

REPUBLIC OF KENYA



THE PRESIDENCY

MINISTRY OF PUBLIC SERVICE AND GENDER

**KEYNOTE ADDRESS BY PROF. MARGARET KOBIA, Ph.D, MGH,
CABINET SECRETARY, MINISTRY OF PUBLIC SERVICE AND
GENDER DURING MAENDELEO YA WANAWAKE ORGANISATION'S
NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 5TH MARCH,
2020 AT MAENDELEO HOUSE, NAIROBI**

SALUTATIONS

**Mrs. Rahab Muiu, National Chairperson, Maendeleo ya Wanawake
Organisation,**

National Officials, Maendeleo ya Wanawake Organisation,

**Chairpersons of Maendeleo ya Wanawake Organisation from all the
forty seven (47) Counties,**

Distinguished Members,

Good morning

I am pleased to join you this morning for the meeting of the National Executive Council of Maendeleo ya Wanawake. I congratulate the new officials for your election and appointment. It is a heavy responsibility and great opportunity to serve the Nation as you contribute to Gender Equality and Women Empowerment.

Let me thank you Chair and the Executive Committee for organizing today's meeting and the important activities thereafter.

Distinguished Members

History of Maendeleo ya Wanawake

The history of Maendeleo ya Wanawake Organisation is as old as the story of women of Kenya's walk to gender empowerment and women equality. Maendeleo ya Wanawake Organisation was set up to unify, nurture and empower women socially, economically and politically to enable them to deal with the unique challenges caused by patriarchal cultural orientation.

While the challenges that face women have changed in nature, intensity and perspective, the broader objective of maendeleo remain the same now as then. Women empowerment remains a major national priority and concern for Kenya. **The question is to what extent do women and men have equal opportunity to maximize their potential?**

Fundamentally, the Organisation has through its mobilisation power been instrumental in building schools, clinics and community centres. Additionally, the past programmes in areas of National priorities such as HIV&AIDs, education and empowerment has been instrumental in showcasing Maendeleo ya Wanawake Organisation and its women leaders as change makers.

Distinguished Members,

Growing Women Leaders and amplifying their voices at the grassroots

At the time of independence, the leadership of Maendeleo ya Wanawake Organisation was turned over to African Women and thereafter expanded to the eight (8) regions of the Country. This structure of leadership that stems from the smallest Administrative Unit upto National level has created a chain of elected representative of over ten thousand (10,000) Maendeleo ya Wanawake leaders.

Distinguished Members,

Since inception in 1952, Maendeleo ya Wanawake Organization has complimented the Government's effort to eradicate poverty, disease and ignorance. Many women at various positions of leadership including Parliament are a product of Maendeleo ya Wanawake Organization initiatives.

You however must acknowledge that, much more needs to be done in the area of governance by specifically protecting the constitutional gains for women and that this will require negotiations and strategic partnerships.

Distinguished Members,

Maendeleo ya Wanawake network on the ground has an important role to play in our National agenda/efforts:

- (i) It can amplify the unheard voices of the grassroots women and highlight their needs;
- (ii) It can support efforts by Government and build the gender bridge by ensuring the grassroots receive right information at the right time;
- (iii) It can help in focusing on engendering decision making at the grassroots by ensuring women are represented at every level of decision making including, Board of Management of Schools, Market Committees etc.

It is therefore important for Maendeleo ya Wanawake Organisation to look for new innovative ways in which it can enhance its capacity to effectively empower the women to be able to resonate with the fast evolving social-political-economic dictates of this world. Maendeleo ya Wanawake Organisation as a leader must therefore build its capacity and capability to provide this leadership role.

Distinguished Members

There is need to strengthening Maendeleo ya Wanawake Organisation for impact

This will require this reinvigorated team from the Board and Executive to chart a way forward. This requires leadership, dedication and due diligence.

Women of Kenya whom you have been appointed to serve, expect diligent professional and quality stewardship from you. It is therefore, my humble duty to request you to develop the right mindset and attitude. Maintain a high level of trust in your service to the women and the Country.

Maendeleo ya Wanawake Organisation has an intricate network that rival's only the Government Administration giving the organisation unrivalled advantage to be able to effectively engage on National issues that concern Government, women and Kenyans at large.

In my view, Maendeleo ya Wanawake Organisation holds a great promise to fully meet the demands of women and girls. However, the organization has since 2014 struggled under the weight of governance issues, lack of focus; internal conflicts; and capacity challenges.

Conclusion

In conclusion, I assure you of the Government's commitment to work with Maendeleo ya Wanawake for the greater benefit of the women of Kenya at all levels of the society. My Ministry shall walk with you to achieve this common goal of promoting the socio-economic status of women in Kenya as laid out in the Government's national priorities on Gender. I wish to thank our development partners for the good working relationship we have nurtured over the years. Collectively we shall transform the political, cultural, socio and economic landscape of women in this country.

I thank you.