



## **THE JUDICIARY**

**OFFICE OF THE CHIEF JUSTICE AND PRESIDENT  
OF THE SUPREME COURT OF KENYA**

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# **CLOSING REMARKS BY HON. JUSTICE MARTHA KOOME, EGH, CHIEF JUSTICE AND PRESIDENT OF THE SUPREME COURT OF KENYA DURING THE SOUTHERN AND EASTERN AFRICA CHIEF JUSTICES' FORUM IN KAMPALA, UGANDA - 2<sup>ND</sup> OCTOBER 2024**

**THEME: 'ENHANCED ACCESS TO JUSTICE:  
UNDERSCORING REFORMS IN  
AFRICAN JUDICIARIES'**

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**Honourable Chief Justices,**

**Honourable Judges and Judicial Officers,**

**Distinguished Guests,**

**Good afternoon!**

1. As we gather here this afternoon to conclude the 2024 Southern and Eastern Africa Chief

Justices' Forum, I am happy that we leave this conference inspired by the wealth of ideas and experiences shared over the last two days. This conference has offered us an invaluable opportunity to connect, share insights, and support one another in our collective mission of enhancing access to justice and transforming our societies.

2. Our discussions have been rich and enlightening, thereby laying the groundwork for continued collaboration and progress in enhancing access to justice across our jurisdictions. We have explored our vital roles as guardians of justice, the pressing need for judicial reforms, and the fundamental importance of independence within our judicial systems.

3. Reflecting on our conversations, it is evident that good governance and the rule of law rest on the foundation of independent, efficient, and effective judicial systems. For our societies to experience meaningful transformation, we must empower our Judiciaries as the custodians of justice. This requires undertaking necessary reforms to enhance our effectiveness, efficiency, and independence.
  
4. We have witnessed a collective acknowledgment that African judiciaries are not mere peripheral players in governance. The reforms implemented across various jurisdictions have enabled us to emerge as active participants in the dispensation of justice, reinforcing our roles as guardians of the rule of law. This is a milestone that we must celebrate and build upon.
  
5. One of our primary responsibilities is to remain responsive to the needs of those we serve. The

introduction of specialized courts is a significant step toward fulfilling this obligation. This morning, we heard from esteemed judges who shared their enlightening experiences, showcasing how specialized courts are enhancing access to justice in their jurisdictions. I urge all of us to intensify our efforts to enhance access to justice for all, particularly for vulnerable and marginalized groups, including women and children.

6. Furthermore, we must embrace the potential of technology in our judicial processes. We must lead the way in championing initiatives such as e-filing, and virtual court proceedings that have potential to significantly improve the administration of justice. By harnessing technology, we can enhance coordination and expedite our services, making justice more accessible to all.

7. It is crucial to acknowledge that courts are not the only avenues for resolving disputes. We must advocate for and promote alternative dispute resolution (ADR) mechanisms, including mediation, arbitration, and conciliation, while also empowering local communities to explore Alternative Justice Systems (AJS).
  
8. The independence of our judiciaries is paramount for the effective administration of justice. As we have discussed, the processes surrounding the selection and appointment of judges play a vital role in safeguarding this independence. The reforms we have undertaken in these areas are crucial for promoting judicial independence and, consequently, access to justice.
  
9. As we move forward, we must remain vigilant in protecting the progress we have made toward ensuring judicial independence. It is vital to

address any challenges that threaten the security of judges and judicial officers and advocate for the necessary financial resources to sustain our institutions.

10. In conclusion, the conversations and reflections we have shared during this conference demonstrate that the landscape of justice in Africa is evolving. We are experiencing a renewed focus on improving access to justice and service delivery for our citizens.

11. I would like to express our heartfelt gratitude to the Uganda Judiciary, the Organizing Committee of this Conference, and especially to Chief Justice Alfonse Owiny-Dollo, for hosting this successful conference. Your hospitality and the warm welcome extended by the people of Uganda have made our stay here truly memorable. The graciousness of the Ugandan government and the kind reception from all

Ugandans have not gone unnoticed, and we are deeply appreciative of your efforts to ensure our experience was enriching and enjoyable.

12.To my fellow Chief Justices, it is heartening to unite as leaders of judiciaries from diverse nations, bound by a shared vision for justice, the rule of law, and sustainable development in our respective countries. This forum reflects our collective commitment to enhancing the administration of justice in our region.

13.Lastly, I extend my appreciation to all panelists and attendees for your contributions, which have enriched this conference. Thank you for being a part of this important dialogue.

14.In the spirit of unity, cooperation, and fraternity that this gathering embodies, let us continue to collaborate, learn from each other, and work together towards a just and prosperous Southern and Eastern Africa.

Thank you, and may God bless you all.

**Hon. Justice Martha K. Koome, EGH,  
Chief Justice and President of the Supreme  
Court of Kenya**

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