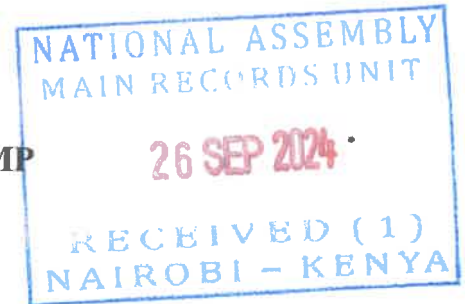




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Date: 26/09/2024

The Rt. Hon. (Dr.) Moses M. Wetang'ula EGH, MP
Speaker of the National Assembly
Republic of Kenya
Nairobi



The Rt Hon. Sen. Amason Kingi Jeffah, EGH, MP
Speaker of the Senate
Republic of Kenya
Nairobi



Dear Sirs

RE: IMPORTANT ROLE OF LEGISLATURE IN TACKLING YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT IN KENYA

Unemployment has been the number one major problem affecting youth in Kenya. Youth unemployment is Kenya's ticking time bomb as a figure of unemployed youth is increasing. Recent figures by Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (KNBS) reveal that at least one in every three Kenyan youths is jobless. Unemployment data reveal that more than four million youths have no jobs. Moreover, unemployment among youth has been on the rise.

Young people are the hardest hit by joblessness, compared to those above 35 years in an economic setting plagued by a hiring freeze on the back of sluggish corporate earnings. Youth aged 20-34 are the highest proportion of the unemployed.

A number of graduate youths in Kenya are battling the mental health stress that comes with struggling to get employment. For some, unemployment has made them feel stagnant. The unemployment levels have forced some graduates to indulge in drug abuse as an escape route from the realities and pains of not securing a job. Effects of unemployment are robbing many youths of their prime years.

There are too many youths without work who are desperate for a job, most of whom are younger, and if we lose them, we risk losing them for good. Unemployment is a blight on young people, and government must help resolve this.

Like many African countries, Kenya has a huge youthful population. According to the 2019 Population and Census results which shows that 75% of the 47.6 million population is under the age of 35. This can be a blessing or curse depending on how empowered the youth are. Youth have great potential – youth remain largely unexploited resource.

Youth aged between 15-34 years constitute about 70 per cent of the Working Age Population that is estimated to stand at about 19.8 million people. The group aged 15-34 years, however, is the largest among the unemployed in the Working Age Population.

Tragically, the national unemployment rate stands at 40 per cent with youth constituting at least 75 per cent of the total unemployed people in the country. Moreover, about 500,000 youth join the labour market every year. In essence, unemployment remains the single most serious problem facing youth in Kenya. There is no denying that youth unemployment is a major threat to the achievement of Kenya's Vision 2030, the country's long-term development blue print.

More needs to be done to ensure strong economic growth and create decent paying jobs at a high rate. In particular, parliament must ensure Kenyan government puts in place measures, policies and strategies to mitigate the scourge of unemployment in the country to stop the number of unemployed youth from rising.

It is prudent that while measures are being put in place by the government to tackle unemployment, the legislature plays its critical role to interrogate these policies and measures and see how effective they are in addressing this biggest problem affecting our nation.

Given the challenge of youth unemployment that is affecting the country, parliamentarians in the country do have a constitutional duty and role to play in tackling this problem. Parliamentarians are tasked to play three key roles which are representation, legislative and oversight. Parliamentarians are strategically positioned to use their influence and power to assist in tackling youth unemployment in the country.

Noteworthy, while the government has put in place measures and strategies to curb and address youth unemployment, for these strategies to be effective they need to be adequately scrutinised and analysed such that they do benefit the youth who are represented by the parliamentarians who come from different areas across the country. Some of the government plans do not have adequate funding and it is the duty of parliamentarians to make sure that they lobby and advocate for the government through the ministry of finance to increase funding such that the strategies can realise the primary goal of creating employment. Supplementary budget votes that will see these funds being increased and released will need the voting of parliamentarians hence their role is key.

Furthermore, the concerns and voices of the youth as to whether these initiatives are benefiting them or not would need to be brought to the attention of the executive and it is the role of parliamentarians to represent the youth and bring their concerns and issues towards the initiatives to the attention of the executive so that there is feedback.

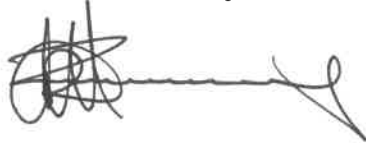
Parliamentarians have a key role to play in ensuring that these programmes or initiatives being rolled out by government are also benefiting youth from marginalized groups and areas, and ensure that the policies or strategies are not only viewing the youth as a homogeneous group but are adjusting the approach to the specific needs or different demographic groups among young people. Parliamentarians need to ensure that initiatives to address youth unemployment are sensitive to the plight of the vulnerable groups and do not seek to make them more vulnerable.

Unemployment is a ticking time bomb in Kenya and more and more youth are struggling to get employment opportunities. Government strategies do have challenges that needs to be addressed if they are to produce tangible results. Parliamentarians have a key role to play in scrutinising these strategies to ensure that they do address the unemployment challenges facing the country.

The Youth Congress is reminding parliament that it has an important role in tackling youth unemployment. The Youth Congress is a youth serving Non-Governmental Organization founded in 2007 to provide young people in Kenya with a platform to articulate their issues, explore opportunities for youth participation and leadership to effectively address their interest and concerns and engage young people in social, economic and political processes. The Youth Congress has 47 County Youth Leagues that bring together over 500 youth groups and organizations, with about 100,000 members.

Thank you for your kind consideration on the matter.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Raphael Obonyo', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

RAPHAEL OBONYO
PUBLIC POLICY ANALYST
CO-FOUNDER - THE YOUTH CONGRESS

CC:

Clerk's Chambers
Directorate of departmental committees
Parliament Buildings
Nairobi