REMARKS BY HIS EXCELLENCY WILLIAM SAMOEI RUTO, C.G.H.; PHD., PRESIDENT AND COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF OF THE KENYA DEFENCE FORCES, DURING THE AFRICAN FERTILIZER AND SOIL HEALTH SUMMIT

MAY 9TH, 2024

KICC, NAIROBI
Your Excellency, President Mohamed Ould Ghazouani, Chairperson of the African Union Assembly,

Your Excellencies, Heads of State and Government,

Your Excellency, Mr. Moussa Faki Mahamat, Chairperson of the African Union Commission,

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

1. On behalf of the people and government of Kenya, I extend a warm welcome to all our visitors, near and far. Welcome home! I trust that you have enjoyed your stay and explored the delightful charms of Magical Kenya.

2. It is an honour to be here at the beginning of this pivotal summit, which emphatically revisits a historic moment of Africa's green revolution ambitions, with a focus on soil health and fertilizer use.

3. Today, Africa remains heavily reliant on food imports, highlighting the limited progress achieved decades after the Abuja declaration. Clearly, therefore, we have very important issues to reflect upon and resolve as a matter of urgency, and this Summit offers us a perfect opportunity.

4. Across Africa, our people face numerous serious challenges that hinder their efforts and investments in enhancing agricultural productivity. These include inadequate fertilizer application, extreme climate adversities such as flooding and intense drought, and extensive land degradation, among others, all pointing to the broader issue of poor soil health, central to our discussions.
5. Recent global economic crises, compounded by supply chain disruptions from the COVID-19 pandemic and geopolitical dynamics, have worsened fertilizer affordability and availability, and disrupted agriculture, resulting in reduced acreage and lower yields.

6. This Summit presents an opportunity to collectively deliberate and sustain our ambition by converting challenges into opportunities. To achieve this, we must assess our current situation within the broader context of Africa's potential.

7. In our pursuit of the green revolution, it is crucial to note that Africa possesses over 60% of the world's uncultivated arable land, yet it operates far below its agricultural capacity. This vast potential underscores our ability and obligation to transform Africa from a hungry continent into a self-sufficient global breadbasket.

8. Additionally, fluctuating fertilizer prices and supply chain disruptions, exacerbated by conflict in producing regions, demand deep reflection on securing adequate, affordable, and sustainable fertilizer production and supply across Africa.

9. Therefore, in the face of prevailing challenges, our commitment to achieving Sustainable Development Goal number 2 - **ending hunger, ensuring food security, improving nutrition, and promoting sustainable agriculture** - must be unwavering. This commitment resonates boldly in our Agenda 2063, where we pursue an agricultural revolution through modern, sustainable practices.

10. Our focus should not only be on increasing fertilizer usage but also on ensuring its judicious application to revitalize responsive soils and rehabilitate degraded ones.
11. Despite our current situation falling short of our ambitions outlined in the Abuja Declaration, SDG 2, and Agenda 2063, there are reasons for optimism. It is encouraging to see several African nations making strides in fertilizer production, particularly phosphate fertilizers. However, the absence of nitrogen fertilizer production plants, due to high capital requirements, underscores the need for regional investment collaboration to enhance our self-sufficiency in fertilizer manufacturing.

12. I stand here to make a strong case for a common strategy, collective action, joint investment, and logistical collaboration to ensure every arable acre of Africa's land receives the right type and quantity of fertilizer. This transformation will shift our agricultural production from deficit to surplus.

13. My case is bolstered by direct and irrefutable evidence from Kenya’s investment in food security and agro-industrial productivity under the bottom-up economic transformation agenda. Three years ago, our national food production was low, primarily due to high input costs. In 2022, maize production was only 30 million bags against a normal production of 40 million bags.

14. To turn this situation around, we decided to make inputs, especially fertilizer, more accessible and affordable. This initiative resulted in a harvest of 61 million bags of maize in 2023. We achieved this by leveraging technology, utilizing an integrated digital platform that registered over 6 million farmers. Through this platform, farmers access fertilizer using mobile phone vouchers, make payments, and receive collection notifications at nearby government storage facilities.
15. More land is now under cultivation, with each acre yielding higher production since the availability and affordability of fertilizer. More importantly, farmers across the country receive soil-specific fertilizer formulations in adequate quantities, resulting in unmistakable differences and encouraging progress.

16. To achieve Africa's green revolution, large-scale subsidized fertilizer use is a necessary imperative. Therefore, as we continue our deliberations, I urge this Summit to pay particular attention to several critical areas.

17. Firstly, prioritizing investments in nitrogen fertilizer production facilities is essential. Secondly, developing mechanisms for real-time tracking of fertilizer market trends to ensure timely availability is crucial.

18. Additionally, we need sustainable strategies to make fertilizers more affordable and accessible. Enhancing last-mile logistics for fertilizer distribution is equally critical. Moreover, building farmers' capacities for effective fertilizer use and soil health improvement is imperative.

19. To anchor our interventions in sustainability, we must design effective subsidy programs that support both immediate productivity needs and long-term soil health.

20. Fundamental to our efforts will be the need to entrench production incentives by leveraging the African Continental Free Trade Area to enhance market access and profitability for farmers. Pan-African integration will also provide a basis to harness research, science, and technology to develop a robust African Soil Information System, support a community of soil health experts across various sectors, and enhance research and soil testing facilities to support informed decision-making.
21. I see this summit as our opportunity to define viable pathways for rapid agricultural transformation in Africa. The knowledge, experience, capability, and commitment demonstrated by delegates gathered here are pivotal for driving our agenda forward. I am confident that together, we can usher in a new era of agricultural productivity that is both sustainable and profitable.

22. Thank you for your dedication and partnership as we embark on these important discussions. Africa is counting on us. Let us rise to the challenge. A green revolution is not just essential to feed a young, hungry continent; it is imperative to transform Africa into a surplus agricultural producer and the world's breadbasket. It will also catalyze wealth generation, job creation, manufacturing, and exports - a testament to the pivotal role of getting fertilizer right.

23. I wish you all productive deliberations and look forward to empowering outcomes at the conclusion of this summit.

Thank you.
God bless you.
God bless Africa.