



SPEECH BY H.E. SUSAN KIHKA, GOVERNOR OF NAKURU COUNTY, DURING THE OFFICIAL OPENING OF THE SECOND KENYA URBAN FORUM AT LAKE NAIVASHA RESORT ON 17th JUNE, 2025

Salutations

1. It is my distinct honour, Your Excellency, to welcome you all to the Second Kenya Urban Forum, which Nakuru—the County of Unlimited opportunities—is privileged to host here at Lake Naivasha Resort in Naivasha, Nakuru County.
2. Your Excellency, allow me to sincerely thank the organizers of this pivotal three-day forum—the National Government through the Ministry of Lands, Public Works, Housing and Urban Development, UN-Habitat, the World Bank, and the Nakuru County Government—for bringing together a diverse assembly of urban thinkers, policymakers, and stakeholders in the built environment.
3. This forum serves as a critical platform for reviewing the Kenya Urban Forum 1 (KUF 1) resolutions, exploring the vast potential of our urban spaces, and advancing innovative ideas to drive equitable, inclusive, and vibrant urban futures. The resolutions from KUF 1 have played an instrumental role in shaping our collective efforts toward building resilient, inclusive, and sustainable cities. The theme for this year’s forum, “The Future is Urban – Driving Kenya’s Urban Transformation,” reflects the urgency of our mission. Urbanization is no longer a forecast—it is a lived reality that is swiftly redefining the face of our nation.
4. Nakuru County, having attained city status in December 2021, has navigated both the challenges and the immense opportunities that come with urban growth. Our city stands as a testament to progress in urban planning and infrastructure development, and we are proud of the strides we have made.

Ladies and gentlemen

5. At KUF 1, we launched the Nakuru County Spatial Plan—a strategic framework guiding the development and regeneration of our urban and rural areas. It laid the foundation for revitalizing our municipalities, town councils, and market centres, many of which were previously in a state of neglect. In

alignment with the Urban Areas and Cities Act, my administration chartered the municipalities of Naivasha, Molo, and Gilgil. The KUF 1 resolutions also underscored the need to strengthen urban governance through adequate human resources and financial support.

6. I am pleased to inform you, Your Excellency, that we have allocated budgets to operationalize these municipal boards. We are actively seeking partnerships to further enhance their performance. Moreover, we are in the advanced stages of chartering three more municipalities—Njoro, Maai Mahiu, and Mau Narok—as well as six new townships.
7. In line with Kenya Urban Forum Resolution 12 – that sought the accessibility of land as opposed to ownership, my administration in collaboration with Financial Sector Deepening – FSD -Kenya in developing the Land Information Management System (LIMS) by combining both Spatial and non- Spatial land data. This data will aid in bridging the gap between the county’s growing population and the demand for efficient land use and planning. We thank the United Nations-Food and Agricultural Organization, European Union, the Council of Governors for aiding the County in setting up the Geospatial Information System Laboratory (GIS-LAB) that help collect and harmonize planned, surveyed and titled County Spatial data. This is crucial as it guides the County on data- driven decision making on land and the suitable development purpose.
8. As a young city, just four years old, we are keenly focused on addressing our housing needs. With a population exceeding two million, Nakuru currently has 5,469 housing units—a figure that clearly demonstrates the pressing demand. We thank you, Your Excellency, for the Affordable Housing Initiative, with a true testament of its effects; seen today. We thank you for commissioning 605 affordable housing units in Bondeni, Nakuru East. We look forward to your presence once again to launch the additional 220 units nearing completion in Bahati and Elburgon, Molo. You challenged us to deliver 50,000 housing units, and I am proud to announce that planning is underway for new projects in Viwandani Ward and Karagita here in Naivasha.
9. Affordable housing is not just about shelter—it is a catalyst for broader urban development. It has triggered complementary infrastructure projects, such as improved wastewater management and expanded tourism amenities, as we work toward positioning Naivasha as a true resort city.

10. We thank you, Your Excellency, for your visionary Bottom-Up Economic Transformation Agenda (BETA), which is dedicated to uplifting the lives of traders and providing decent, dignified trading spaces. Nakuru County has greatly benefited from this initiative through the establishment of twenty modern markets and the Nakuru Regional Market.
11. These two-storey facilities are thoughtfully designed and equipped with ICT centres to support Nakuru's youth creatives, as well as lactation spaces to cater to the needs of young mothers. Additionally, the markets include ablution blocks with bathing facilities, especially for women, ensuring hygiene and comfort. This transformative program, Your Excellency, is currently 30–70% complete across the eleven sub-counties of Nakuru, and has already created employment opportunities for over 3,000 youths and women. It stands as a testament to your commitment to inclusive development, economic empowerment, and social dignity for all.
12. Your Excellency, successful urban development is built on collaboration. Nakuru County has benefited immensely from strong partnerships with the Government of Kenya, the World Bank, and the Agence Française de Développement (AFD). These partnerships have enabled us to implement key projects, including the construction of 3.814 kilometres of road, the installation of 40 street lights, 10 high-mast floodlights, and 40 vending platforms to support our mama mbogas and youth entrepreneurs.
13. In addition, we are undertaking 7.8 kilometres of water reticulation and a de-fluoridation project in Naivasha. Our residents have long suffered due to fluoride-related health issues that have even denied many of them opportunities in the Kenya Defence Forces. With the completion of this project, I humbly appeal to you, Your Excellency, to consider allocating more KDF recruitment slots to the youth of Naivasha.

Ladies and gentlemen

14. Allow me to also acknowledge the profound impact of the Kenya Urban Support Programme (KUSP), which has worked in close alignment with the Kenya Informal Settlements Improvement Project (KISIP). Through KUSP, Nakuru County has received state-of-the-art urban infrastructure, including a modern fire station, the revitalization of Nyayo Gardens and John Michuki Park in Naivasha, and over 20 kilometres of upgraded road networks. We thank your administration, the World Bank, and other partners for placing urbanization at

the heart of national development—recognizing that no nation can thrive if its cities fail, and no city can succeed if its people are left behind. We warmly welcome the second phase—KUSP II—and are committed to leveraging it to build on these gains.

15. Your Excellency, Nakuru was honoured to be selected once again as the host for this prestigious forum, and we believe that one reason is the unique ambiance we offer. Our county is a gem in Kenya's tourism crown, rich in biodiversity and endowed with a blue economy full of potential. Yet with this honour comes a solemn responsibility—to lead by example in protecting our environment through climate-smart initiatives.
16. We have embarked on an ambitious environmental program, including extensive greening efforts, the installation of air quality monitoring sensors in the city, and the rehabilitation of the Gioto dumpsite through waste compaction, segregation, recovery, and innovation—such as producing eco-tiles from glass waste and fire briquettes from organic waste.
17. In conclusion, urbanization, while an engine of growth, also intersects with climate change, housing, mobility, and economic inclusion. It is my sincere hope that the discourse and resolutions that emerge from this forum over the next three days will translate into bold, tangible actions—ones that uplift lives and shape cities of opportunity, justice, and dignity.

Thank you

H E SUSAN KIIHIKA, EGH

GOVERNOR, NAKURU COUNTY