiate between good and bad values. However, most people choose to ignore good values and instead promote bad values. This has led to the challenges that we face as a nation and as a county. **These challenges include but are not limited to; dishonesty, corruption, violence, theft, tribalism, clannism, nepotism, greed, handout culture etc.**

As a county, I strongly feel that we should address this matter and come out with a policy on county values and how they should be promoted by all the people of Vihiga County. Specifically, a training program should be continuously implemented starting from ECDE to our tertiary institutions as well as the general populace on the importance of County and personal values in our lives. Also, the county should through this assembly approve county values and have these values published and displayed in all our educational institutions, public places, county government offices, health facilities and displayed in strategic areas within Vihiga County.

CONCLUSION

Madam Speaker, Honourable members,

What I have outlined today in my speech requires a lot of commitment and dedication to be realized or achieved. What is required most is the cooperation and the support of this assembly, the Vihiga elected leaders and the people of Vihiga in general. On my part, I am deeply committed to achieve what I have stated in this speech if I am accorded the necessary support and the enabling environment. I must state it here today that, my government will need to take drastic steps to address the current challenges facing Vihiga County Government:

- Bloated staff
- Corruption
- Pending bills
- Poor governance system
- Wage bill
- The culture of handouts
- The perception that the County Government is a “CashCow” and the Main source of employment
- The mind-set among the youth, parents and general community that formal employment is the ONLY way to go and that those who go for Technical and Vocational training are deemed as Failures

Therefore, for me and my Government to succeed and bring the urgent transformation the people of Vihiga are yearning for, this assembly must give me unequivocal support particularly as it will relate to the approving of policies and bills that I will submit to this assembly to address the above stated challenges. Further, I will require the support of this assembly in approving my annual budgets and programs to implement my development agenda.

Lastly but not least, I wish to appeal to the members of this assembly to put the development aspirations and dreams of the people of Vihiga first rather than your individual ambitions and political affiliations. This will allow us to focus on the development agenda of the people of Vihiga County who had the faith and confidence in us by electing us as their leaders during the August 2017 General Elections.

Madam Speaker, Honourable members,

The new dawn for Vihiga County begins now. Let us deliver on our promises to the people of Vihiga. It is now my singular privilege and honour to declare the official commencement of the second Vihiga county assembly.

God Bless you all.

God Bless this great County of Vihiga.

God Bless Kenya.

Thank you.