

# “I SPEAK OF PEACE”

A Speech by:  
**Hon. Dr. Charles Wanyoike Rubia, CBS, EGH.**

Delivered to the  
**Murang’a County Assembly**  
On Wednesday, June 8<sup>th</sup>, 2016

**Venue:** Murang’a County Assembly Grounds

**Hosted by :** The Council of Eminent Persons of Murang’a

**S**peaker of the Murang’a County Assembly, The Honourable Nduati Kariuki; Leader of the Majority in the Assembly, Honorable. Kihungi; Leader of the Minority; distinguished members of Murang’a County Assembly; members of the Executive of the County Government of Murang’a here present; fellow members of the Council of Eminent Persons of Murang’a, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen.

It is with great pride that I address you this morning, the great men and women who form the Assembly of my native County of Murang’a of which I am very proud. I wish to thank you all, particularly the Honorable Speaker, Nduati Kariuki, for the invitation. It always feels good to be home. Perhaps because of my leadership in Nairobi and at the national level, and having not sought an elected position in Murang’a, many of you may forget that I hail from this County.

I was born and brought up in Maria-ini Sub-Location, Location 5, Kagundu-ini in Kandara, Murang’a where I still have a home, extended family and many childhood friends.

This is a significant day in my life. As I accepted the invitation to speak to you today, I did so aware that it is my first time to address a Council Assembly since my days as Mayor of the City of Nairobi and later as Minister for Local Government.

The turning point, both in my life and the fight for multi-party democracy in Kenya, started in May 1990 when Hon. Kenneth Matiba and I started the agitation for the rights of Kenyans to live as a free people without fear of tyranny. When we convened the now famous Saba Saba meeting

g for Seventh July 1991, we were arrested and detained on 4<sup>th</sup> July 1991.

**K**enneth, myself and many other Kenyans paid heavily for this sacrifice, but it was not in vain. That is why we are able to gather here today to speak freely and chart our own destiny as a county and as a country.

Our struggle for democracy, was inspired by many more heroes before us, who had said *Ciaigan a ni Ciaigana* (enough is enough!) and laid down their lives so that future generations of Kenyans may live free and in peace and prosperity. We remember our freedom fighters like Mary Nyanjiru from Kiandari, General Kago and others who made the ultimate sacrifice to set us free from our colonial masters and the rule of the British Monarch.

We thank the Almighty God, that our efforts and sacrifices were not in vain. Although we were successful in our fight for multi party democracy, it is unfortunate that this crusade was hijacked by other forces who then introduced Majimbo while this was never our original intention. However, it is still possible to manage our current system of Governments in the spirit and the intentions of the proponents of the system.

Today, I came to celebrate freedom in our young democracy. This young Assembly signifies the great strides we have made across generations to nurture a culture of democracy and peace in our county and country.

Ladies and gentlemen, I also came to speak of peace. I speak of peace as the only guarantee for sustainable freedom and development for our people, our county, our country and our continent.

I speak of Peace at a time when our country is at war fighting the Al-Shabaab terrorists in Somalia and many African countries are facing the threat of unnecessary violence fueled by extremist ideologies.

I speak of Peace. About a decade ago, Kenya's peace and sovereignty came under a mortal threat from a near civil war situation after the disputed election. I speak of peace at a time when we are headed for a general election next year.

**I** speak of Peace. Peace is the single most important gift from God, which we often take for granted. I have, therefore, chosen this time and this place to remind all of us to treasure peace in our communities, our county, our country and our world.

What do I mean by peace? What kind of peace do we seek as a County and as a Country? We are reminded now and again that peace is not the absence of conflict, but the ability to handle conflict by peaceful means.

I, therefore, speak of genuine peace, the kind that cherish harmonious co-existence among neighbors in a community, the kind that enables men, women and nations to have hope for a better tomorrow and to build a better life for their children and future generations.

Why do I speak of peace now? Tensions and conflict among men and nations are as old as civilization itself. But today, violent conflict and war are no longer among nation states. Our recent experience from many parts of the world is that millions of innocent people are losing their lives today because of wars involving communities within the same countries.

We have celebrated democracy and freedom as the gifts from the past generations. But today democracy is facing the threat of conflict as families, clans and ethnic communities are rising up against each other. Election time is a particularly risky time when the danger of violence becomes very real. Experts are telling us that the period during and after elections is the most volatile in Africa when many countries face a real challenge to stability.

The 2010 Kenyan constitution has enabled us to devolve power and resources to County Governments. With devolution, we have also devolved the vices of the past associated with the centralization of power such as corruption. But supremacy wars for County leadership risk devolving the instability associated with the struggle for power by national elites.

In the age of the counties, we have to be on guard to avoid rhetoric and political styles that will fuel conflict in our county and nation. It is possible to contest for leadership without degenerating into violent conflict; without introducing conflict in communities. We have a moral duty to foster unity, cohesion and peaceful co-existence of our people. This is the surest way of winning the war against ignorance, poverty, disease and tyranny, and of ensuring sustainable development and democratic freedoms.

Our politics should be of selling our ideas and programmes to the electorate. Nobody can convince me that leaders in Murang'a or any part of Kenya have to form militias or youth groups to terrorize, heckle and shout down other leaders. It is not only primitive and uncouth but very unnecessary. It must be condemned in the strongest possible words.

Distinguished men and women, this County is very young, slightly above three years only. But County Assemblies have a historic mission to nurture a culture of peace and democracy as a precondition for development and prosperity for all.

As Members of the County Assembly, your role as agents for development in the County is well cut out. However, it is important for you to conduct your business in the Assembly in accordance with your Standing Orders and in the Spirit of the Kenyan Constitution 2010.

I urge you to legislate laws that will encourage economic development and investments in your County. I urge you to avoid crippling taxation that will chase away investors and or cripple exist

ing businesses. Always bear in mind that you are in competition with your neighboring Counties for investors.

Ladies and Gentlemen, let me touch a bit on a topic very much alive in our Country. Corruption. This is an evil that can bring our County and Country to ruins. It is an evil that must be fought from all fronts. When resources allocated to the National and County Governments are misappropriated by our leaders, we marginalize ourselves and our children and grand children. We will leave them with debts to pay. When a leader steals from the public in whatever way, he/she is actually stealing from his/her children who will be left with debts to pay. Most parts of our Country are backward, not because they were not allocated resources by the Government but because the resources allocated were misappropriated by their leaders. This is the main cause of what is today referred to as historical injustices, leaders marginalizing their own. May this never happen in our County.

As President John F. Kennedy once remarked, “the pursuit of peace is not as dramatic as the pursuit of war.” I agree. Those seeking votes might seek conflict as an instrument of mobilizing supporters. But the consequences are dire for the individuals and communities. Members of the County Assembly have no more urgent task than crusading for peace.

We must learn to work together with our friends and enemies. We must take seriously the wise words of Nelson Mandela: “If you want to make peace with your enemy, you have to work with your enemy. Then your enemy becomes your partner.” What *Wanjiku*, the ordinary citizen, wants to see in Murang’a and the entire country are leaders working in partnership, not apart.

Ladies and Gentlemen, let me also highlight this point; Murang’a County is an equal and rightful member of the Republic of Kenya. As a matter of fact, Kenya cannot exist without Murang’a County and the same can be said of all the other 46 counties. We cannot work in isolation. I want to implore upon all of us to take this fact practically. Whatever is happening in any corner of this Republic will be relative to Murang’a County. Conversely, whatever we do here must be seen in the same light. Our people must be ambitious enough and aspire to occupy high offices in the National Government. **Kenya belongs to all of us.**

As I conclude, I salute the Eminent Kenyans from Murang’a County who dreamt of the idea of the older and younger generations working together to foster and safeguard national peace. They formed the Council of Eminent Persons as a platform to enable those of us no longer in active service to contribute to peaceful solutions to our problems.

In the Council, we are guided by the belief that peace is a journey of a thousand miles. We must take it one step at a time. The Council has registered success in resolving what were potentially deadly and embarrassing family feuds involving prominent citizens of this noble county. It will continue to advocate for peace within and between generations.

Ladies and Gentlemen, Hon. Speaker Sir, in August 1962, about a year before Kenya attained self-Governance, now called Madaraka, several Eminent Kenyans and their friends came together under the chairmanship of the Late Dr. Jason Likimani and organized the first convention dubbed **The Kenya We Want**. This first Convention brought together stakeholders from the Colonial Government, Political leaders of the day, business people, the academia, religious leaders and many other professionals. The Convention was funded by the organizers and their friends. The Nairobi City Council which I was Mayor of both funded and fully participated in the Convention. The purpose of the Convention was to chart a way forward for the country that was just about to become independent. A similar Convention was also held, this time by the young Government of Daniel arap Moi when he took over leadership of the country.

**A**s the Council of Eminent Persons of Murang'a, we are toying with the idea of hosting a convention whereby all stakeholders of Murang'a County will be invited to contribute ideas on **'The Murang'a We Want'**, so that we all can work together in creating a prosperous and peaceful County. The potential in this County is great.

I have great hope that we will walk this journey together in creating a peaceful, prosperous Murang'a as a county of great men and women of honour and integrity. Let every one of us take the message of peace to all hills and valleys of Murang'a.

Let peace be in every mouth, every podium, every classroom and every homestead in our beloved county. In the words of our National Anthem, **'May we dwell in unity, Peace and liberty so that plenty may be found within our borders'**.

**Thank you, and GOD BLESS YOU.**

*I am for peace;  
but when I speak, they are for war.  
(Psalm 120:7) NIV*