

**OPENING AND CONVENOR
WELCOME REMARKS**

BY

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**NATIONAL STAKEHOLDERS
CONVENTION**

**UFUNGAMANO HOUSE, NAIROBI |
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SALUTATION

- ✓ **The Chairman of the Kenya Conference of Catholic Bishops,**
- ✓ **The Chairman of the Supreme Council of Kenya Muslims,**
- ✓ **Fellow Religious Leaders,**
- ✓ **Leaders of Constitutional Commissions and Independent Offices,**
- ✓ **Representatives of Government and State Agencies,**
- ✓ **Leaders of Civil Society, the Media, Youth, Women and Persons with Disabilities,**
- ✓ **Distinguished Guests,**
- ✓ **Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Good morning.

It is my great honour and privilege, on behalf of the Kenya Religious Leaders Forum, to warmly welcome you to this **National Stakeholders Convention on Democratic, Credible and Peaceful 2027 Elections.**

We meet at a particularly important moment in our nation's journey. We are less than one year away from the 2027 General Elections, and the responsibility before us is not merely to prepare for an election day. It is to safeguard an **entire electoral cycle** - before, during and after the elections.

Our history reminds us that elections in Kenya have too often been accompanied by tension, violence, exclusion, mistrust and, at times, the weakening of institutions that are meant to protect our constitutional democracy. We therefore cannot afford complacency.

But we also come here not merely to lament our past. **We come to shape our future.**

The Kenya Religious Leaders Forum - bringing together **the Evangelical Alliance of Kenya, the Kenya Conference of Catholic Bishops, the Supreme Council of Kenya Muslims and the National Council of Churches of Kenya** - has come together because we believe that the wellbeing of Kenya must remain greater than political, ethnic, religious or individual interests.



Our institutions have, over many decades, stood alongside Kenyans in moments of national difficulty. We have defended human dignity, promoted peace, supported democratic participation and spoken for justice. As we approach 2027, we renew that commitment.

OUR PURPOSE

The purpose of this Convention is simple but profound: **to ask whether Kenya is ready for democratic, credible and peaceful elections in 2027- and, where we identify gaps, to agree on what must be done now.**

We must therefore, be willing to ask difficult questions.

1. Are our constitutional commissions and independent offices sufficiently prepared and sufficiently independent to discharge their mandates without fear or favour?
2. Are our political institutions prepared to conduct competition within the boundaries of the Constitution?
3. How do we confront the growing monetization of politics and the influence of illicit money?
4. How do we prevent violence, goonism, hate speech and ethnic polarization from becoming instruments of political competition?
5. How do we protect young people from being recruited, exploited and used as instruments of political violence?
6. How do we ensure that women, youth and persons with disabilities are not merely spectators but meaningful participants in our democracy?

And perhaps, as religious leaders, we must ask ourselves an uncomfortable question: **How do we preserve the prophetic integrity of the pulpit when political actors seek religious legitimacy and influence?**

These are not questions for Government alone. They are questions for all of us.



THE CHARACTER OF THIS CONVENTION

Over these two days, we have deliberately brought together a broad spectrum of Kenyan society.

We have representatives of constitutional commissions, security agencies, civil society, the media, the private sector, political actors, religious institutions, youth, women and persons with disabilities.

This diversity is important because **democracy is not the responsibility of one institution. It is a shared national undertaking.**

The programme before us reflects this broad responsibility.

Today, we will reflect on the **State of the Nation** and examine possible scenarios in the 2027 electoral cycle. We will interrogate the legal, logistical and institutional preparedness of agencies responsible for elections, security, justice, human rights and national cohesion.

We will also have the opportunity to engage directly with these institutions and ask the questions that ordinary Kenyans are asking.

Our five breakaway sessions will then take us deeper into some of the most significant threats to the electoral cycle: **political violence and youth exploitation; institutional capture and abuse of state power; opaque campaign financing and elite capture; misinformation and hate speech; and the structural exclusion of youth, women and persons with disabilities.**

Tomorrow, we will listen particularly to the aspirations of our young people and consider how those aspirations can be translated into meaningful participation and action.

We will also confront the difficult relationship between **corruption, illicit money and politics** - because we cannot speak honestly about democratic governance without addressing the resources that finance political competition and the incentives that follow political investment.



A CALL TO COURAGE AND RESPONSIBILITY

As we begin, I urge all of us to approach these discussions with **courage, honesty and patriotism.**

- ✓ Let us not come here simply to confirm what we already believe.
- ✓ Let us listen to one another.
- ✓ Let us interrogate institutions without hostility, challenge one another without contempt, and disagree without becoming enemies.

Most importantly, let us remember that behind every statistic about an election is a human being - a Kenyan parent, child, student, trader, farmer, professional or young person whose life can be profoundly affected by the choices we make.

Kenya is bigger than any election. Kenya is bigger than any political party. Kenya is bigger than any individual leader.

Our Constitution gives us a framework for living together in dignity, justice, equality and freedom. Our task is to ensure that elections strengthen that constitutional promise rather than undermine it.

The religious community has a particular responsibility. We must remain:

- ✓ **Non-partisan but not neutral on matters of justice;**
- ✓ **Peaceful but not silent in the face of injustice;**
- ✓ **And independent enough to speak truth to power wherever power is exercised.**

As the Kenya Religious Leaders Forum, our commitment is to the Kenyan people.

We will continue to work with all stakeholders who genuinely seek a Kenya:

- ✓ Where political competition does not cost us our peace,
- ✓ Where public office is a responsibility rather than an avenue for private enrichment,



- ✓ And where every Kenyan can participate in democratic processes without intimidation, discrimination or violence.

OUR EXPECTATION

At the end of these two days,;

- ✓ We should not leave with merely another conference report.
- ✓ We should leave with **clarity, commitments and action.**
- ✓ We should identify what must be done, who must do it, and when it must be done.

The proposed Communique should therefore not be viewed simply as a statement for the media. It should become a moral and civic call to action for religious institutions, State agencies, political actors, civil society, the media, the private sector and citizens.

Let this Convention be a moment when Kenya chooses:

- ✓ **prevention over reaction,**
- ✓ **dialogue over confrontation,**
- ✓ **constitutionalism over impunity,**
- ✓ **service over self-interest,**
- ✓ **peace over political expediency.**

Fellow Kenyans and distinguished delegates, The 2027 elections will test not only our institutions but also our national character.

The Kenya we shall have after 2027 will, in large measure, depend on the choices we make before 2027.

Let us therefore begin this conversation with hope, with humility and with determination.

On behalf of the Kenya Religious Leaders Forum and the National Council of Churches of Kenya, I warmly welcome you to this National Stakeholders Convention.

May our deliberations be frank, constructive and courageous. May they lead to practical action. And may God bless our nation, Kenya, and guide us as we work together for **democratic, credible and peaceful elections in 2027. Thank you, and welcome.**