

NATIONAL STAKEHOLDERS' CONVENTION- OPENING REMARKS

Bishop Dr. Calisto Odede, Chairman Evangelical Alliance of Kenya:

Some of us who are here got together some time back in a discussion on the direction that the country is taking and there were some recommendations that we needed to have a national conference that would bring together faith actors and different stakeholders so that we can look at the direction that the country is heading especially as we face 2027 elections.

Therefore, the reason why we are gathered together here is because we believe that we need to address ourselves to the situation that is facing the country today. Although we may be coming from different faith persuasions and professional backgrounds, we are convinced that it is when we get together in an open and honest conversation that can avoid certain pitfalls but also address ourselves to the challenges early.

The Nature of the Dialogue:

This requires the various aspects of dialogue:

Dialogue of the Hand: This is when we come together around projects and activities that if we jointly participate in our returns would be greater than when we were engaging alone. Working together on a common cause. As we look forward to 2027, our prayer is that Kenya will remain one peaceful, united country, before, during and after the 2027 elections. We can consider this as our project.

Dialogue of the Head: This is when we come together in discussions and exchange ideas which will be helpful in stabilising the nation as provide solutions to the various organs and entities which are given the mandate to deliver free, fair and credible elections.

Dialogue of the Heart: This meeting having been called by the religious umbrella organisations of KCCB, SUPKEM, NCKC and EAK is undergirded by the fact that we all believe in God whom we worship and we can trust him with the heart matters on issues affecting the nation. We do trust that we will be engaged in prayers in our various forms so that God will intervene in the issues affecting Kenya.

Separation of powers and checks and balances

While it is obvious that the constitution grants the people of Kenya power over the affairs of the country, this power has been distributed for the purpose of checks and balances in Executive, National Assembly, Senate, Judiciary, independent commissions, independent offices and the county governments. The Independent Commissions include, Kenya National Commission on Human Rights, Ethics and Anti-Corruption Commission, Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission, Commission on Administrative Justice and the Commission on Revenue Allocation. A number of these bodies are critical to the effective delivery of a free and fair elections in 2027.

Challenges Facing Us:

While our constitution is remarkably progressive, our politics culture seems to be less progressive as we are still struggling with

- patronage;
- ethnic mobilisation;
- corruption;
- impunity;
- political exclusion;
- winner-takes-all politics;
- abuse of state resources;
- weak accountability.

In other words, we changed the rules more quickly than we changed the players' behaviour.

On top of this we still have the challenge of implementing both the letter and the spirit of Chapter six of the constitution in our elections as we still have characters with questionable integrity still competing in our politics. As a result of this there is a great trust deficit upon our leaders which has led to national pessimism upon the leaders. Kenya does not primarily suffer from a shortage of laws. We suffer from a shortage of obedience to the laws we already have.

Important areas to address:

It should be very clear to all and sundry that our leaders are not violating the constitution in any way including the bill of rights. Failure to do so increases the level of mistrust and affirms that some are favoured more than others. This should not be the case regardless of the ethnic, gender, age, religious and political affiliation.

But secondly there should be restoration of trusting in the independent commissions and organs. The greatest constitutional crisis may not be the absence of institutions but loss of public trust in institutions. We need citizens to believe that:

- courts are independent;
- elections are credible;
- police protect citizens;
- Parliament represents citizens;
- commissions work;
- public money is protected.
- picketing is legal

It is therefore paramount that as we enter into the elections for 2027, Kenya must have:

- an independent IEBC;
- credible voter registration;
- transparent electoral technology;
- impartial security forces;
- responsible political speech;
- protection of journalists;
- protection of peaceful assembly;
- mechanisms for resolving disputes;
- political leaders committed to accepting constitutional outcomes.

As a church, EAK and other stakeholders, we have embarked on massive countrywide prayers and civic education that will empower individuals at the grassroots to make

informed decisions on who their candidates should be. And may God help us to have an election where people are not displaced and nor killed, and elections delivered in a transparent manner.

Amen