

# Uhuru's full speech at historic launch of UHC in Kisumu, Kenya

Fellow Kenyans,

Today marks a key milestone; a historic journey for our nation as we inch closer towards the realization of Health for All.

The proclamation towards Universal Health Coverage demonstrates my Administration's commitment to ensuring investments are made towards the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health, as enshrined in Article 43 of the constitution.

This proclamation also sits squarely within the country's blueprint for socio-economic development and shared prosperity; The Vision 2030 which envisions a society in which "no one is left behind".

This proclamation also resonates strongly with the global community's aspirations as outlined in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Today, therefore marks the actualisation of my Government's full commitment to SDG Goal 3 on ensuring healthy lives and promoting wellbeing for all.

Fellow Kenyans,

My Administration recognizes the social and economic challenges that Kenyans face due to the cost of health care. The prohibitive cost of accessing health services has regrettably pushed at least one (1 million) Kenyans below the poverty line every year, with many others left at the brink of financial ruin.

Furthermore, the consequences of ill-health are deterrent to the optimal growth and development of our children; the well-being of our pregnant women and survival for those with chronic diseases, and the elderly. This impacts negatively on the productivity of our nation.

For this reason, Kenya joined the rest of the world in aligning with the Primary Health Care Approach that was declared in Astana in October this year, during the Global Conference on Primary Health Care.

Access to quality primary health care can address over 80% of a person's health needs throughout the life cycle by focusing on preventive and promotive health interventions. We must, therefore, endeavor to build resilient and responsive health systems that guarantee equitable access to health.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Since my first term as President, my Administration has consistently underscored the importance of health as the key driver for development. In 2013, my Government focused on the following investments in health:

- One, removal of user fees at dispensaries and health centers which led to improved access to primary health care services at that level;
- Two, institution of the Free Maternity Programme (now known as Linda Mama) eliminating maternal health cost barriers for poor and vulnerable mothers;
- Three, equipping two hospitals in every county with equipment for specialized treatment that previously caused Kenyan patients and their families to travel long distances and at high costs;
- Four, the provision of Health Insurance Subsidies for over 200,000 Households countrywide.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

While these interventions have shown tremendous benefit to the health of Kenyans, my Administration is now taking this further. Last year, I promised Kenyans affordable health care as part of the “Big 4” Agenda for development.

Our journey to Universal Health Coverage also christened “Afya Care” has reached a critical milestone today as we launch the pilot phase in the Counties of: Kisumu, Nyeri, Isiolo and Machakos.

The pilot will elicit critical lessons that shall inform the scale up to the rest of the country.

Starting now, all Kenyan residents in the 4 pilot counties with a UHC (Afya Care) card will have access to free health services across County public health facilities. The range of essential health services will include:

- Emergency Services;
- Child Health Services;
- Maternal Health Services;
- Mental Health Services;
- Infectious Disease Management;
- Non-communicable Disease Management;

Inpatient and Outpatient Services and

- Community Health Services.

My government will disburse a total of additional Ksh 3.1Billion towards the Afya Care initiative. These resources will be invested in the public health facilities to strengthen the delivery of primary health care.

This approach will prioritize the promotion of health at the household level through public health education and through the engagement of community health workers, who shall provide the very basic of health services.

In addition, resources shall be invested in the Kenya Medical Supplies Authority (KEMSA) to ensure that those who fall ill can find quality medicines at public health facilities.

During the pilot phase, the other 43 counties will be engaged in health systems strengthening, in anticipation of the countrywide scale up.

In addition, various ministries outside the health sectors will play a critical role in creating an enabling environment for health, such as the provision of water and electricity to all health facilities. This multi-sectoral collaboration will be critical to the success of the pilot phase.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In order to realize the envisioned success of this initiative, we require an equitable and efficient strategic purchaser for health services for all Kenyans.

I, therefore, direct accelerated institutional reforms, starting with the National Hospital Insurance Fund (NHIF), which should see that Kenyans who require care at the National Referral Hospitals, can access it. In addition, to boost efficiency, all publicly-financed insurance pools should be collapsed into a single pool.

Furthermore, we will need to ensure the sustained supply of essential medicines and medical commodities at all our public health institutions.

I, therefore, direct reforms in the Kenya Medical Supplies Authority (KEMSA) to allow for an uninterrupted supply of quality essential medicines and medical commodities, leveraging on existing technology to forecast needs and manage logistics.

Taking cognizance of the ever-rising cost of health care, I direct the Ministry, together with stakeholders in the industry, to create the necessary institutions that shall allow for the economic evaluation of investments in health, and set tariffs that shall protect Kenyan from market exploitation.

Devolution provides a unique opportunity to address inequities and inefficiencies in the health sector.

To fully gain from the decentralization of health services, I urge the County Governments to match the investments from the national government with commensurate investments in human resources for health.

The health workforce constitutes an essential component to the success of this initiative. I laud the collaborative efforts demonstrated by the leadership of the 4 pilot Counties with the Ministry of Health and urge for continued engagement to ensure equitable distribution of resource.

The sustainability of this initiative is also pegged on a conducive legislative environment that ensures resources allocated for public goods are retained as such. I, therefore, call on the National Assembly and the Senate to fast-track all legislation that will secure this initiative for Kenyans today and for generations to come.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Kenya enjoys vibrant private sector participation including in the health sector. I urge current and potential investors to join forces with the public sector and invest in the health of Kenyans through favorable Private Public Partnerships.

I would like to acknowledge the immense support that our Country have received from Development Partners as we articulated the strategy to achieve the agenda on Universal Health Coverage.

I implore all of you, to continue in this spirit and align to the Universal Health Coverage as outlined in the Medium-Term plans.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

They say it takes a village to raise a child. The UHC journey is at its infancy today and we all have a part to play for it to attain maturity. Let us join hands and ensure Kenyans can enjoy the highest attainable standard of health without suffering financial devastation.

With these few remarks, I now declare the initiation of the UHC Pilot Exercise.

Afya Care; Wema wa Mkenya!

God Bless you, God bless Kenya.