

Kenya National elections conference: Jane Marriott's speech

Your excellency the President of the Republic of Kenya, the Chairman of the IEBC, the IEBC Commissioners, the Chief Justice, representatives of Independent Commissions present, candidates and leaders of political parties present, Ambassadors from various foreign missions present, the chief guest – Your Excellency the Chairperson of the Commission African Union, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen...

I am delighted to be here today, and want to thank the IEBC for inviting me to this important event.

The UK is a firm believer in responsible, accountable governments that govern for all their people. We also know that such democracy should never be taken for granted. Democracy needs nurturing, growing and people who believe in it.

For those who follow British politics, you will have seen some of the recent twists and turns in the UK's democratic story. They have been just as gripping as Kenya's own debates as we head toward six sets of elections in less than a month's time.

This will be Kenya's 3rd election after the promulgation of the 2010 constitution. Like every other election, the 9th August general election is an essential opportunity for citizens to elect leaders of their choice, as set down by their rights guaranteed in Kenya's constitution.

The UK shares a longstanding partnership with Kenya, and is a committed friend. We have a Strategic Partnership, agreed by His Excellency President Kenyatta, and Prime Minister Boris Johnson. It is a five year partnership deliberately designed to span Kenya's elections this year and the UK's Parliamentary elections, due before 2025. Because the mutual interests of our two countries is greater than whomever is in power, in either place.

Our fundamental interest is that Kenya becomes ever more stable and prosperous, and continues to be a leading democracy, setting standards across the region. We have enjoyed standing shoulder to shoulder on the world stage with Kenya – on climate change, on education, at the United Nations Security Council. And we want that modern friendship and partnership, based on mutual respect, to continue.

I want to be very clear, therefore, that the funding and organising of elections is a Kenyan responsibility. Who Kenyans elect is a matter for the people of Kenya. The UK respects Kenya's sovereignty. We remain neutral and impartial.

At the request of Kenyan institutions, we have supported good governance through programming to provide technical support to build on lessons learned and improve standards, to help strengthen the democratic process. As I hope

you know by now, the international community does not fund the core budgets of Kenya's institutions, including that of the IEBC.

We have been proud to support reforms that have led to stronger and more accountable institutions, including the IEBC, the Judiciary, and civil society organisations. We want to congratulate these institutions, which have demonstrated accountability in the execution of their mandates, and the delivery of services to Kenyans.

UK support to Kenyan elections

In line with our commitment to helping strengthen governance institutions in Kenya, we have supported key electoral institutions to build upon the lessons from the 2017 general elections. Our three-year Kenya Elections Support Project (KESP), has provided targeted support at the request of the IEBC, in areas such as legal reforms, voter education, mobilisation for voter registration, strategic communications, and elections security management, which strengthens collaboration and coordination between the security agencies and the IEBC.

We have supported closer consultation, collaboration, and coordination amongst the key Government of Kenya electoral institutions. In this regard, we applaud the continued dialogue and engagement amongst the IEBC, Judiciary Committee on Elections, Office of Registrar of Political Parties, and the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions. The work between these institutions is important in building confidence in the electoral process.

We are pleased to see the strides made by the IEBC to prepare for the 2022 general elections, in line with its Elections Operations Plan and its Strategic Plan.

Our message

With 29 days remaining for the 9th August general elections, the world is watching the example Kenya sets. We all want to see free, fair, credible and peaceful elections – the contest and debate of ideas and issues, in a tone of friendship.

For our part, like the other speakers here, we encourage all sides in this election to use the remaining campaign period to preach peace, to act peacefully and to work in a manner that promotes confidence in the electoral process and electoral institutions.

As a friend of Kenya, the UK government calls on all present across all six types of election – and those whom they represent – to do their part in contributing to free, fair, credible and peaceful elections, before, during, and after the 9th August elections. We call on all candidates and political contestants to promote peace and unity, and not division or conflict.

As I said, the world's attention is on Kenya, and friends of Kenya such as the UK remain available to support the Kenyan people, the Government of Kenya and the institutions in their preparation for August's elections. I am confident that through this Conference, there will be renewed commitment by

all stakeholders to commit to free, fair, credible and peaceful elections.

With these many remarks, I congratulate the IEBC for organising what I am sure will be a successful National Elections Conference.

The winner in the 2022 Kenyan elections should be the independent institutions reflecting the will of the people. To those working hard – day in and day out – to deliver this, I say thank you and good luck.

ASANTENI SANA