

Speech: High Commissioner's speech during the Royal wedding and Queen's Birthday celebration in Nairobi

Chief Guest,

Waheshimiwa,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Welcome to this celebration of the marriage of Prince Harry and Meghan Markle, and of the birthday of Her Majesty the Queen.

I'd like to thank all my team involved in organising today's event. In fact you should be grateful for the role they played in overruling me on some of the logistics – particularly what I thought was my rather good suggestion of making it a million shilling package including a helicopter tour of Mount Kenya.

Friends,

Harry and Meghan will be making today the greatest commitment two people can make to each other.

They have decided to use their marriage not just for themselves and their families, but to celebrate the contribution of everyday people to communities in the UK and around the world.

The Royal Couple have invited over 1,000 community and youth leaders to the festivities, alongside 200 charity representatives.

Instead of gifts, they have asked anyone wanting to honour the occasion to give their money or their time to helping others. In particular, they have used their wedding to honour the causes to which they as a couple are deeply committed:

- Supporting children with HIV and AIDS,
- Helping the homeless and those without shelter,
- Empowering the world's poorest women,
- Supporting Armed Forces families,
- Bringing more children into sport,
- And conservation, both on land, and in our oceans.

Her Majesty the Queen and her family have dedicated their lives to public service. Between them, the family acts as patron or president to 3,000 charitable organisations.

They support and honour a culture of volunteering, of public service, and of working to change the lives of others for the better, both in the United Kingdom and across the Commonwealth.

As Prince William said earlier this year, such service “nurtures, repairs, builds and sustains our society”. Without the work of charities and volunteers, and of those dedicated to helping others, society would in the Prince’s words “be an empty shell”.

Friends,

I draw inspiration today from the Royal couple’s dedication to public service. And I believe it is a theme of great relevance here in Kenya.

Kenya has spent much of the last year in intense political competition. That has showed the strength and vibrancy of Kenya’s democracy. But it has also brought polarisation and mutual accusation; attacks on Kenya’s institutions; and for some Kenyan families, tragic personal loss.

Kenya’s leaders have now taken the courageous decision to reconcile – to work together and to put their country first.

We welcome and salute that commitment.

And I will continue to call on Kenya’s leaders to pursue reconciliation in the spirit of public service and the greater good.

That means two things in particular.

First, politicians must put the interests of the country, of all Kenyans, before their own ambitions.

Second, a stronger Kenya built on justice can have no place for those who steal from its citizens. Whatever their high rank or station, those who act for private instead of public gain must be held fully to account.

It is the responsibility of all of us to work for positive change in our communities, and our wider society.

So today I would also like to celebrate the contribution of some remarkable individuals here in Kenya.

Among our guests are representatives of organisations who are working to improve lives across this country.

From tackling homelessness, to supporting street children, to helping reduce plastic pollution in our oceans, these are people who have identified a problem, and decided to tackle it. I am proud to be able to welcome them to today’s celebration, and I am sure you will join me in thanking them for the work they are doing in support of their communities.

I’m enormously honoured to count among our guests this afternoon Golda Ayodo, who runs the Golden Girls Foundation. In March this year, Her Majesty the Queen gave Golda the Commonwealth Points of Light award for her outstanding work changing the lives of girls and young women in Western Kenya.

Golda, and our other volunteers here this afternoon, show us how Kenyans from

all walks of life and all parts of society can shape and strengthen Kenya, and I hope their examples will serve as an inspiration for others.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

This is a moment of great promise for this great country of Kenya. The United Kingdom stands with you as Kenya seizes the opportunities ahead.

We do so as a close friend and partner; and as a fellow member of the Commonwealth. We were delighted to welcome HE President Kenyatta to London last month for the Commonwealth Summit, and will work with Kenya as we realise even more of the potential of that great global network.

I want to thank all the sponsors of today's event.

Chief Guest,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let us join together in celebrating today the marriage of His Royal Highness Prince Henry of Wales and Ms Meghan Markle, and in wishing them a lifetime of happiness together.

Together, we say:

Mungu abariki ndoa yenyu

May God bless your marriage.

I invite you, Ladies and Gentlemen, to join me in three toasts:

The happy couple

His Excellency the President and people of the Republic and Kenya

Her Majesty the Queen.

Photos for the event can be viewed [here](#)