

**SPEECH BY EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR HARUN HASSAN DURING THE  
BOD FAREWELL DINNER AT THE SAROVA STANLEY ON 8<sup>TH</sup>  
OCTOBER 2021**

*Cabinet Secretary - Labour Hon. Simon Chelugui,  
Our Principal Secretary Hon. Nelson Marwa,  
The Chairman – NCPWD Mr. Peter Muchiri,  
Members of the Board,  
Former chairs of the Board and former CEOs,  
Distinguished guests and colleagues in the disability sector,  
Ladies and gentlemen,*

About two months after taking over as the Executive Director, I placed portraits of my predecessors on the walls of my office. Every morning when I enter, and as I carry out my duties, I'm reminded that one day my portrait will join that catalogue too. We also have portraits at the Boardroom where board meetings are done, of former board chairs and their members.

One fact about public service is that we are temporary holders of the offices we occupy. This then implies that what is memorable is not our lengths of stay, but the contributions and impact we make with this sacred opportunity to serve.

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Just like life, the sands of time can easily bury our history as an institution and the journey we have travelled so far. That is why we decided to set up this function tonight and invite our former CEOs, former Board chairs and members and other key stakeholders – to take stock of the past, inform the present and project the future.

It's interesting that many a times, our entry point to working here is through a gazette notice, ready to work. Unfortunately, in the course of work, sometimes,

we end up leaving even more divided than we came. That is why we wish to set this tradition of honouring the efforts of all those who have come before us and also maintain that unity of purpose.

The Council's establishment didn't just happen in days or weeks. Our journey goes way back to 2004, a time that I myself was not even someone with disability. After being established by the Persons with Disabilities Act of 2003 – and lacking capacity – we started as a team of only four staff members (Cecilia Mbaka, Josephine Onyonka, Bishar Haret Nunow and Jane Wamugu - our colleague) housed within the Ministry and our small offices based at Nyayo Stadium.

Fast-forward, the Council is now a home to many of us, an established state corporation with 105 staff members – inclusive of our county disability officers in all the 47 counties of Kenya.

Each and every one of you played a role in building this institution to the level it is, and we honour you for that. Ours is a lighter duty compared to yours – just occupying the structure you tirelessly built. But the work isn't done yet.

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Our very huge mandate has been constantly met with hearts that are ready to serve. Serving the vulnerable in any society is not just a profession, it's a calling. Callings are never easy undertakings. In fact, many are the times that they are met with strained resources in the face of very huge demand.

In our case as a Council, for instance, we have challenges such as staff capacity operating at under 40 percent of the expected capacity. We have one officer in every county, some serving extremely vast and sparsely populated counties. These jerks back efforts to make our service delivery more effective and efficient. Our total budget is inadequate in addressing all the services expected of us to persons with disabilities, with over 70 percent of it going solely to the cash

transfer programme. However, to address this gap in financing, we are revamping our resource mobilization department with the sole purpose of forming partnerships with different stakeholders. Soon, we will have in place a resource mobilization strategy.

We also thank the Government for the continuous efforts and support, holding our hand all the way, in particular our CS Chelugui who we were domiciled under before the cabinet reshuffle last week, and our PS Marwa for their leadership and steadfast focus.

Sometimes, when I talk to people, they present a negative report about the state of persons with disabilities in Kenya. They give me cases showing how persons with disabilities have been left behind over the years. The other day, a young person in my office did me a report on service delivery and subtitled it '*Situation kwa ground ni different*'.

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On the positive side, these truths hold us accountable as public servants, but they don't entirely represent the state of disability in Kenya.

As a country we have made tremendous progress since the signing into law of the disability act in 2003, making other African countries even benchmark with us. Our disability advocacy has taken a right based approach, mainstreaming disability is a key metric in the Performance Contract for state agencies and the 5 percent employment threshold for PWDs is law (though with implementation challenges).

But we still have a long way to go: One person with disability being left behind is a lot too many.

On Wednesday, I met with a lady called Rukia Harun and her mother at Harmony Junior School in Madogo, Tana River County. Rukia is a class six student and

was born without her arms. Two things struck me: One, that Rukia was visibly oblivious of the office that had visited her – reminding me again that it’s never about the title of an office, but the mission that the office holds. **I was not the CEO. I was ‘just a guy on a wheelchair interested in her story’.**

Second, she reminded me of myself over 10 years ago, when I was just beginning to accept my wheelchair as my legs and my hands playing both roles of hands and legs. In fact, she is better than me – through sheer courage and willpower mastering to write using what she has - her legs.

I also appreciated the intersection between disability and gender, and **noted** how her impacts are way different than mine **as a man** – then to top it up, the surrounding culture and its role in promoting stigma.

This experience highlights what’s at stake. Anything we do, no matter how small – be it in the Board or Management - hugely impacts lives in all corners of this country. This experience puts into context the engagements we hold as board members and as the Secretariat.

I’ll admit, sometimes we differ bitterly in opinions on policy and management issues. But I’m so proud of the fact that we do this not as a battle of egos, but because all of us want to see Rukia and other persons with disabilities get the help they need.

Like Abraham Lincoln said, “We are not enemies, but friends. We must not be enemies. Though passions *sometimes can strain*, it must not break our bonds of affection.”

We have ONE enemy – BARRIERS that HOLD persons with disabilities BACK.

Back in 2015/16, I served briefly as a member a much bigger board (16 members inclusive of ED) than the current one (9) under the leadership of Hon Sangkok. Today, I serve as the CEO of a much leaner board.

I wish to thank the outgoing Board and our current Chairman Mr. Peter Muchiri for the support given to the Management during its tenure. I've been privileged to work with a Board that is committed, very keen on details and speaks their minds.

We wish you all the best in all you do. The Council is your home, so hopefully this won't be the last time we get to see you.

Before serving in the Council, many of us would visit seeking for services. Today, we are proudly honoured to sit in high offices that inform and influence decisions. It is expected that once our time is up and we come back, we will be back seeking assistance. That is the burden we ought to have – making things a little bit better while we're around.

To CS Chelugui, who we were domiciled under before the Cabinet Reshuffle last week, and to our PS Mr. Marwa, thank you for your continuous support.

To the Secretariat/ Heads of Department present today (*name them*), thank you for the hard work you put, carrying the hopes of PWDs working towards achieving the Board resolutions.

To those in my office who work with me on a daily, as well as organising this function, thank you for all you do. (Hellen, Sarah, Blaise, Phyllis, Linda, Edwin, Mugambi, Munyere, PR and Procurement Departments)

Philosopher St. Augustine said that 'Hope has two beautiful daughters: their names are Anger and Courage. Anger at the way things are, and Courage to see that they do not remain the same.

'The question today is: Will we take the disability journey forward, or will we slump and tire?

Thank You.