

Mr. Speaker,

The Hon. Deputy Speaker of the County Assembly of Taita Taveta,

Hon. Majority Leader,

Hon. Minority Leader, Hon.

Members of the County Assembly,

Good afternoon.

1. Mr. Speaker,

It gives me great pleasure to address this distinguished assembly of our great county Taita Taveta. This occasion affords me the opportunity as your Senator, to share with you my thoughts and vision for our rich County. It also presents us with an opportunity to boost the working relationship between the senate and the county assembly for the sole benefit of our people. This being my first address to this assembly after the 2022 elections I must mention that it is a special address and am therefore truly honored and humbled to address this distinguished Assembly.

2. Mr.. Speaker.

Permit me to recognize and appreciate the election of the Governor of Taita Taveta county H.E. Andrew Mwadime and the deputy governor Hon Christine Kilalo. There are members of the executive who are integral components of our great county.

Let me also take this opportunity to sincerely congratulate you for being elected the speaker of the Taita Taveta county assembly and

Honorable members of this county assembly for being elected/nominated to serve in that capacity. Your position is a clear reflection of the trust and confidence that the people of this county bestowed on all of you. We have a huge responsibility to ensure that we uphold that trust.

3. Mr.. Speaker,

I wish to note that today's occasion is one that has clear statutory recognition through provisions in the Senate Standing Orders no. 253 (1) which states that “ A Senator **MAY**, in accordance with the rules of procedure of the County Assembly in which he or she is registered as a voter, attend and address the County Assembly or a committee of the County Assembly.

4. This standing order mandates me as your representative to the Senate to make an address to this house and always work in consultation and collaboration with the County Assembly and by extension, the honourable members of this assembly.

5. Mr. Speaker,

Let me state here without an iota of doubt that as a legislative arm of government, each one of us is a proponent, champion, benefactor and beneficiary of devolution. We must therefore never tire to articulate, stand by, fight for, and protect devolution as outlined in Article 174 of the Constitution of Kenya (COK,2010).

6. Mr. Speaker,

The COK (2010) devolved both power and resources from the centre to the County governments. We as elected leaders (both the senate and the County assemblies) have this onerous task to defend this devolution. When I look back at the development record in our County before devolution and compare it with the development after devolution, it is clear that a lot has been achieved after devolution, the challenges notwithstanding.

7. Mr. Speaker,

We must never, under any circumstance, allow our country to slump back to a centralized system of government which marginalized parts of the Country, the most affected being those which had minimal rainfall and lacked fertile soils and were generally deemed low potential areas. The Coast region generally and Taita Taveta County in particular were such Counties. Devolution therefore served as a framework to redistribute national resources equitably across the Country.

8. Mr. Speaker,

In the last ten years as the first two cycles of devolved governance, devolution was at its infancy. It gave us an opportunity to establish requisite structures including but not limited to the Executive and

the County Assemblies. We are now in the third cycle and we are at a point where county Assemblies are deemed to be starting from a point of advantage, building on the efforts and experiences of the first two Assemblies, and supported by relatively experienced staff that have benefitted from some capacity development and training on matters related to effective functioning of the Assembly. It is therefore important to note that my expectation and that of the people of this great county is that we should be able to get better service delivery since we are at an advantageous position compared to the last two governments.

9. Mr. Speaker,

Article 96 of the Constitution clearly stipulates the role of the Senate. The Senate represents and serves to protect the interests of the counties and their governments, participates in passing legislation concerning counties and determines allocation of national revenue among counties. In addition, the Senate plays a pivotal role in determining the allocation of national revenue and oversight of the same between the two levels of government through the enactment of the Annual Division of Revenue Act (DORA) and among Counties through the County Allocation of Revenue Bill (CARA) as well as the County Additional Allocation of Revenue Act.

10. Mr. Speaker,

The Constitution also bestows on the Senate, the unique responsibility to participate in the oversight of State Officers.

The senate has been bestowed as part of oversight, the role to impeach the governor and the president when such a need arises.

11. Mr. Speaker,

There are many observations that I would like to make concerning our oversight role as senate and the County assembly.

Some of the consistent findings in most Auditor General reports found that there were inaccuracies in financial statements, a lot of expenditures could not be ascertained due to lack of supporting documents and County government staff having unsurrendered and multiple imp rests, unexplained vehicles registration numbers, unexplained voided payments among others.

12. Mr. Speaker,

It is however good to note that there were measures put in place to improve on the issue of imprests which led to their reduction to about ksh 2,500,000 for the year which ended in June 30th 2022 as compared to Ksh 5,900,000 for the year which ended June 30th 2021. The holding of imprests by county officers continues to hoard money which would otherwise have been used for development. In the same breadth, supplying of goods and services without providing the required documents raises suspicion as to whether these goods and services were actually supplied. Lack of documentation impedes the payments for the goods and services provided and has been one reason for the rising of pending bills.

13. Mr. Speaker,

In the financial statements of 2021/2022 FY, the pending bills have been reported to stand at Ksh 1.2 b. It is not clear why the County executive continues to accumulate more and more pending bills yet pending bills are supposed to serve as the first charge on the County receipts in the subsequent financial year. Continued

accumulation of pending bills only serves to hurt very innocent business men and women who have provided goods and services to our County. There is therefore need to form a good debt management strategy and a framework for clearing the pending bills.

14. Mr. Speaker,

Another milestone that has been reported in the 2021/22 audit report is the existence of the Asset register. This is lawful and there is need to continue updating it to ensure the assets accumulated over the years are safeguarded. However the Auditor general has observed many anomalies that make the asset register which include instances where land has been grabbed and encroached as is the case of 20.23 ha reserved for showground under Voi Municipality. There is also a case of public records for Chawia Wusi Kaya where 18 parcels of land registered under County Council are missing. Clearly, the Committee in charge of the lands docket has its job well cut: to investigate and report its findings to this honourable house.

15. Mr. Speaker,

The Public Finance management Act 2012 provides that no Public Funds shall be applied outside a County's planning framework. This act speaks to County Integrated Development Plan (CIDP) which is a 5 year plan that guides the development priorities that inform the annual budget process. Section 108 requires that the CIDP outlines the County development goals covering 5 years. It informs the County's annual budget, The County's 10 year sectoral

plan and county's 10 year spatial plan using the GIS and City and Municipal Plans.

16. Mr. Speaker.

The CIDP contains specific goals and objectives, a costed implementation plan, provisions for monitoring and evaluation and clear reporting mechanisms. In drawing the CIDP, there is need to ensure that the projects and programmes are in line with the national and global goals like the Vision 2030 and Sustainable development goals (SDGs). The SDGs stress on various ideals germane to the general understanding of how to create a conducive environment for humanity to exist while enjoying human dignity. These ideals include poverty reduction, achievement of food security and improved agriculture, Good health amongst our population, access to quality education, achievement of gender equality, access to clean water among others.

17. Mr. Speaker,

With this background in place, it is good to look back at the objectives of the CIDP 2 which ran from 2018 to 2022. The goals in the CIDP 2 were largely fashioned around the need to achieve development which is aligned to the SDGs. These included:

- to ensure provision of quality and clean water for domestic use
- provision of quality health services.

- provision of water for irrigation to provide food security.
- Provision of access to education (ecde and vocational training) among other goals.
- The question that begs answers is to what extent were these goals and objectives achieved, and if not why?

As an assembly whose role key is to offer primary oversight to the County Executive, it is imperative that we interrogate the performance in the five year plan and see what succeeded and what failed, and after such evaluation, focus on areas that need improvement.

18. Mr. Speaker,

I would like to advise strongly that, as a best practice, as we draw our objectives in the CIDP, there is need to put clear targets which then can be used to measure the outcomes. For instance, on the objective of provision of water, a clear statement of how many projects eg boreholes projects were conceived to be constructed in order to improve on the water abstraction and distribution. This was clearly missing in CIDP 2. In the evaluation of the success of performance indicators done by the County executive, the statement appearing in the audit report for FY 2021/22 indicates that 60% of households have access to clean and portable water. This indicator is likely to be inaccurate since most areas continue

to suffer from scarcity of supply of the water resource and therefore more funds need to be applied in this area.

19. Mr. Speaker,

A proper evaluation of the implementation level and outcomes of performance indicators is vital since it forms the baseline which will then inform the monitoring and evaluation of the implementation progress of the CIDP 3 (2022-2027). In strategic management we say that whatever gets measured, gets done.

20. Mr. Speaker,

In 2020, the Country and the world at large were struck by the COVID 19 pandemic that tested the core of our Healthcare system. Many people lost their lives because the pandemic found us ill prepared to deal with it. The pandemic however granted us opportunity to acquire some of the vital equipment necessary to deal with difficult ailments such as the COVID 19 pandemic. The national government appropriated funds to Counties to help them deal with the pandemic. The funds were ring fenced to construct isolation wards, buy Personal Protective Equipments for the healthcare workers and the populace, and construction and purchase of Intensive care units (ICU).

Towards this, it has not been possible to tell if there

exists an operational ICU in our County. This largely is due to the misuse of COVID 19 funds by the County officials as reported by the Special Auditor general's report on COVID 19 funds. It is sad to note that to date the investigative agencies have not unraveled this scam and presented evidence for prosecution of those who are culpable. The County assembly has not publicised their findings on the expenditure of the funds to the public. To instil confidence of the public to the assembly, there is need to form a reporting mechanism between the public and the assembly, As things stand, the public is not confident that the County Assemblies of the past have been performing their oversight role adequately.

21. Mr. Speaker,

It is noteworthy that the proposal to have the ICU facility in Mwatate was not well conceived given that the County Referral Hospital is Moi in Voi and that there was need to have the ICU at the referral facility. It is also important to note that there is a possibility for one to move from ICU to a mortuary in case of death. There is no mortuary in Mwatate hospital and it would be cumbersome to transport dead bodies from Mwatate to other mortuaries in and out of the County. Be that as it may, there is need to plan for construction of a mortuary in Mwatate sub county hospital and set up an ICU facility in Moi hospital.

22. Mr. Speaker,

One of the objectives that was set to be achieved in the CIDP 2 was on youth empowerment. I note with great concern that what was stated as performance indicators for youth empowerment is construction of stadiums, which are Moi, Wundanyi and Mwatunge. I am convinced beyond doubt that these are low ranking indicators for measuring youth empowerment. The priority indicators should be those that will empower our youths economically. Though sports may be considered as source of employment, it is not a significant number of youths who have benefitted through the sports sector. It is my considered opinion that we should focus on more formidable avenues of empowering our youths in areas like access to tertiary education and making funds available for doing business through Access to Govt Procurement Opportunities (AGPO), support for agribusiness and value addition of agricultural produce, support for artisanal mining among other avenues.

23. Mr. Speaker,

Such initiatives may need enabling legislation to achieve.

Most of the financing to youths, women and pwds available from the national govt do not cater for start ups businesses. There is need to come up with legislation that supports start up business ventures

for our youths. A good framework of financing small and micro enterprises in the County with nominal charges was the DATU SAWAZISHA FUND which currently is in limbo. There is need to either revive it or start a similar Fund that would ensure Datuzens benefit from business from the County govt and CDF and for poverty alleviation and add quality of their life. As it is now, most people are shying away from County govt tenders because the financial institutions are not ready to offer finances to the suppliers of goods and services since they are uncertain the loans will be repaid.

24. Mr. Speaker,

Allow me at this juncture to comment about the issue of financing of education through the County Education Fund Board. The amendment on the legislation anchoring the Board in statute has raised a lot of discussion which is very healthy in a democratic society. Of great concern is the removal of disbursement of money to beneficiaries through the Higher Education Loans Board.

The questions that are being asked is whether the students should be given financial support as loans or bursaries/scholarship. A cursory glance at the issue would make one choose the option of bursary.

25. Mr. Speaker,

My honest opinion is that much as the popular answer is to disburse this support through bursaries may seem popular, my considered opinion is that thus method makes the funding model unsustainable since the money is never recovered. The National Higher Education Funding model has existed for many years because it is managed as a revolving fund, so that those who benefit and get employment, repay the loans and pave way for others to also benefit. The reports that exist within the County govt indicate that already the money collected and ready to be loaned to other deserving cases are in the upwards of ksh 8,000,000. This is just the beginning and with better structures, the loan model remains the most sustainable.

26. It has been our experience that money disbursed through bursaries is normally as little as ksh 5000 whereas the money through the loan model can be as high as ksh 60,000. The little amounts disbursed through bursaries may hinder access to higher education for our children. Additionally, the disbursement has more often than not been discriminatory and marred by political considerations, nepotism, cronyism, causing needy and deserving cases to miss out on funds.

27. Mr. Speaker,

I would like to thank the governor for returning the law to the assembly to review it and have the loans reinstated even though honourable members still could not agree with that. The role of enacting legislation is solely that of this honourable house. I would still plead with you honourable members to evaluate the functioning of the Funding model with a view to reviewing it at the opportune moment in the near future.

28. Mr. speaker,

The worst impediment to growth of devolution and implementation of projects and programmes in the Counties is corruption. The county assembly has powers to end corruption in the county executive if they Commit themselves to do so. The COK 2010 article185(3) requires the county Assembly to ensure that the county executive and other county organs perform their responsibility according to the laid down rules and regulations. Article195 of the same constitution gives the county assembly the powers of the high court to summon any person for questioning on any issue of interest to the county assembly. Additionally, section124 the Public Finance Management Act requires the County executive (treasury) to respond to any matter on finance raised by the county assembly within14 days. The county

government Act in its section 40, allows the county assembly to pass a resolution requiring the governor to remove from office County executive Committee members. This Gives the county assembly the power to solve most of the corruption cases administratively. Article 185 recognizes that the county assembly can also solve some of the problems through legislation. There is need to formulate laws and policies that close down the avenues for corrupt practices.

29. Mr. Speaker,

On the part of the senate, we have introduced the procedure for removal from office of Governors and County Executive Committee Members (CECM), speakers and their deputies, by way of impeachment, by clearly defining the roadmap and threshold for the same, in The County govt impeachment procedure bill. The bill has been published and is in its first reading. This is also aimed at ensuring the process is clear and discouraging starting process of impeachment on flimsy grounds. As you may well know, all Kenyans are supposed to go through fair administrative action. This law, if enacted, will ensure that issues of corruption and acts of malfeasance are dealt with expeditiously.

It is good to note that the County Assemblies are bestowed with the process of impeachment, while the trial of state officers undergoing an impeachment process takes place at the Senate.

30. Mr. speaker,

The constitution in its article 229 section 8 requires members of county assembly to after 3 months of release of the auditor general's report, to consider, adopt and take appropriate actions on these commendations of the report.

There is need to for the Assembly to communicate these resolutions to the relevant government agencies for action. As it is now, County assemblies wait for the senate to pass resolutions on reports on the Auditor general which end up delaying investigations, given that the senate is supposed to look at reports for all County govts which makes it have backlogs.

31. Mr. Speaker,

Apart from the funds that are received by the Counties from the National sharable revenue, there is need to increase own source revenue. From the report of the Auditor general for the year ending June 2022, it is not possible to ascertain whether all the funds reached the County Revenue Fund Account because it points to possibility of revenue leakage. There is need to seal all the revenue leakages and the most appropriate way is to make the revenue

collection is fully digitized. It is disheartening that even after the Auditor general and the senate insisting and recommending that revenue collection be fully digitized, the County has since retained the manual revenue collection. In this regard, I urge the County govt to adhere to these recommendations in order to seal pilferage of County funds.

32. Mr. Speaker,

As the senate of Kenya, we have continuously and without tiring, pushed for higher allocations to our Counties, This has seen the sharable revenue increase year after year. It is good to note the senate has played a key role in ensuring that these increments are achieved despite the resistance from the executive. A case in point is when there was attempt to reduce County sharable revenue to 310b in the year 2021/22 down from 316.5 allocated in 2019/20, during discussion of DORA. After a long struggle we agreed on a consensus to leave it at 316,5b.

33. Mr. Speaker,

Second instance is when the senate was passing the third generation formula, when the proposed formula was going to see change of parameters for sharing revenue amongst Counties. Since the National executive was proposing the sharing of 316.5b, some counties were gaining revenue while others were to lose. Taita

Taveta County was to lose 388 million. Most of us stood the ground and marshalled numbers to defeat the executive and were able to push for revenue to counties to go up by 53.5b to 370 billion in that year of 2021/22. We also pushed for retention of second generation formula as the third generation formula. The next basis for sharing revenue will be passed in 2025/26 FY.

34. Mr. Speaker

We must however remain vigilant of the powerful forces in the Kenya Kwanza government which might be hellbent to frustrate devolution. To illustrate these forces Mr. Speaker is by what happened this year during the passage of the 2023/2024 division of revenue Act. Whereas Commission for Revenue Allocation proposed a share of Ksh 407 B to counties, Treasury proposed a figure of 385B is 22b less. They used their numbers in the National Assembly and the senate to have the DORA bill pass. In the senate, Kenya Kwanza voted 25 senators for 385B against 8 senators for 407B.

35. Mr. Speaker,

The sharable revenue is projected to grow by 429.57 billion equivalent to 20% increase from the allocation in DORB, 2022. However the national government allocation will increase by ksh 413.27 billion (23.43%) while County Equitable share will increase

by 15.425 billion (4.2%). This will mean that all the goods and services budgeted for may not be achieved since the 4.2 % will not cater for inflationary costs, which is at 8.4%.

36.Mr. Speaker,

This year, DORB factored in an allocation on Equalization Fund. The Equalization Fund is supposed to be appropriated using Equalization Fund Act. Parliament as since passed the Equalization Fund bill which shared Ksh 8,654.943,469 being 0.5% of all revenue (Ksh 1.730 Trillion) of the most recent audited accounts, approved by National Assembly (FY 2019/20).Taita Taveta has only two wards benefitting from this Fund. These are Kasighau ward and Challa Ward which received 6.3 and 6.9 respectively. The truth is that almost all wards of Taita Taveta County deserve to benefit from this fund. I will be seeking a statement from the Senate Committee of finance and budget to try and understand how the study by CRA left out the rest of the wards during the drawing of the second-generation formula for sharing the equalisation fund. This fund is meant to help Counties build road networks, fund water and electricity projects. Most of the Our County really needs these services and so any formula which denies Taita Taveta these funds is not reliable at all.

37. Mr. Speaker,

It is important to note that treasury has continued to allocate huge sums of money to national government ministries, departments and agencies for functions that are largely devolved. For instance, 25 billion was added to the ministry of agriculture, yet agriculture is devolved. The national govt share of revenue will be Ksh. 2,177,867,000,000 (out of which Ksh 11,016,000,000 shall be transferred to Counties as additional Conditional allocations.

38. Mr. Speaker,

Another bad sign that the current National executive is not pro devolution, is by their continuous delay in disbursement of Funds to Counties in time. This is happening even after the senate of Kenya passing an elaborate disbursement schedule as required by law. The County governors have been seen time and again lamenting in mainstream media about the non-remittance of sharable revenue to Counties and have even threatened to shut down the Counties. We must therefore vigorously resist further attempts to return Kenya to a Centralized system of governance.

39. Mr. Speaker,

Library Services being a devolved function as per the fourth schedule, has now been unbundled and attendant resources amounting to 425 million identified and proposed to be fully

transferred to County governments. This amount of 425 million has been included in the equitable share for allocation to 33 County govts in a phased approach starting from FY 2023/24 at 100%, 75% for FY 2024/25 (balance of 25% to be shared as equitable) and 25% for the FY 2025/26 (Balance of 75% to be shared as equitable. From the fourth FY that is 2026/27, the 33 County governments will be required to integrate the salaries of these staff into their payroll, after which the entire 425 million will be available for sharing to all the 47 County governments. Having said this, it is good to note that the Senate of Kenya raised concern about the inclusion of the 425 million for Library services as part of County equitable share. This is because these funds have already been earmarked for a specific purpose and cannot be distributed using the revenue sharing formula. Indeed, the resources have been curved out from the Kenya National Library Services recurrent expenditure and not from the projected revenue.

40. Mr. Speaker,

A lot of focus must be placed on planning, execution and monitoring of projects and programs by the County Executive. This is where our role as oversight arms of government, we must up our game to make sure that our people get goods and services and in a timely manner. To this end, the senate of Kenya has continued to

allocate more funds to County Assemblies under CARA, to ensure that assemblies are well resourced to carry out their mandate.

41. Mr. Speaker,

I equally agree with the Members of County Assemblies in their clamor for more pay. The job that they do in making laws, representation and oversight is such a gargantuan task which a pay commensurate to it. Given the nature of financial demands from the public, the MCAs become vulnerable and can easily be corrupted by the executive to turn a blind eye to corruption in the Counties. It behooves each one of us to support the call for better remuneration for our MCAs.

42. Mr. Speaker,

Additionally, I have always pushed for financial autonomy of the County Assemblies to allow them independence to carry out their mandate without undue influence from the executive, for fear of being denied access to finances. From the foregoing, you may be seeing the value that assemblies add to devolution. If County Assemblies go to bed with the Executive, then we shall surely miss out on development. It is always good to learn from experience and one of the experiences to learn from was the dalliance that the executive of the last regime had with the assembly. We witnessed serious underdevelopment. The enlightened public reciprocated by

voting out most of those whom they felt did not work well. It is my sincere hope that the good team in place right now in the assembly will not be compromised along the way and drop the ball. Lets maintain the good work and the eagerness that you have exhibited since you took oath.

43. Mr.. Speaker,

In carrying out your mandate, you are advised to be conversant with the national legislations that guide most of our oversight work namely COK 2010, County government Act, The public Audit Act, The Cities and Municipalities Act, The Public Finance Management Act and their attendant regulations.

In the case where the provisions of the national laws are not adequate to address challenges in the County level, there is need to make laws suitable for our County. To facilitate the making of County laws, several pieces of legislation have been considered and some have been signed into law. These include the County Attorney Act to ensure drafting of laws, County Government printers bill to ensure speedy publishing of the bills among others.

In this regard, I would urge as many members to come with private members bills which would go a long way in compelling the executive in implementing projects and programs for the good of our County. Most legislators have opted to sponsor motions so as

to come up with specific resolutions. The downside of motions is that they give a choice for the executive choose to implement or not to implement. This does not mean that motions are not important. There are many motion discussed and passed, and their resolutions and recommendations informed birth of new laws or proposals of amendments to existing laws.

44.Mr. Speaker Sir,

The boundary conflicts between our County and neighboring Counties have continued to be thorny issue among Datuzens. These are boundary Conflicts between Taita Taveta and Makueni, Taita Taveta and Kwale and Taita Taveta and Kajiado. I may want to refrain from addressing substance of the issues surrounding boundaries between Kwale and Taita Taveta, Makueni and Taita Taveta because of the sub judice rule.

However, it is good to note that there is a report done by a task Force led by Wilson Mwangombe whose report speaks to encroachment by our neighbours to our County Land. We await the outcome of the court cases and see how pursue the issues after getting the ruling. I have presented statements and petitions on the same on the last parliament and I will not relent until we get our boundaries restored to where they were originally. I would strongly urge the County Assembly to consider petitioning the Senate to

look at these boundary issues and use the information of the Mwang'ombe report as an authority and basis for consideration.

45. Mr. Speaker,

In the previous regime of this County, it is sad to note that the Boundary between Kajiado and Taita Taveta Counties was varied by the two governors of Taita Taveta and Kajiado Counties. I have requested for statement from the Senate Committee on Devolution to give me an explanation the lawfulness of the action by the two governors.

Article 188 of the COK 2010 is clear on the procedure to be followed in varying county boundaries. That mandate is given to the parliament of Kenya. I have requested the committee on devolution to work hand in hand with the committee on Lands and the Committee on national Cohesion so that we can get answers.

46. My Speaker,

The way to resolve the numerous boundary disputes between different Counties in Kenya is through making legislation to operationalize article 188. In the last Parliament the senate passed The County Boundaries Bill and forwarded it to the national assembly for concurrence. That bill lapsed in the national Assembly. It has been republished afresh in the senate and it is in the second reading.

47. Mr. speaker,

Our people have continued to suffer lack of water supply. Year in year out, politicians campaign on the platform of solving water crisis. In the last govt, a rig was purchased to dig boreholes to enhance supply of water. After spending a colossal sum to purchase the rig, I did not see any effort to provide water through digging boreholes for the public. What I hear is that it was turned to doing private jobs of drilling boreholes. Whereas that may not be a bad thing if it is used as a revenue stream, the original idea of doing public work should remain as the main focus. What the current assembly needs to do is to find out how much work the Drilling machine has done so far and find out the plans in place to ensure boreholes are done. In case the rig has been misused corruptly, then the culprits must be brought to answer.

48. Talking about provision of water, there are several boreholes that were done as early as 2015, produced water but the water has not been abstracted and given to people for use. I found one such borehole during my oversight work in Chala ward, Mpakani

village. There is need to ensure reticulation of this water from this borehole.

49. Mr. Speaker,

I know there are other such incomplete projects which need to be completed. Incomplete projects are raised as audit queries by Auditor general because citizens don't get value for their money spent in incomplete projects. There is need for assembly select committees to flag such projects and demand that the executive prioritizes their completion. These include but not limited to the Moi Municipal Stadium, The Lumi Dispensary, The Bomeni women market,

50. Mr. Speaker,

Another project is the Njoro Kubwa Water project which was to supply 86% to irrigable land and 14% to domestic water. The previous govt was against the project so they did not approve. I request this govt to pursue the project to see how we can increase our County Gross Domestic Product. All the fodder produced and the animals that would be reared in the ranches would produce revenue through Cess and PAYE from the employees.

51. Mr. Speaker,

Still on the subject of water, we need to really think about building of check dams and harvest rain water. When it rains all the water goes to the oceans as if we have a tender to fill the ocean. The County govt needs to fund the Feasibility studies for these dams to establish the places where these dams can be built and their costs. When that is done, it is possible to get investment partners to finance as grants or loans.

52. Mr. Speaker,

Apart from the small water projects, other ongoing world bank funded water projects need our oversight too so that our people get access to water. Remember these are loans that will be paid by future generations. The National government has time and again promised to construct the Mzima 2 water project. The news from the Ministry of Water and Sanitation that the project has been terminated and that there is a new design being done came as a shock to many. We will continue pushing the National government to expedite that process to make sure we get water supply to our people soonest possible.

53. Mr. Speaker,

There is need to look at avenues to raise own source revenue is extremely important. This is because the sharable revenue to not

being divided equitably and more money is remaining at national govt to service the national debt obligations. Increasing our revenue makes sense because of the need to increase salaries for County employees, give them promotions, to generally cater inflation and to reduce the percentage of wage bill to County total revenue which currently is at 53%, (instead of the allowed 35%).

When the wage bill is too high, there is little money left for development. There is need to freeze on employment and do proper staff rationalization to check the spiraling wage bill.

54. Mr. Speaker,

Still on the same issue of revenue, I have sadly noted that our levies for business permits are on the higher side compared to neighboring counties. As a government, we need to facilitate our people to do business and not to tax them out of business. This year I will be very keen on public participation of the County Finance bill to see how we involve and take the views of the market people.

55. Mr. Speaker,

I have spoken in many forums on how we are mistreating our market people overtaxing them. They are first charged for the ground market fee and afterwards, they are expected to pay for the toilet services. This is double taxation because the ground levy is to ensure this market woman or man access water, toilet, security,

cleaning and even lighting services. The toilet charge should be charged to the people who are not doing any business in town. Lets create a conducive environment for businesses to thrive; which is our role as government.

56. Mr. Speaker,

During the president's visit to the County in June 2023, he decreed that the revenue from Tsavo National Park be shared on a 50%, 50% basis between the National government and the County of Taita Taveta. When I request to know how much our county was set to get from this sharing formula, I was surprised to get information from the ministry of Tourism that the County would not get anything from that share. On this, I would strongly urge that the County assembly petitions the senate with specific prayers that the government implements the presidential directive immediately. The proceeds from the Park will add substantially to our own source revenue.

It is disheartening to note that within this new Administration of Kenya Kwanza, Kajiado County was handed over Amboseli National Park. What wrong have we done to deserve this discrimination of not being allowed to benefit from our Tsavo National park, which covers 62% of our Land.

57. Mr. Speaker

There are many land issues in Kenya and our County has not been left out. There are cases where land has its lease expired and the renewal is done unprocedurally. There are pieces of land whose lease have expired and the County government is clear that the renewal should not be granted. An example is Machungwani land in Taveta. I presented a petition to the senate and our recommendation is that that land should be adjudicated and given to people who are already farming there. I may not comment further since this is a matter before a court of law.

58. Mr. Speaker,

The other land with issues is the Msammbweni land issue, which we addressed as a senate through a petition. We recommended that the Commissioner of Lands erred in changing the conditions in the original lease that the investor build the Factory within two years after the grant and the land should not be sold. Our recommendations are that the circumstances of the change of conditions be investigated further by EACC. There is also need to pursue purchase of the land through Settlement Fund Trustee Board, so that the land can be bought by government to settle the people living there as squatters.

59. Mr. Speaker,

The other land is the Voi Point limited Land. The case is in the Court so I may not dwell on the substance of the matters being adjudicated in the Courts but just to mention that the residents of Mkamenyi village petitioned the senate and the land owners accepted to add the 35 acres of land to 50 acres to the 28 families living in the land.

60. Mr. Speaker,

Human wildlife Conflict (HWC) has remained a thorny issue in our County. Though the National Govt in trying to carry out mitigation measures, the measures have not adequately addressed these challenges. There cases where there are projects to build electric fences, but communities and Wildlife service have not agreed on where it should pass. There are areas where erecting electric fences have proved difficult. An example is the Maktau location which is surrounded by national park leaving it in between like an Ireland. In 2019, I brought the senate committee on Tourism to try see how to stop the killing of cattle by the wild cats. The KWS proposed to build a cage where people would put the animals in one place at night for safety. The idea looked unpopular and unworkable to the residents.

61. Mr. Speaker,

Electric fences in areas like Kishushe, Ngolia and mbololo wards also prove to be difficult to build given that the road from Voi to Mackinon cut through the park at some points. The solutions to HWC have proven to be quite complex. At this point I would like to congratulate the members of County Assembly who held demonstrations to protest the inaction by the KWS when required to respond in good time when called upon to scare away the wildlife to the Tsavo Conservation area. Allow me to also condemn the police officers scuttled the peaceful demonstrations by the MCAs by use of excessive force.

The other method of mitigation of these conflicts is through compensation. The govt has failed on this respect to provide adequate budget for compensation. Many people have lost lives and livelihoods as a result of HWC but it takes a lot of time to compensate them.

62. Mr. Speaker,

I have taken time to look at the bill and proposed some amendments to the Wildlife management Act of 2013 but the bill did not go through the National assembly as the dubbed it a money bill. I will look at the bill once more to remove the offensive clauses like the ones that require one to fence off their land to prevent animals from destroying crops. I have republished the

amendment bill again since the two speakers of parliament have agreed that the bill involves Counties and therefore can emanate from the Senate. In this bill, I am seeking to reduce the time for compensation to be below two years, the restore compensation for harm (maiming or death) by snake bites among other critical provisions.

63. Mr. Speaker,

There is need to for the County government to set aside funds and collaborate with national govt and seek to mitigate through construction of an electric fence in all areas where there is HWC. In my consultation with KWS and the ministry of Tourism, the funds required to construct an electric fence around the County is about ksh 300,000,000. This can be shared between the County and National govt. The County needs to come in and help its citizens even when wildlife management is not a devolved function. The most important thing is to have our people to secure their lives and livelihoods from Wildlife menace.

64. Mr. Speaker Sir,

In conclusion, the challenges notwithstanding, we can still make our County of Taita Taveta Prosperous if we create synergy by working together to ensure that the enact the requisite laws and policies to guide on each aspect of governance. We need to remain

vigilant and do proper oversight to ensure prudent use of resources meant to deliver goods and services to the great people of Taita Taveta.

I would like to wish our Muslim brothers well in this Holy month of Ramadhan. For the Christian brothers, I wish the well during the upcoming Easter holidays.