

Deputy Governors Present

USAID-Kenya Resilience Coordinator Jennifer Maurer

Honorable Speakers of the County Assemblies Present

Honorable Members of the County Assemblies Present

Chief Executive Officers of Different Parastatal and Private Sector Companies

The County Commissioner and National Government Officials,

County Executive Members and Chief Officers,

Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

People of the Great Counties of Isiolo, Samburu and Marsabit.

Assalam Aleykum and Good morning, everyone!

Welcome to the Investment Conference for Isiolo, Marsabit, and Samburu Counties!

As the Governor of Isiolo County, I am pleased and grateful to address you today. I am filled with hope and excitement for the future as we are joined by a diverse group of enterprises operating in Isiolo, from tradesmen to Mama Mbogas, agro-processors to eco-tourism companies, and financial lending institutions. This showcases what the people of the Northern Region can achieve when we work together.

This investment conference is not merely an envisioning of possibilities but it is a testament of the commitment of the region's leadership to explore and address gaps in investment opportunities across our three counties. Additionally, it affirms the region's leadership's resolute commitment to fostering economic growth and nurturing innovation in our diverse but bankable value chains.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The big question here is, Why Isiolo, Marsabit and Samburu? I firmly believe that these counties offer abundant investment opportunities. The combined young and growing population, expanding urban areas, and accessible employment options create vibrant markets for various services.

At this point however, I would like to express my bias towards Isiolo County as an attractive investment destination. Allow me to first state that Isiolo County is not only the geographical center of Kenya but also a crucial gateway between the Northern and Southern parts of our great nation.

Isiolo is home to the only international airport in the region, with the potential to serve over **200,000** local and international passengers annually, thus boosting tourism in the region. Additionally, cargo flights for fresh meat and other value-added products from our modern abattoir, as well as fresh farm horticultural produce and khat from neighboring Meru and Laikipia Counties, could be significant economic drivers for the region.

Therefore, I make an appeal to the CEO of Kenya Airports Authority to expedite the expansion of the runway, and urge aviation companies to commence cargo and passenger flight operations at this vital air transport facility.

Further, Isiolo is currently experiencing significant infrastructural development, with the construction of the Isiolo-Modogashe-Mandera Road as part of the Horn of Africa Development Project and the ongoing LAPSET project. Noteworthy, both projects hold the promise of unlocking the region's economic vitality, connecting it to markets across Kenya and beyond.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In this era of climate change, it is crucial we build dependable livestock production systems that allow our smallholder livestock farmers to maximize the benefits from their animals. To this end, my government is at the final stage in operationalizing the Isiolo Abattoir. This facility holds the

potential to employ 300 young men and women while processing 10,000 shoats, 500 cows, and 300 camels per day, generating a significant volume of hides and skins.

Therefore, in line with the national government's aspiration of creating direct and indirect jobs in the leather industry, I encourage investors to consider establishing a leather tanning factory near our modern export abattoir. Additionally, I urge the Kenya Investment Authority and Kenya Leather Development Council to collaborate with my administration in promoting this opportunity.

Further, it is noteworthy that recent market research statistics show a strong and growing demand for fresh and processed camel milk products both domestically and internationally. I encourage companies in the milk processing sector to consider establishing a milk processing factory in our county. This move will not only provide a ready market for our farmers but also create much-needed jobs for the youth.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Our county's breathtaking scenic landscapes, and beautiful terrains are unmatched. Isiolo is also home to the Special Five and a diversity of other wildlife species. All these when combined with patches of extensive Savannah grassland provide broad opportunities in tourism. Noteworthy, to make our tourism sector more viable, and also more importantly protect wildlife corridors through community conservation, my administration has fast tracked legislative proposals: The **Community Conservancy Bill, Wildlife Conservation and Management bill and Tourism bill** that will compliment national legislation.

I highly recommend that investors to put their monies in our vibrant tourism industry by investing in eco-lodges, cultural tourism and in sports tourism. It is my belief this viable sector promises substantial financial, social, and environmental returns for investors.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The reliance on traditional sources of energy is no longer sustainable. I am pleased to announce that our county has abundant renewable energy sources such as solar, wind, and biomass spread across the county. On solar energy, our county has the potential to generate an average of 5.2kwh/kwp daily and 1899kwh/kwp annually.

Further, a recent survey conducted by the Ministry of Mining, Blue Economy, and Maritime Affairs has revealed that our county is rich in mineral deposits including coltan, gold, gemstones, copper, graphite, gypsum, and limestone. I urge investors to consider investing in these lucrative industries.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Our youth hold great potential in the innovation space, with a risk-taking, creative, adaptable, and resilient entrepreneurial spirit. I urge investors and development partners to work with my administration by investing in the Isiolo Youth Innovation Centre. This is a safe space where the youth of our county can explore entrepreneurial opportunities in ICT and online jobs, the creative and film industry, climate-smart agriculture, and other economic sectors. Similarly, I request financial institutions present to consider using this space as a means of assisting our youth in accessing appropriate and affordable business capital.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I want to emphasize the importance of active investment in driving economic growth. It creates jobs, boosts economies, and promotes resilience and sustainability in our region. To facilitate a conducive business environment, my administration has expedited the passage of the Trade and Markets Bill in the past year. Additionally, we have developed a comprehensive Five-Year Cooperative Strategy to foster the growth of cooperatives in our county.

In addition to this, to ensure that businesses can operate without fear of insecurity and to maintain a safe and attractive environment for investors, my government has collaborated with the Ministry of Interior to enhance security across our county. We have also initiated discussions with USAID-Kuza to seek assistance in developing a Regional Peace-Building and Conflict Management Policy and Bill. Once implemented, this framework will provide a comprehensive approach to addressing both intra and inter-county conflicts, taking into consideration the unique challenges of our region, and will help institutionalize peace-building efforts.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As I sum up, I want to emphasize that with the appropriate support and investment, Isiolo has the potential to become a hub for innovation and economic development, benefiting not only our county but the entire northern Kenya region.

Similarly, I would like to express my gratitude to everyone who took the time to attend today's conference. Your presence here demonstrates the increasing acknowledgment of the investment potential of Northern Kenya. The high quality of participants, insightful presentations, productive discussions, and the collaborative spirit of the attendees are evidence that our region is making significant progress towards commercial success.

We are deeply appreciative of the support from organizations such as USAID, Impact for Northern Kenya Fund, Agricultural Finance Corporation, and Acumen, which are providing much-needed financing to the region. Additionally, we are thankful to our development partners who continue to support Isiolo County in our efforts towards resilience and investment. Their support has been crucial to our progress, and we look forward to continued collaboration to achieve our shared vision of a prosperous Northern Kenya.

Looking ahead, let's take advantage of this opportunity to form enduring partnerships, explore new opportunities, and contribute to the economic transformation of Isiolo, Marsabit, and Samburu Counties. Together, we can

build a future where investment flourishes, economies grow, and communities thrive.

Thank you.

GOD Bless You All.

H.E Abdi Ibrahim Hassan,

Governor, Isiolo County.