

**SPEECH BY H.E. THE GOVERNOR, HON. JOHN OBIERO NYAGARAMA ON
THE OCCASION OF THE DEVOLUTION COUNTY DIALOGUES TO BE HELD
ON MARCH 31, 2015**

Mr Speaker

Deputy Governor

The Senator

Honourable Members of Nyamira County Assembly

Distinguished Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

Before we start the function, please let us first acknowledge the supremacy of the Almighty God of all creation; the Lord took care of us when undertaking our individual pursuits, and He has allowed us to congregate here this morning. I have faith that the Lord will continue to guide us in our concerted efforts to lay a firm foundation for our beloved County.

Ladies and Gentlemen;

It gives me a great pleasure to be with you this morning to preside over the inauguration of Nyamira County Devolution Dialogue.

Today's County Dialogue is a build up to the Second Annual Devolution Conference slated for Kisumu this month. The conference will bring together key players in the devolved fraternity to reflect on the status of devolution, nationwide.

Most importantly, the Kisumu meeting will take stock of the challenges Counties have experienced since 2013 and reflect on how to harness the promise of Devolved Governance in Kenya. Today's event, therefore, serves as a curtain raiser to the Kisumu conference following a recommendation from the Council of Governors that a raft of County preliminary dialogues precede the final forum.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

The onset of devolution posed enormous challenges to newly formed County Governments due to a variety of structural, administrative, and policy challenges including political and legislative concerns. Despite these teething problems, the good news is that the people of Kenya have firmly embraced the concept of Devolved Government.

In this regard, County dialogues will provide us with an opportunity to compare and contrast our varied experiences with devolution. Finally, fresh ideas may emerge on how to perfect the system even further for the benefit of all.

We all agree that Counties are responsible for the provision of core services such as health, water, a clean environment, road infrastructure, and others. I am of the belief that delivery of these essential services demands collaboration between the County leadership and the people in an effort to establish and sustain a healthy revenue base through continued investment in economic development activities.

I also hold the view that the institution of County Government is an excellent idea that has enabled the people of this great nation to make everyday decisions on matters that concern them most. The decision to adopt devolution as a philosophy of government is arguably the most revolutionary measure ever taken by the State since Kenya attained her independence in 1963.

Curiously, while providing us with an opportunity to make our own decisions as a County, at the same time devolution poses an unusual challenge to us all. The system expects County Governments to begin charting their own path of socio-economic development independent of sister counties and the National Government.

Since no two Counties are the same, economic conditions and opportunities vary dramatically across Counties hence the need for each county to define her own path the best way we know how.

Ladies and Gentlemen;

In Nyamira, there is always some element of constructive dialogue going on between the Executive, the Assembly, and the people. I want to thank you, Mr Speaker and Honourable Members of the County Assembly for executing your legislative mandate with utmost diligence and commitment. Similarly, your readiness to engage My Government in constructive consultations from time to time has enabled us all to accomplish many tasks for the people of Nyamira.

Ladies and Gentlemen

I wish to take this opportunity to expound on some of the many schemes My Government has embarked on primarily to ensure focused County involvement, speedy response to emerging challenges, and adopting solutions that deliver even development across County wards.

Firstly, agriculture remains the bedrock of the Nyamira economy contributing 90% of the County Gross Domestic Product. Therefore, performance of the agricultural sector has a major influence on the incomes of most of our County residents a majority of whom depend entirely on the sector for food and employment.

In appreciation of the importance of agriculture, My Government has a fully focused agribusiness agenda calculated to catapult the socio-economic development of the County. For instance, My Government has initiated a calf-

rearing project geared towards achieving a thriving and sustainable dairy industry for socio-economic transformation of the County of Nyamira.

Initiating income generating projects such as the dairy industry requires continuous monitoring and provision of expertise and material support. From the onset, My Government was well aware that jump-starting such a massive dairy programme demands continuous investment, monitoring, and field extension service

For example, the County Government was compelled to launch subsidized Artificial Insemination Services, in which we synchronized and inseminated over 7,000 dairy cattle. In this financial year, the County plans to inseminate 12,000 and vaccinate 30,000 cows. It is critical to note that activities such as this one that seek to transform the people's lives do not often make news headlines or capture the attention of our severest of critics.

Although most of the educational docket remains with the National Government, the performance of Nyamira County schools in 2014 KCSE examination did us proud. Furthermore, none of our Nyamira schools suffered the humiliation of being branded examination cheats.

On behalf of people of Nyamira and myself as County Governor, I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate school principals, teachers, and education quality control officers for this exemplary performance, and to request them to redouble their efforts to achieve even better results this year. I also have information that Nyamira students schooling in neighbouring Counties performed extremely well in the same examinations.

With regard to Health, My Government has purchased and distributed medicine and other supplies to all public health facilities in the County, initiated an integrated automation system in Nyamira County Hospital leading to the doubling of revenue collection.

In addition, Nyamira procured 5 ambulances, an assortment of medical equipment, and 3 X-ray machines. For some time now, various renovation works of the County and Sub-County Hospitals as well as the 48 dispensaries has been going on. The purpose of undertaking these crucial works is partly to prepare Nyamira Hospital for eventual upgrading to full referral status.

In order to ensure efficient and effective service delivery in our County Hospitals, My Government appointed eight new boards in November last year to offer oversight and ensure accountability in the management and utilization of allocated resources. Indeed, the expectation of the County Government is that the hospital boards will provide strategic leadership and guarantee compliance with Government directives in health matters.

In the water sector, the County Government has initiated 46 small and medium sized water supply projects throughout the county. The objective of this scheme is to avail potable water to over 50,000 Nyamira residents as well as market centres, learning, and health institutions within the locale.

Thanks to the Governments of German and the Netherland's, both Nyamira and Keroka township water supplies are undergoing major rehabilitation works to boost water supply to consumers.

Our County has realized major accomplishments in the past one year in the areas of Trade, Tourism, Cooperative, and Industrial Development. Among these achievements is the revival of pyrethrum cooperative societies, training of cooperative management committees, and establishment of 7 new SACCOs.

My Government has also issued Ksh 2 million loans to 90 traders through the Joint Loans Fund facility, conducted a benchmarking venture at both Kisumu and Nairobi for our Jua Kali traders, and set aside Ksh 6m for erection of Boda Boda sheds in each Sub-county. Finally, we have mapped 9 new tourism sites in Nyamira County, constructed market stalls in Gachuba, renovated Nyabite and Keroka market stalls, and fenced off Miruka market.

In October last year, My Government announced that all senior public servants in Nyamira County had signed performance contracts as a demonstration of being always accountable, productive, transparent, and focused. In other words, performance contracting will improve work performance and ensure delivery of quality and timely services to the people.

To conclude my remarks, I would like reiterate the importance of dialogues such as this one to assess the overall gains achieved under devolution. The Constitutional and statutory provisions establishing county governments is not carved in stone.

Devolved government is certainly a good concept of government that allows us to make critical decisions on matters of great concern to our families and relatives such as health, environment, and others. Nevertheless, after a conversation like this one, we are likely to identify existing gaps that require attention in order to perfect the system.

For instance, I am convinced that governors ought to play a central role in dealing with matters relating to security within counties currently reserved for the National Government. I trust that this is one of the many recommendations that a forum such as this should generate in an attempt to improve devolved government.

In conclusion, I want to take this opportunity to thank you all for your active participation in this tripartite forum involving the people, County Assembly,

and Government. In a way, we have held similar conversations in public forums held in the recent past.

THANK YOU AND MAY GOD BLESS YOU.