

## **GOVERNOR TUNAI'S REMARKS DURING THE OFFICIAL OPENING OF THE NEW BUILDING AT NAROK LAW COURTS**

11th September, 2020

The Honourable Chief Justice and President of the Supreme Court of Kenya; The Honourable Judges and Chief Magistrate; County officials and other judicial officers present, and fellow citizens;

We are gathered here today to make another step forward, in ensuring administration of justice, and making adjudication of people's matters by the courts more efficient, and expanding the reigns of the rule of law.

My Lord, on behalf of the Narok County government and the residents of Narok, we take great pleasure in welcoming you here in Narok, the fast-growing crossroads town in the South-Rift, and a place that is very cosmopolitan.

The coming together this morning of the leadership of the judiciary and the leadership of the Narok County Government, together with the people, demonstrates our appreciation of the harmony and convergence of Law, Justice and Governance in serving the people, for the progress of the society.

My Lord Chief Justice, few important events stand out as significant in marking the milestones for access to justice for the benefit of the residents of this county.

On January 2017, two judges of the High Court of Kenya were posted to the Narok station (one to the Commercial Division and another to the Environment and Land Division), a historical event that transformed significantly the adjudication of matters here, and clearance of backlog of cases, some that were still pending for long periods such as 10 years, or 8 years or 5 years.

Before 2017, the people of Narok used to endure the fatigue of long hours of travel to Kisumu, or Kisii, Bomet or Nakuru to access a High Court.

Many times their hope for pursuing justice would shrink. Some would lose hope due to economic constraints, while others would wait for so long on the wheels of justice to turn, only to die years later before the courts would deliver judgements on their cases.

For a long time, judicial staff would work under strenuous circumstances, and their duty stations too being so far from their families.

Things are very different now. In just four short years, access to the High Court is nearly at an arm's length.

My Lord Chief Justice, the launch of this new Narok Court house offers us the opportunity to take stock of our joint efforts to strengthen the rule of law in dispensation of justice, facilitation of law and order, and elevating the rule of law as a pillar of good governance.

In building new court-houses we are in essence enabling efficient dispensation of justice and providing facilities that give judicial officers to operate in an environment that is conducive, more spacious, and to give room for deployment of more judicial officers.

Each day we make access to justice possible for citizens of Kenya through efforts such as this happening today, we give true meaning to the creed preserved by a line in our National Anthem, that "let justice be our shield and defender".

Judges, Magistrates and the entire galaxy of judicial officers play a critical role in the lives of all people here in Narok and everywhere else. From imposition of sentences; granting decrees of divorce; protecting minority rights; imposition of fines for various offences and enforcement of property rights – these issues affect people's lives here each day.

Courts are the shrines where all people – the rich and the poor- find safety in the dispensation of justice.

The growing appreciation of Alternative Dispute Resolution mechanisms as provided for in the Constitution, in settling of disputes, is effectively putting to use our traditional dispute resolution mechanisms, and also continues to make settlements of disputes quick, especially through mediation and arbitration.

Honourable Chief Justice, your high sense of public service, and fidelity to the expansion of access to justice mechanisms has led to the rapid collaboration between the judiciary and other institutions such as County Governments, and construction of various court houses across the country, this one here in Narok County being one of them.

When the request was made to us as a County to partner with the judiciary in combining financial resources for this project, we gladly facilitated 2 million shillings towards this great endeavor, and we are happy that today we have gathered to witness the success of this partnership.

Further, we have set aside land that will be used for construction of staff houses for judiciary staff, to ensure comfortable stay.

For a free, just and equitable society the advancement of the rule of law enables free men and women to pursue happiness while respecting the rights of others.

The establishment and presence of the High Court as well as the Environment and Land Court here in Narok altogether go a long way in presiding over and adjudicating various legal challenges faced by the people in this region. From land disputes; succession matters; gender-based violence, to criminal among others. The residents of Narok and all the neighbouring regions easily have all criminal and civil matters handled here.

Narok County is so vast, comprising 18,000 square kilometers, and with a population of 1.2 million permanent residents, distributed across the 6 constituencies/ sub-counties.

Considering these realities, my Lord Chief Justice, I would like to make some special appeal to you. While we now have two High Court divisions in Narok town, access to justice is still a nightmare in this vast county.

We request you to consider establishing a Magistrate's Court in Olulunga, an area located nearly 100 kilometers from here, whose residents have to spend a whole on the road coming to Narok town to seek the services of the courts. We plead too that you consider establishing another Magistrate's Court at Nairagie Ngare, an area whose thousands of residents have to endure long travels to come here to seek services of the courts.

Lastly, my Lord Chief Justice, it is really necessary to establish a Children's Court station here among the series of courts that we now have. Far too many children rights matters are in this region, and it would interest you to facilitate the establishment of such court here.

I am aware that setting up judicial stations come with no minimal costs, and that the Judiciary may have its financial challenges, I would nonetheless put this request on your laps for special consideration.

The preservation and expansion of freedom entirely depends on the broadening of access to justice. It is satisfying to note that such is part of the driving forces behind the Judiciary Transformation engagements, and making access to justice a public good.

Ours is an assurance to you and the judiciary that we fully commit to work closely with you for the advancement of access to justice for all people in Narok County.

In the end, when ordinary citizens put their trust in the justice system, they need to always leave appreciating that our courts, our judges, the chief magistrate, and magistrates, were there for them, administering justice fairly and impartially, and insuring civil discourse in order that respect for our justice system is preserved and perpetuated.

My Lord, we here in Narok, take great pride in the judicial officers presiding over the courts here, because the footprints of their impartiality are everywhere for the people to see.

We have to work together, so that all arms of government can deliver services effectively for the people. By building facilities fro administration of justice, as we are witnessing today, we are truly making freedom, liberty and justice part of our daily lives.

Thank you all and may God bless you.