

# THARAKA NITHI COUNTY ASSEMBLY

## THE HANSARD

### Third Assembly-First Session

*(Special sitting of the County Assembly Convened Vide Kenya Gazette Notice No. 17151 of 2023 by the Hon. Speaker)*

**19<sup>th</sup> December 2023**

*The County Assembly met at the  
County Assembly chambers in Kathwana at 11.30 a.m.  
[The Speaker (Hon. J. Mbabu) in the Chair]*

## ARRIVAL OF HIS EXCELLENCY THE GOVERNOR

*(His Excellency the Governor (Hon.) Muthomi Njuki escorted by the Speaker of the County Assembly (Hon. John Mbabu) entered the Chamber at half past eleven accompanied by the Mace of the House)*

*(His Excellency the Governor took the Chair of the County)*

*(The Mace was placed on the Table)*

## PRAYERS

**Hon. Speaker:** Honourable members please be seated. Next order.

## CONVOCATION

CONVENING OF THE SITTING OF THE COUNTY ASSEMBLY FOR THE  
GUBERNATORIAL ADDRESS PURSUANT SECTION 30(2)(K)  
OF THE COUNTY GOVERNMENT ACT 2012

**Hon. Speaker:** Your Excellency, honourable Muthomi Njuki the Governor of Tharaka Nithi County, honourable Members, as you are aware Section 30(2)(k) of the County Government Act 2012 provides that the County Governor shall among others deliver annual State of the County Address containing such matters as may be specified in County legislation.

Further, the Tharaka Nithi County Assembly Standing Order 31(1) provides that the Governor shall address a special sitting of the Assembly once every year and may address the Assembly at any other time.

In this regard, honourable Members, by way of a letter to the County Assembly referenced Ref: TNC/CS/CONF./2023/25 dated 16<sup>th</sup> November, 2023, the desire of H.E The Governor to address the County Assembly today, 19<sup>th</sup> December, 2023 was conveyed.

Consequently, pursuant to the provisions of Standing Order 40 of the County Assembly of Tharaka Nithi Standing Orders I gave notice of this Special sitting to the honourable Members by Gazette notice No. 17151 in the Kenya Gazette on Friday 15<sup>th</sup> December, 2023.

I therefore wish to declare that this sitting is properly convened.

Your Excellency, it is the custom of the Assembly to recognize guests seated at the Speaker's gallery. I therefore wish to accord special recognition to the distinguished guests seated at the Speakers gallery in this order:

1. H.E. the Deputy Governor Hon. Nyaga Muisraeli Nderebia
2. The County Secretary
3. The CEC members
4. The DCC IgambaNg'ombe Sub-County.
5. The County Chief Officers
6. Magdalene Njeru- Former CECM Health.

The guests are all welcome to the Assembly during this momentous occasion of the address by His Excellency the Governor of the County of Tharaka Nithi.

Honourable Members, pursuant to the provisions of Standing Order 33(3) His Excellency the Governor shall be heard in silence and the address shall not be followed by any comment or question.

Honourable Members of the County Assembly, invited guests, ladies and gentlemen it is now my singular honour and privilege to invite His Excellency the Governor of Tharaka Nithi County to address the Assembly.

I thank you. Welcome His Excellency.

## **GUBERNATORIAL ADDRESS**

### EXPOSITION OF COUNTY POLICY

**His Excellency the Governor** (Hon. Muthomi Njuki): Thank you Mr. Speaker. His Excellency the Deputy Governor of Tharaka Nithi, The Speaker of the County Assembly of Tharaka Nithi, The Deputy Speaker of the County of Tharaka Nithi, Majority Leader in absentia, Deputy Majority Leader, Chief Whip, Deputy Chief Whip, Members of the County

Assembly, The Clerk of the County Assembly of Tharaka Nithi, Members of the Executive, Chief officers present, the National Administration representatives, the County Attorney, The County Secretary, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen:

Mr. Speaker, distinguished guests, Members of the County Assembly, esteemed citizens of this County who are listening to us today, I stand before you today with a profound sense of responsibility to deliver the State of the County Address in accordance with the County Government Act 2012, Section 30(2)(k). We gather on this auspicious occasion to reflect on the progress, challenges, and aspirations of Tharaka Nithi County as one.

Over the past seven years, our County's economic growth has been remarkable, growing by 257%, from KSHS. 30 billion in 2016 to KSHS. 77 billion in 2022, as measured by the Gross County Product (GCP). This substantial growth underscores our County's untapped potential to make a more significant contribution to the National GDP. Presently, our county accounts for 0.6% of the overall GDP of Kenya. Which is not a surprise because we are a small county with a small population but with a very high potential.

Mr. Speaker, in my first term, guided by the CIDP 2018-2022, my government achieved notable milestones, as previously highlighted in past State of County Addresses. The financial year 2022-2023, which recently concluded, marked the conclusion of the second-generation CIDP, executed through five annual development plans. Throughout this period, the CIDP focused on key strategic goals, including the transformation of our agricultural sector, transportation network, improved healthcare access, and the extension of clean and safe water to more households.

In our second term, which started in August last year, my administration is actively implementing the third-generation CIDP since the advent of devolution in 2010. This CIDP was graciously passed under the wise leadership of the Finance, Budget and Appropriation Committee of this honourable House chaired by Hon. Godfrey Murithi Gaturo, the member for Karingani ward. This CIDP features well-defined programs that will continue our development agenda and ensure we are leaving no one behind.

Allow me now, Mr. Speaker, to present the current status of implementation of our policies and plans.

Mr. Speaker, when I assumed office in August 2017, the County's Own Source Revenue, money collected locally from our tax payers in Tharaka Nithi, for the financial year 2016-17 was a paltry KSHS 79 million. Remarkably, in the most recent financial year, 2022-23, after our 6-year journey, the revenue collection exhibited substantial growth of 362%, reaching KSHS 286.7 million. This positive trajectory in County Own Source Revenue is attributed to strategic initiatives such as the Rapid Results Initiative (RRI) in revenue collection, the installation of CCTV cameras for strengthened oversight at CESS collection points, coordinated enforcement efforts, and the implementation of automated revenue collection processes, effectively minimizing pilferage and non-compliance. We aim to attain our full-revenue potential, as indicated in the recent Commission on Revenue Allocation (CRA) Report of 2022, without increasing local taxation, but rather through focus on optimizing our operations. Owing to this, we have been recognized as one of the fastest growing Counties in Kenya.

*(Applause)*

Agriculture stands as a fundamental pillar in both the Kenya Vision 2030 and the Bottom-Up Economic Transformative Agenda (BETA). My administration places agriculture at the forefront of its development agenda, aiming to boost productivity and create value addition to elevate farm incomes. The agricultural sector, employing 70% of Kenya's labour force, not only contributes 60% to export earnings but also supplies 75% of raw materials for industry and constitutes about 33% of GDP. In our County, where approximately 80% of the population is involved in agriculture, the sector plays a vital role in sustaining livelihoods.

Recently, we undertook a comprehensive profiling exercise where we registered over 95,000 farmers across various value chains. This was geared towards generating a shared geo-referenced, updated database, with relevant information on targeted beneficiaries to support data-driven agricultural interventions. We will now be able to link our farmers to key service providers through digitized platforms and e-services.

Over the past seven years, my administration has actively pursued agricultural reforms, concentrating on enhancing both crop and animal productivity. Through the County Crop Subsidy Program, we have provided farmers with high-quality inputs, fostering the adoption of certified seeds that are high yielding and drought resistant. Over 100,000 farmers benefited from the program, receiving certified maize, beans and green-gram (*Ndengu*) seeds. My

administration intends to continue supporting this program and ensuring that more farmers benefit.

*(Applause)*

Mr. Speaker, soil health is a factor contributing to correct plant nutrient requirements. We have ensured that soil testing scanners are available and so far, over 1,000 farmers have benefited from our soil testing services. My administration will further extend this outreach by ensuring the services are available in every ward. I advise our people to take up the small cost by the government to the farmers who want their soil tested because the fee that they have been paying of Ksh1500 is being pended and therefore they will only pay for a paltry 200 shillings for transport because people will take the equipment to them. The rest of the cost will be shouldered by the government of Tharaka Nithi.

To reduce post-harvest losses, we distributed post-harvest management equipment to farmers, including moisture meters, digital weighing scales, tarpaulins and hermetic bags to eight aggregation stores. Additionally, Aflasafe, a natural solution to alleviate the threat of aflatoxin, has been distributed to farmers to manage aflatoxin levels prior to crops maturity.

Mr. Speaker, the Last Mile Fertilizer Subsidy Program has significantly reduced costs for farmers, making low-cost fertilizer accessible at KSHS. 2,500 per 50kg bag for both planting and top dressing, down from the previous KSHS. 7,000. This is an effort led by His Excellency the President of Kenya William Ruto to ensure that we are self-sustaining as far as the production of own crop in Kenya is concerned and that we stop importing from neighbouring countries. During the last two planting seasons, more than 35,000 bags of planting fertilizer, 13,000 bags of top dressers, and 600 bags of Mavuno Tea Blend were distributed. In addition, we have expanded our Last Mile Fertilizer Distribution Network with two new centres operationalized at Mukuuni and Nkondi cereal stores to distribute fertilizer and other inputs, in addition to Mitheru cereal store which was previously the only store distributing fertilizers. We plan for additional openings in the near future.

Mr. Speaker, Tea is one of the major cash crops in our County, sustaining numerous livelihoods in the high-altitude zones. Regrettably, farmers have faced declining incomes due to post-harvest losses and fluctuating global prices in recent times. To address post-harvest losses, we have successfully rehabilitated over 50 tea buying centres, with ongoing plans to revitalize more centres.

Mr. Speaker, revamping cotton farming in our county faces numerous challenges, including unpredictable weather patterns, low prices and high cost of inputs. To improve production and ensure high productivity, we have partnered with the Fiber Directorate of the Agriculture Food Authority (AFA) and other stakeholders on issuance of certified BT cotton seed, pesticides and provision of extension services. This is to make sure that we improve the production of high-quality cotton in the County.

Minimizing on-farm losses is pivotal for farmers to enhance food access and availability. Unfortunately, small-scale farmers face challenges with inadequate storage capacities, resulting in losses of up to 30 percent of their seasonal harvest. In response to this challenge, we have taken proactive measures by establishing aggregation centres at Thiiti Mukothima, Kanyange in Chiakariga ward, and Kirumi in Ganga ward to address and mitigate post-harvest losses. This is in addition to the Mitheru, Mukuuni and Nkondi stores.

Mr. Speaker, we successfully relocated Itugururu Primary School to pave way for the operationalization of the Agricultural Training Institute. The County is now in the process of actualizing farm development and construction of kitchen and dining hall amenities. Through this initiative our farmers will acquire modern farm management practices and consequently increase quantity and quality of agricultural production by having an active and educative Agriculture Training Institute in Tharaka Nithi. It is important to note, Mr. Speaker, that in this region, it is only Tharaka Nithi county that does not have a farmers training institute despite the fact that 90% of our population are farmers.

Livestock production plays an essential role, contributing nearly 90 percent to the livelihoods of households and accounting for approximately 95 percent of family income in the Arid and Semi-Arid Lands. In the lower ecological zone of our County, livestock farming has emerged as a primary source of livelihood. However, this sub-sector grapples with various challenges, including issues related to pests and diseases, the escalating cost of animal feeds, post-harvest losses and persistent droughts.

County efforts have been enhanced by strategic partnerships with Kenya Cereal Enhancement Programme (KCEP) and Kenya Climate Smart Agriculture Programme (KSCAP), Financing Locally-Led Climate Action (FLLoCA) and Emergency Locust Response Project (ELRP). Over 80,000 farmers have been supported to increase the productivity and profitability of key cereal commodities such as maize, sorghum, millet and associated pulses. This is through the

intervention of these programmes that I have mentioned. This has contributed to increased food production and smallholder farmers' income.

Through Agriculture Sector Development Support Program (ASDSP), we have supported value chain development in terms of capacity building to over 14,000 value chain actors and 39 innovations supported across the banana, dairy and indigenous chicken value chains.

Through the Kenya Climate Smart Agriculture Project (KCSAP) and Emergency Livestock Response Program (ELRP), we have supported over 300 farmer groups to implement micro – projects spread across various value chains, in Tharaka Nithi County.

The key objective of the ELRP is to facilitate animal re-stocking with climate-resilient and stress tolerant breeds, crop, pasture and forage restoration in areas impacted by the locust upsurge. These programs reached out to over 90,000 beneficiaries who accessed agricultural trainings and extension services, with at least 3,000 farmers receiving improved goat breeds.

Mr. Speaker, we have vaccinated more than 25,000 cattle, 20,000 goats, 6,000 sheep, 20,000 poultry, and 3,100 canines (That is dogs and related animals) against various diseases. That even includes human beings who bite others.

Due to the expansive demand for A.I. services, we established a subsidized County A.I service with sub-stations at Kianjagi in Maara, Marimanti in Tharaka and Chuka in Chuka-IgambaNg'ombe. This initiative brings animal genetic material storage services closer to our farmers, which has greatly reduced the cost of insemination. This will increase A.I uptake, pedigree breeds, milk production and an eventual increase in households' incomes. Mr. Speaker and honourable members, all these interventions have resulted in the overall increase in milk production and collections by our farmers. We were producing 22 million litres of milk in 2017, today we are a proud county having increased the milk production by slightly over double. We are currently producing over 45 million litres annually.

*(Applause)*

We are heavily investing in value addition in the agriculture sector to stimulate economic growth and in the process of sourcing for partners to help in the establishment of a milk processing plant that will enable our farmers to fetch competitive prices for their dairy products, create job opportunities and boost the economy of the County and that of Kenya.

The milk processing plant will play a crucial role in the dairy industry by transforming raw milk into various dairy products through proper pasteurization, homogenization, and quality control to ensure safe consumption and strategies are in place to extend milk coolers to parts of Tharaka Nithi County.

My administration is dedicated to fortifying fish farming and fostering a resilient and inclusive aquaculture environment for smallholder farmers in our County including ASAL regions. Our support initiatives have resulted in the construction of over 700 fishponds, enhanced fish rearing enterprises, where farmers were equipped with pond liners, fish feeds and fingerlings. Mr. Speaker the successful implementation of the Aquaculture Business Development Program (ABDP) has seen the number of fish farmers grow from 1,500 to 2,200 and we are geared towards establishing fresh fish markets and cottage industries for locally producing fish feeds across the County. My administration will establish an aquapark at Kairini that will act as an aggregation and educational centre in aquaculture, as it addresses the marketability aspect of fish not only within the County but also outside Tharaka Nithi.

Mr. Speaker, honourable members, it is within cooperative societies that members collectively work towards maximizing their economic, social, and cultural aspirations, thereby invigorating the communities they serve. We have successfully mobilized and registered over 31 cooperative societies, spanning the youth and Jua Kali, marketing, and urban and rural sectors.

As part of our commitment to boost coffee production through cooperatives, we are actively uplifting coffee societies and minimizing the number of players in the coffee value chain. Additionally, through participation agreements with the National Government, financial institutions and our new-found partners in the diaspora, we will strengthen producer-based organizations, cooperatives automation and improve credit worthiness thereby promoting direct coffee sales. It is therefore my urge to the people of Tharaka Nithi, especially farmers who are producing coffee, to increase coffee production not only in quantity but also in quality so that we do not look for market and fails to have the product to meet the demand.

Mr. Speaker, in partnership with National Council of Churches of Kenya (NCCCK), East African Grain Council (EAGC) and Micro Small Enterprise Authority (MSEA), we have trained four Farmer's Producer Organizations (FPOs) with a membership of over 6,000 farmers and linked them to various markets such as East Africa Breweries Limited (EABL),



Farm Shine Exporters and Grain Connection Exporters to sell their farm produce including cereals and pulses. This is domiciled mostly in the lower regions and the headquarters is Nkondi ward.

Mr. Speaker, my administration has been prioritizing accessible, affordable, and universal healthcare. To this end, we have undertaken initiatives to enhance our health facilities, bolstered the recruitment of additional human resources for health, and enhanced the provision of commodities and medical supplies. These endeavours have led to significant advancements in health service delivery, and we are steadfast in our commitment to further reduce the distance between health facilities to less than 5 kilometres, aligning with the guidelines set forth by the World Health Organization (WHO). Mr. Speaker, honourable members, there are 112 public health facilities in the County compared to 86 in 2017...

*(Applause)*

... with majority of these facilities operationalized, including Tonya and Kirangi in Tharaka, and I am mentioning because they are “babies”, Wiru and Kanini in Maara, and Rianthiga and Nthigiriri dispensaries in Chuka-IgambaNg’ombe. My administration is in the process of upgrading several health centres to level 4 hospitals. This includes, Gatunga Model, Muthambi, Kajuki, Mpukoni and Kibugua Health Centres. These will be upgraded from Level 3 to Level 4, following the recent elevation of Chuka County Referral Hospital to Level 5 status.

*(Applause)*

This is because a level 5 health centre is normally open to serve of the Country and thus, we would like to increase the number of level four hospitals in our county so that we still take care of our people without facing what will come from the level 5 influx.

To further improve service delivery and ensure every ward has a Level 3 facility, because there are some wards that currently do not have a level 3 health centre, we will upgrade the following dispensaries to health centres: Kanyuru in Marimanti, Gaciongo in Mukothima, Kamwathu in Gatunga, Kaanwa in Mariani, Mukuuni in Magumoni, Kambandi in Mugwe, Mumbuni in Muthambi, Kirumi in Ganga, Kaare in Mwimbi, Kiang’onde in Karingani and Kamwimbi in IgambaNg’ombe. This will ensure that we have inpatient facilities that can take care of basic health issues that do not require to be referred to a level 4 hospital. That will

also require an upgrade of the human resource to those levels to be able to handle in-patients. Therefore, this will come at an extra cost.

Mr. Speaker, to improve the quality, accuracy and accessibility of laboratory services, we are implementing the Clinical Laboratory Improvement Project (CLIP), which encompasses a sample referral system and has enabled us to acquire state-of-the art equipment for Chuka Level 5 Referral Hospital. This is going to be the first in Kenya.

*(Applause)*

Additionally, to further strengthen referral services in the County, two Advanced Life Support (ALS) ambulances have also been procured. This is a system that will enable our patients from the lowest and the most remote dispensaries in Tharaka Nithi to access the same Lab services as a person who is at the Chuka Referral Hospital. We will be transporting samples and relaying back the results within hours from remote areas.

In an effort to bolster blood security in our health facilities, my administration established a blood satellite centre at our County Referral Hospital. This facility enables us to process blood and its derivatives, such as packed red blood cells, fresh frozen plasma, platelet concentrate, among others. This will alleviate the problem of our people having to wait for blood from far flung blood centres like Kenyatta National Hospital and other regional centres,

Mr. Speaker, additionally, my administration continues to ensure emergency medicines and medical supplies are available across the County. To this end, we are in the process of employing drone technology to transport commodities where they are required to save lives.

Mr. Speaker, and honourable members, the human cost associated with healthcare remains high within a labyrinth of dispersed service providers. To strengthen the Human Resources for Health and improve the quality of healthcare services, my government has continued to recruit and train healthcare workers. In the past two years alone, a total of over 90 medical personnel in various cadres have been recruited and over 70 staff from diverse cadres have been released to pursue higher education in different specialties.

Mr. Speaker, honourable members, primary healthcare is one of the key contributors to our pursuit of universal healthcare coverage, both at the community and facility levels. In my administration's concerted effort to buttress Community Health Services in the County, we

have enlisted the support of Community Health Promoters (CHPs), who were previously called CHVs to deliver primary health services, emphasizing a shift from curative and rehabilitative approaches to preventive and promotive measures. This is in line with the Kenya Kwanza manifesto of providing universal healthcare before 2027. Their involvement has resulted in a commendable increase in the proportion of immunized children, rising from 72% in 2018 to 94.9% by 2022. Additionally, CHP involvement has elevated the proportion of women utilizing family planning methods from 67% in 2017 to 74.7% in 2022. Now you know why our population is not increasing.

*(Laughter)*

Overall, Tharaka Nithi County healthcare is performing above the national average across multiple parameters.

Mr. Speaker, honourable members, most of our facilities are dedicated to providing reproductive, maternal, newborn, child, and adolescent healthcare services. Notably, as per the Kenya Demographic Health Survey (KDHS) of 2022, our County achieved a remarkable 95% rate for skilled deliveries, surpassing the national target of 89%.

Additionally, the percentage of fully immunized children under 1 year in our county stands at 95%, surpassing the national achievement of 82%. Moreover, my government has made significant strides in improving nutrition services, resulting in a substantial reduction of the overall stunting rate from 32% to 21%.

In terms of sanitation, Tharaka Nithi now has higher coverage of households with access to improved sanitation at 95%. These accomplishments are a testament to the impactful public health interventions implemented in the County. I applaud the department of health, headed by Dr. Nthuraku because of this achievement making Tharaka Nithi almost an open defecation free zone.

*(Applause)*

Mr. Speaker, in a bid to enhance antenatal care (ANC) coverage among our women of reproductive age, we supported the training of our CHPs on short messaging prompts aimed at enrolling eligible mothers to the platform in which beneficiaries are able to interact with healthcare providers. Over 1,000 mothers have been enrolled in the program which aims to

adopt technology to improve maternal wellbeing. This is a programme where expectant mothers are roped into an App where they interact with professionals who tell them what is going on with their bodies during the nine months of gestation. This makes it very easy to carry the pregnancy to term with few challenges. We thank our CHPs and the county ministry of health.

In addition, my administration rolled out an electronic Community Health System (eCHIS), where all Community Health Extension Workers and Community Health Assistants have been trained, and the same training will be cascaded to all CHPs. We are also rolling out an ambitious Geographic Information System (GIS) for tracking healthcare issues at household level.

Mr. Speaker, my administration is cognizant of the essential role of financing in healthcare service delivery and instituted measures to ring-fence and avail adequate resources to our health system. In pursuit of this goal, my government enacted the Tharaka Nithi Health Services and Sanitation Act, 2021 and the subsequent Facility Improvement Fund (FIF) Regulations, 2023, both approved by this County Assembly. This will ensure the health facilities retain their FIF collections and support primary healthcare facilities to finance their operations. This ensures that all the money collected by the health facilities from poor patients does not find its way into other uses like roads, allowances for the executive and County Assembly and other unrelated uses that do not directly contribute to health. It is very important for that fund to be invested in and promoted because during hard times like now when we have not received any equitable share then it will be possible to continue buying drugs and non-pharmaceuticals and other commodities to support our healthcare.

It is worth noting that, the FIF collections increased from KSHS. 99 million in the year 2020-2021 to KSHS. 120 million during 2022-2023.

*(Applause)*

We are targeting to increase this to KSHS. 300 million in the medium term. Do not dare to ask how much we used to collect before because you would not believe it.

In the realm of public administration, my government has prioritized seamless intergovernmental coordination between the National and County Government. The chiefs and our ward administrators. The assistant chiefs with our ward administrators. The CHVs

who are part of our administration all the way to the County Commissioner. We do not have boundaries between the county and the national government when it comes to the delivery of services to our people. We are different levels of government but we are united in coordination to deliver to one Mwananchi from one government under one constitution. We have constituted multi-agency County, Sub County, and ward teams, comprising officers drawn from both levels for enhanced service delivery. One example of that is the multisectoral committee, a team that is dealing with the illicit brews in Tharaka Nithi county.

The County has a high rainwater endowment hence a high rainwater harvesting potential, Mr. Speaker. We are currently experiencing El-Niño. We are located at the foot of Mt Kenya and therefore when it rains in Tharaka Nithi, it pours. And when it is not raining it is the opposite extreme. That is why rain harvesting is key because we are able to mitigate the scarcity that is normally followed by plenty, which is usually three months of dry season and three months of rainy season. Rainwater harvesting is key in building resilience occasioned by weather variability and the gripping effects of climate change. We face a number of water harvesting and storage related challenges that directly affect water security and subsequent provision of quality water and sanitation services.

Mr. Speaker, despite the abundant rainfall, our capacity to harvest rainwater during such times remains limited and when it is not collected the rainwater adversely affects our infrastructure such as roads and bridges which are washed away and also households, including mudslides in parts of this county. I call upon residents to embrace water harvesting at household level for increased water availability and to reduce these calamities that are occasioned by the huge volumes of uncollected water on our roads. My administration is in the process of constructing rainwater harvesting facilities in 15 schools as a pilot project to guide the County in best practice methods of harnessing and storage of rain water, before rollout to all schools in our County by the end of this term, 2027. By 2027, every school in Tharaka Nithi will have water collecting tanks and gutters and no roof water will go to the ground.

*(Applause)*

Even if the school does not need that water, we better keep it in tanks than have it on our roads because that is what it is increasing the cost of maintenance of our roads. That is a programme we wish to roll out in collaboration with the Members of the County Assembly in

various wards. Mr. Speaker, my administration is developing a policy on rainwater harvesting and storage and therefore this Assembly will play a critical role to help us increase that potential of water harvesting. It is not possible to implement that directive to have rainwater collection by all Wananchi unless we have a law to enforce it. That is why, honourable members, when you are called upon to expediate the approval of this policy through the Water Harvesting Bill, please do it with speed and accuracy knowing that you are saving the people by giving them adequate water and saving the infrastructure. It is my believe that that Bill is having its way to the Assembly.

Recognizing water storage as a central element for sustained water availability, the Tana Water Works Development Agency is collaborating with the County to construct dams, including Tungu, Kajogu, Thuci, Kithino and High Grand Falls, with a combined total capacity of over 12 million cubic meters. These initiatives will play a pivotal role in increasing sustained water supply across the larger parts of Tharaka Nithi County.

Mr. Speaker, over the last one year, the County Government in partnership with the African Development Bank has made huge milestones in completing the Chuka and Chogoria Bulk Water Supply schemes with each having a capacity of 15 million litres per day. This was in collaboration with Tana Water Works. These water supplies have been tested and found to be in perfect working condition and will be handed over to Tharaka Nithi county and will be managed by the Nithi Water Company (NIWASCO). The two schemes are awaiting the last mile connectivity with an estimated 13,000 households expected to be connected. Further, this year, in collaboration with Tana Water Works, we are committed to complete and enhance Gakimi-Kibung'a-Gakimithio water project with the people of Maragwa having waited for water since 2017; and it has not been possible because of inadequate water at the intake and the connectivity. But towards this, the Tana Water Works and Tharaka Nithi county have factored in Ksh150million to complete this project within the shortest time possible.

We have also enhanced the capacity of Nithi Water and Sanitation Company by establishing 5 satellite offices across the County at Kathwana, Chogoria, Kibung'a and Chuka. Going forward, we plan to have the company establish offices in all wards to ensure improved services to the residents. In a recent achievement, over 700 new household connections have been successfully established, resulting in over 20,000 households currently benefiting from treated water.

Mr. Speaker, and honourable members, the pursuit of alternative sources of clean water remains a priority for our development agenda. My government is actively engaged in the exploration of groundwater through the drilling and equipping of boreholes, along with the rehabilitation of existing ones.

*(Applause)*

In the past year alone, we have successfully drilled and equipped over ten (10) boreholes and rehabilitated 32 existing boreholes including: Kanthanje Primary borehole, Rugiika borehole, Gacigongoni borehole, Shauri borehole, Kilimani Primary borehole, Kirukuma borehole, Mwororo borehole, Igangara borehole, Nkungani borehole, Njaina borehole, among others. To ensure the sustainability of these systems, we have established a Framework Contract for the prompt operation and maintenance of these facilities. This underscores our commitment to providing a reliable and lasting supply of clean water to our community. Our biggest challenge Mr. Speaker, has been water projects that has been done by the county government, small community water projects, and they are not owned by the community and not taken up for maintenance and thus they fail because of the lack of very small items like taps. The community will not buy these small items because the project is owned by the county Government and thus the water system might be grounded for two months waiting for the county government to buy a tap that cost Ksh1500.

It is for this reason Mr. Speaker, that we have partnered with eWATER Services which is a private water operator providing 24/7 access to clean water in Sub-Saharan Africa. This is to administratively be able to enable communities manage small water systems. My administration signed a Memorandum of Understanding in April 2023 with eWATER, becoming the first County to do so in Kenya, for rehabilitation of failed borehole systems and drilling of new ones in rural areas.

*(Applause)*

Using custom-built Pre-payment Smart Taps and local Operation and Maintenance Partner (Maji Popote), the project will guarantee access to clean water any time by placing an eWATER tag with credit onto the window of any Smart Tap. This is where we have a water Kiosk. Mr. Speaker this is a technology that will enable people to buy units of water just the way we buy units of airtime to be able to speak on phone. Water will be very cheap because we do not sell water but we ask for something very little to be able to manage water systems.

With as little as Ksh5 per jerrican of 20litres it will be possible to have water throughout the year by just buying a token which is cheap and you tap against a tap and water will come out and when the units are drained you cannot be able to get any water until you refill. That way, you will not have to interact with anyone who will tell you do me this or that favour for you to get water when you don't have enough money. This will also create employment the youth will be able to sell these tokens and at the same time manage this technology. We have committed that before the end of January we shall launch that project in Nkondi ward. It is important to note that Maji Popote is a company that is locally owned by one of our own here in Tharaka Nithi County partnering with people all the way in England because eWATER is a Company that is based in England. Every transaction is tracked using a secure, block-chain based system for the initiative which will begin in Nkondi, Giekuri and Kaareni which is at the Kathwana Junction. So, these are not final programmes and this is work we can roll to other parts of the county. The program will continue rolling out across the County covering rural areas that lack proper access to water thus complementing the efforts by all other stakeholders in ensuring universal access to water for all. Please let our people know that they must have sustainable systems instead of having free access to systems that are devoid of any sustainability.

To attain food security, it is imperative that we support our smallholder farmers in transitioning from rain-fed to irrigated agriculture. Noteworthy achievements include the completion of major irrigation projects in the County, such as the Rubate Irrigation and Tunyai-Gakurungu irrigation schemes. These projects have facilitated the engagement of over 2,000 new farmers in irrigation, thereby expanding the total area under irrigation by over 1,000 acres.

Mr. Speaker, honourable members, through a Participatory Climate Risk Assessment process, we developed the County Climate Change Action Plan (CCAP) that was adopted by the County Assembly in September 2023. The plan identified the key priority areas of interventions in the Water, Agriculture, Disaster, Risk and Environmental sectors based on the locally identified climate hazards. Recognizing that adapting to climate change is a global imperative, we have taken proactive steps by developing the County Adaptations Plan (CAP). The core principle guiding these frameworks is to enhance the resilience of our community by aligning adaptation strategies with their specific economic systems. This approach underscores our commitment to not only addressing climate change at the local level but also



ensuring that our communities are equipped to navigate and thrive in the face of these challenges. The two frameworks are the key parameters for our readiness to mobilize for and receiving climate financing.

We are currently implementing the Financing Locally Led Climate Actions (FLLoCA), a KSHS.600 million project, that will kickstart the implementation of the CCAP and that will strengthen local resilience to the impact of climate change, natural hazards, and other shocks, thereby supporting Kenya's transition to a low carbon, climate resilient and green development pathway.

Mr. Speaker, honourable members, education is the foundation of the future of our society, shaping the minds and aspirations of generations to come and it is within the halls of our schools that the foundation of a prosperous future is laid. Commitment to providing quality learning opportunities to our people is not only an investment in their individual potential but a key driver for the overall well-being and advancement. To provide a conducive learning atmosphere, my government has constructed over 185 Early Childhood Development Education (ECDE) classes and recruited 462 ECDE teachers who have been trained to adopt the new national Competence Based Curriculum. Further, we have provided teaching and learning materials, including tables, chairs, among others to the 15 wards. The investments in Early Childhood Education have resulted to a transition rate of 90% from ECDE to primary schools and a net enrolment of 80%. I do not know why we cannot have a transition of 100% from ECDE to primary school. Therefore, the remaining 10% is a reason to worry us and I do not look at that as an achievement. So, to the people who are concerned we have to make sure we have a 100% transition from ECDE to primary school.

Mr. Speaker, the time women commit to childcare takes up the time and opportunities that would otherwise have been used in other income generating activities, thus significantly limits women from engaging in economically viable activities. This is because our education system does not allow children below the age of 4 years to go to school and therefore the mothers are confined to childcare up to when the children hit the school going age of 4 years. Majority of our small-scale traders are women, who are of lower economic status. It is for this reason, Mr. Speaker, that we have, as a county, decided that after childbearing, the mothers who would not afford to employ caregivers (commonly known as House maid or in slang *mboch*), and have interacted with their babies for the upbringing period of one year, be enabled to look after the babies while the mothers resume their trading activities. In line with

our agenda of leaving no one behind, we have introduced an innovative solution to support these mothers, the solution, is the concept of a crèche. This initiative is designed to provide a supportive environment, allowing these women to continue their trading activities while ensuring the well-being and care of their infants.

This programme, which we piloted at Chuka market has received a lot of acknowledgments throughout the country. It is now a policy of the national government that no market will be built without a crèche because it enables mothers to trade and at the same time take care of their children. This programme, which is a proud first of Tharaka Nithi County, has received recognition from even outside the country. During the 6<sup>th</sup> Guangzhou Global Mayors' Forum held in December 2023 in China, I presented the Women Economic Empowerment Agenda through the crèche intervention in our County. Key benefits include providing mothers with peace of mind at work, empowering young businesswomen with flexibility in their daily economic activities, facilitating a seamless transition post-maternity, and enabling more mothers to serve as breadwinners by increasing their income through continued engagement in business activities and thus reducing time-poverty. This is poverty that is usually entrenched in our community because of using time that would have otherwise been more valuable doing something that could have been done by someone else who would not require much pay.

Building on the success of the crèche program, Mr. Speaker, we endeavour to establish more partnerships to scale-up the crèche initiative, to have more market centres (That no more market that can be built in Tharaka Nithi without the crèche and for those already built, we have to find a way through public participation to introduce the crèches in those markets) and ECDE Centres in Tharaka Nithi equipped with crèche. This will enable us to have curriculum for children over three years of age through a study that we are carrying out in collaboration with Kenyatta University and Riara University through Bill and Melinda Gates foundation. It will now be possible to have children in the crèches not just playing but also being taught. That will mean an extra cost for us because it means each market will have two ECDE teachers or caregivers.

*(Applause)*

This will be an opportunity for more employment. It is costly but is more value for money for our mothers and children. It is my conviction that quality childcare in Tharaka Nithi will

ultimately alleviate poverty by enabling women to work and earn a steady income while bringing up healthy families. This expansion is expected to generate employment opportunities for approximately 87 personnel. Additionally, 65 ECDE centres are set to benefit from the issuance of complete teaching and learning kits. This holistic approach reflects our commitment to fostering economic empowerment and supporting the overall well-being of women in our community.

Mr. Speaker, my administration has empowered the youth by fostering skill enhancement. We have been able to improve on the facilities and structures in our Vocational Training Centres (VTCs) by renovating amenities, and constructing dormitories to enhance student retention in Mugumango, Nguruki, Rubate, Ciamakie and Kajuki. We have constructed VTCs at Karuguaru in Gatunga ward and Makutano in Mukothima, Kibuka in Chiakariga and City in Karocho in Marimanti. In addition, we have sponsored over 400 students for scholarships in various VTCs across the County, through our partnership with the KCB Foundation program dubbed “Tujiajiri”. This is a programme where the students who are qualified benefit from a programme that is paid for 50% by the county government of Tharaka Nithi and 50% by KCB bank and the students’ study for free except paying for their utilities. This programme enables the students to go through mentorship by the KCB bank that trains them on business acumen and eventually gives them loans after qualifying to be able to start businesses and utilise the skills that they learned in these polytechnics. We currently hope that the 400 students that in session in various VTCs will graduate to businessmen and therefore increase income in this county.

Mr. Speaker, our County is the only one in the Eastern region that boasts hosting two public universities.

*(Applause)*

With this unique endowment, my administration is exploring partnerships that will enhance the quality of higher education within Tharaka Nithi. We are actively engaging with other universities abroad to establish Confucius Institutes in both universities, scale up digital hubs and institute exchange programs in culinary arts, martial arts, fashion, music and dance. This is a programme that we have already initiated with the Chinese government through the municipality of Guangzhou. Mr. Speaker, it is important to note that the county government of Tharaka Nithi has purposed to have MOUs and partnerships with both Tharaka and Chuka

universities so that we can benefit each other by the skills that we have. Tomorrow at 10 o'clock in the morning, led by our county attorney, we will be signing the first MOUs between the County and the Universities, with Chuka University as a first since devolution in 2010. We believe that this partnership with Chuka University will enable us to exchange ideas and skills. It will also enable us to partner and share resources such as land and amenities because we are all funded from the same exchequer, that is the treasury of the government of Kenya.

Mr. Speaker, supporting individuals with diverse abilities is an essential element of advocating for inclusivity and equal opportunities in the society. Under my administration, we prioritize the well-being of our fellow brothers and sisters who are differently abled. We have demonstrated our commitment to supporting them through issuance of mobility devices and other services to improve their lives. We have issued over 200 wheelchairs and over 300 other mobility devices. We have also issued 25 mobility carts for entrepreneurs with disabilities which have enabled them to be economically and socially empowered. Further, we have conducted assessments of differently-abled individuals and facilitated the migration of over 1,800 to the new identification system to better address their unique needs.

Mr. Speaker, to further empower our differently abled citizens to benefit from the Access to Government Procurement Opportunities (AGPO) program, my government has scheduled to undertake training for PWDs to capacity build and equip them. This is so that they can have direct access to business with the government including the government of Tharaka Nithi county. We always, by law, reserve 30% of all opportunities in procurement to PWDs, youths and women. I have directed the Department of Public Health and Medical Services to decentralize assessment of PWDs to Magutuni Hospital and Marimanti Hospital in addition to Chuka Level 5 Hospital which is the only facility currently offering the service. Today, if you wanted to get the card for PWDs you first go for medical evaluation only in Chuka hospital. We have said no to that and we must now have Marimanti and Magutuni also carrying out these assessments.

*(Applause)*

Under my leadership, we have undertaken 72 rescues in cases involving defilement, child abuse, and abandonment, placed in safe spaces within the county and worked with the authorities and our Judicial system to seek justice. We have undertaken to re-integrate these

vulnerable children into the society to enable them to grow in loving and healthy environments. This reflects our unwavering commitment to protecting and supporting children in vulnerable situations.

Mr. Speaker, honourable members, facilitative and resilient infrastructure is a cornerstone of development and transformation. In our pursuit to transform the economy of our County, my government is dedicated to ensuring the presence of reliable transport infrastructure through consistent efforts and initiatives. Our administration is developing climate-proof infrastructure and employing the use of modern methods such as low volume seal tarmacking for sustainability. To ensure easy accessibility, we consistently conduct routine maintenance of our rural roads, initiate the opening of new roads, construct bridges and footbridges, and undertake other civil works. These measures are in place to ensure that we continually achieve our goal of fostering reliable and efficient transportation infrastructure. Over 2,500 kilometres of roads have been opened and maintained.

To ensure immediate and quick response to different emergencies such as road infrastructure destruction, blockage and other emergencies, my administration engaged over 1,000 road marshals. This County Road Maintenance Team has been instrumental during this El Niño season. For instance, they swiftly restored the flow of Gituma and Nkararu rivers in Marimanti, responded hastily to clear landslide at Gitogoto, and diverted flood water that threatened engulfing homes at Munga, Nturiri and Gatunga market.

Mr. Speaker, some areas in close proximity are separated by rivers and rugged terrain, restricting inter-community socioeconomic interactions. To ensure citizens seamlessly traverse the county, we must establish proper linkages, through construction of bridges and footbridges. Over 50 bridges and footbridges have been constructed including Kithioroka bridge in Marimanti, the boundary of Marimanti and Nkondi, Mwanyani bridge in Nkondi, Mutuguta bridge in Chogoria, Kigaani footbridge in Chiakariga, Gincini footbridge in Mukothima, Kajuki-Kamonka footbridge among many others.

An effective and efficient road network is essential for accessibility and commerce. To date, my government has managed to upgrade over 35 km of county roads to bitumen standards, encompassing towns and municipal roads, thereby enhancing transport and communication. We intend to upgrade another 45 kilometres over the medium term. Mr. Speaker, acquiring our own equipment to assist in road maintenance has greatly reduced the time and cost it

takes to attend to roads in our wards. My administration made this bold yet significant decision over five years ago and the results have been phenomenal, through a model now emulated in multiple Counties. Due to the heavy usage and leveraging of these machines, wear and tear is inevitable and we now need to replace these with newer machines to ensure that work doesn't stall. I urge this honourable House to facilitate these replacements through the upcoming budget.

Mr. Speaker, 50% of our own source revenue is from trading activities. The County Government has made significant investments in empowering all traders by establishing an enabling business environment. We are ensuring the presence of modern and standardized market stalls at strategic locations along Mate Road and Embu – Meru highway, construction of traders' cubicles, sanitation facilities, enhanced security measures, cabro paving and stage sheds.

To catalyse economic transformation, the construction of modern markets is a pivotal initiative to promote trade in the County. In the previous term, the completion of 13 modern markets was achieved. This term, we are embarking on additional modern markets at Cheera, Ndagani, Chogoria, Marimanti, Gatunga and Kathwana livestock markets, Nguruki, Makutano (Shauri) among others. These endeavours ensure that traders operate in a conducive environment with access to essential infrastructure, thereby enhancing livelihoods for micro, small and medium-scale traders.

My administration is keen on strengthening security of tenure and improving living conditions in informal settlements. We have initiated the improvement of the informal settlement at Chuka (Chuka Muslim Village) and are currently in the process of enhancing living conditions in Marimanti town through the formal settlement scheme initiated through Kenya Informal Settlement Improvement Program (KISIP). These efforts illustrate our commitment to creating better living environment for our residents and fostering sustainable urban development.

To protect land set aside for public utility my administration has successfully facilitated acquisition of title deeds for our institutions such as Chuka County Referral Hospital, the Cereals and Produce Board, Itugururu Agricultural Training Institute, Deputy Governor's residence at Kanthanje, while Gatunga Health Center, Magutuni Level 5 Hospital, Marimanti Hospital, and County Assembly Chambers at Kathwana, among others, are all in progress.

We are also in the process of relocating Kathwana Prison to Kabariange, to pave way for the affordable housing project, establish a level four health facility in addition to other crucial public infrastructural developments. In the spirit of affordable housing, we have agreed to partner with the national government by giving up land in various part of this county. This includes in Kathwana, Chuka and Majira in Maara constituency.

Active involvement of the public in governance and legislation is a fundamental commitment that my administration will uphold. We have lived by this principle in the management of our county affairs, through the Public Participation and Civic Education Policy which guides our engagement with the public. I am deeply impressed by the ability of Ciambai to make her voice heard. Through this, development needs have been identified and addressed through our different interventions. My administration through our Public Participation unit will continue involving our people in governance.

The Bottom-Up Economic Transformation Agenda (BETA) is geared towards aggregating farmers, creating job opportunities, and promoting Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs). In alignment with these objectives, my government is actively involved in the construction of the County Aggregation and Industrial Park (CAIP) at Kairini. We have completed the preliminary requirements for the establishment of CAIP and are now part of the first cohort of Counties awaiting official launch. This programme is carried out in partnership with the national government and it is funded on 50-50 basis with a total investment of Ksh500million. This will lead to creation of job opportunities and value addition for our products. Our strategic plan is to add value to local produce, focusing on bananas, green grams, milk, mangoes, honey, avocado, oil seeds, and nuts. The CAIP will elevate existing small and scattered ventures in value addition of local produce, providing our farmers with a competitive edge in accessing better markets regionally and globally. Modelled around a Special Economic Zone (SEZ), our CAIP is designed to attract investment from various sectors.

Mr. Speaker, honourable members, in adherence to the Presidential Order addressing the issue of illicit brew, second- and third-generation alcohol, we have taken regulatory and enforcement measures, by establishing designated operating hours and implementing regular inspections to enforce the Tharaka Nithi County Alcoholic Drinks Control Act, 2021. These efforts ensure that the youth and the general public of Tharaka-Nithi County are protected from consuming illicit brew and engage in more productive activities during working hours.

Mr. Speaker, my administration is actively working to facilitate main power connections to all public facilities. We are also exploring alternative energy sources, with a focus on solar panel installation in off-grid areas. To enhance power distribution stability in the County, we have donated 3 acres of land at Mwoga for the construction of a power substation because we have none in Tharaka Nithi and therefore our powerlines run all the way from other counties and sometimes they are too long and failure in one part normally results in all the county being affected by a blackout. For that reason, we found it prudent to offer land to Kenya Power to establish a power plant or what they usually call a substation to stabilize power in Tharaka Nithi county. Here in Kathwana, I am surprised we haven't had a power outage yet, there are normally a number in a day. I am happy to report that crucial institutions such as Kibuka, Makutano, and Kajuki Vocational Training Centres have been connected to the national grid. Additionally, we are collaborating with various non-state agencies to promote the use of sustainable alternative technologies for domestic use. We also remain committed to discouraging illegal logging to contribute to environmental conservation efforts.

Mr. Speaker, we acknowledge the impact of sports, recreation, and physical activity as powerful tools for creating social awareness, fostering economic growth, and enhancing peaceful coexistence. Sports play a significant role in promoting social integration and economic development across various geographical, cultural, and political contexts. We are undertaking athletic track works at Kairuni Stadium and we plan to elevate several playgrounds to standard pitches, which include Kibugua, Kajiunduthi, and Rwatha. We have also identified the need to establishing a state-of-the-art stadium at the County Headquarters at Kathwana, because we usually use the playground at the primary school which cannot be used while the school is in session, and subsequently implement this project in collaboration with development partners. In the headquarters, where we have land in plenty, we intend to build a state-of-the-art sports and other recreational activities complex. We will be seeking collaboration and partnership with other development partners. The land is already identified in a very scenic environment surrounded by hills and it will be one of the best stadiums in Kenya.

Mr. Speaker, Tharaka Nithi County proudly hosted the 8<sup>th</sup> Edition of the Kenya Youth Inter-County Sports Association (KYISA) Games 2023 for youth aged 18-23 years. This national event proved to be a significant empowerment for both the youth and the local business



community. Moving forward, we will actively build infrastructure and capacity for our sportsmen and women to be the best sporting County in the region and in the Country.

Mr. Speaker, and honourable members, the youth constitute the majority of the citizenry in the County. A significant portion of the youth population faces unemployment and is actively seeking productive opportunities. The Youth Empowerment Program aims to support unemployed youth through a competitive process. The program was launched in September 2021 and officially commissioned in October, under the Tharaka Nithi County Youth Empowerment Act, 2020. Registered youth groups apply seeking grants to revamp their income-generating activities. I urge our youth to remain active in groups and take advantage of government programs. We hope that in the coming year the Youth Empowerment Fund will be more productive as a means to an end for the youth.

Mr. Speaker, Tharaka Nithi County embraces the values of diversity and abundance, rooted in our unique cultures and rich heritage. Our culture is not only the essence of our identity but also a unifying force. It is imperative that we safeguard the invaluable cultural legacies of our communities, serving as reservoirs of wisdom for future generations. Mr. Speaker, we launched Documentation and Digitization (DoDi) of Indigenous Knowledge and Traditional Assets program, whose objective is to collect and protect traditional knowledge and cultural assets and expressions of our communities. This project empowered 30 youth, Njuri Ncheke and Community Based Organizations, all serving as custodians of our culture. We are carrying out a survey of our culture and tourism attractions and data collected will be presented to the National Museums of Kenya for documentation and subsequently used to promote our cultural heritage to the rest of the world.

In response to the ongoing El Niño rains, Mr. Speaker, my administration is steadfast in its commitment to mitigating adverse effects, preventing loss of lives through flooding, drowning, and associated disease outbreaks. I have established a multi-agency team for surveillance activities in areas affected and likely to be affected by the rains. The heightened rainfall during October-December period, attributed to the El Niño phenomenon, presents both blessings and challenges for County residents. While providing water to many households, it also poses potential challenges. This increased rainfall is expected to enhance agricultural production. As a County, we have taken proactive steps in collaboration with partners like the Red Cross, Kenya Forest Service and Kenya Meteorological Department to

assist families and households affected by the rains, including the provision of water treatment chemicals, insecticide-treated mosquito nets, and foodstuffs.

Mr. Speaker, honourable members, despite various drawbacks, my administration has ardently pursued completion of the County Assembly Chambers...

*(Applause)*

...and through the support of the Senate, the demanding journey towards completion of this crucial facility is drawing to a close.

*(Applause)*

If all goes well, Mr. Speaker, the next State of the County Address will be delivered in a modern state-of-the-art County Assembly Chambers within Kathwana Municipality.

*(Applause)*

We would like to thank you, Mr. Speaker, and your team and the County Executive team in the infrastructure department following the directive by the president for downscaling the size of the chamber to accommodate Ksh200 million we are now set with a budget in place. We will be able to procure a contractor who can do this work not in the next Financial Year but the next year that starts in two weeks.

*(Applause)*

So far, we have achieved various milestones towards the goal of establishing modern County Assembly Chambers, including formation of a Multi-Sectoral Committee for the Technical Project Review and Adoption of the Presidential Recommendations on Project Cost Estimation, ahead of implementation. Therefore, there is nothing that can stop us on our way to get us out of this shed that we are in at the moment. I call upon this honourable House to support the Executive in its bid to obtain the necessary budget allocations and provide the requisite oversight for completion of this project.

*(Applause)*

If you look around, Mr. Speaker, some of the visitors that we have in this House are already getting sleepy. The County Assembly Members are struggling; I am also soaked and my handkerchief is no longer a handkerchief but a wet cloth...

*(Laughter)*

... and I am not surprised that most of the times the County Assembly prefers to meet outside this chamber. You are completely justified. But this, Mr. Speaker, is coming to an end.

*(Applause)*

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, today, as we reflect on the progress and vision for Tharaka Nithi County, we stand at the intersection of opportunity and responsibility. Our collective journey towards prosperity is anchored in unity, innovation, and a deep commitment to the well-being of our people. As we move forward, let us remain steadfast in our dedication to the principles of inclusivity, sustainability, and cultural preservation. Through collaboration, innovation, and dedication, we can overcome challenges and build a future that is resilient, inclusive, and prosperous for all.

I extend my gratitude to this honourable House, our esteemed partners, and the resilient residents of Tharaka Nithi for their unwavering support. May our collective efforts pave the way for a thriving and harmonious future for our beloved County.

Thank you. God bless Kenya, God bless Tharaka Nithi, God bless you all. Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.

*(Applause)*

## **ADJOURNMENT**

**Hon. Speaker:** Honourable members, we forgot to recognize and welcome the members of the fourth estate. We are aware of their presence and they have been most welcome.

Honourable members, with the Governor having delivered his Annual State of the County Address in this House, the Speech now becomes a property of this House and Standing Order number 33 allows us to, once we resume session, have not more than four sittings to discuss the address by His Excellency the Governor.

Honourable Members, Standing Order number 38(1) provides for the regular sessions of the Assembly. It states: Except for the Session commencing immediately after a general election, the regular Sessions of the Assembly shall commence on the second Tuesday of February and terminate on the first Wednesday of December.

In light of the above, honourable members, the House stands adjourned until Tuesday 13<sup>th</sup> February 2024 at 9.30 a.m.

## **DEPARTURE OF HIS EXCELLENCY THE GOVERNOR**

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

*The County Assembly rose at 1.05 p.m.*