



REPUBLIC OF KENYA

**REMARKS BY HIS EXCELLENCY HON. WILLIAM SAMOEI  
RUTO, PhD, C.G.H., PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF  
KENYA AND COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF OF THE DEFENCE  
FORCES, DURING THE KALASHA INTERNATIONAL FILM  
AND TV MARKET, FESTIVAL AND AWARDS 2026**

**MAY 2, 2026**

**KICC, NAIROBI**



**Distinguished Creators, investors, and partners in the creative economy,  
Ladies and gentlemen,**

1. It is my great honour to join you at the Kalasha International Film and TV Market, Festival and Awards 2026, now firmly established as East and Central Africa's premier platform, where creators, investors, and visionaries gather to showcase their finest work and shape the future of our creative industry.
2. With over 3,000 delegates, 100 exhibitors, and representation from over 30 countries, the Kalasha Awards have clearly outgrown their local origins. They have become a regional force and are well on course to gaining global recognition.
3. To the young creators - the photographers, choreographers, dancers, designers, writers, filmmakers, musicians, digital artists, and storytellers - who bring our streets and stages to life, I see you. I recognise your craft. I honour your hustle. And I am deeply inspired by your work.
4. It is because of you that we are investing resolutely in this sector to nurture your talent, expand your opportunities, and ensure that your creativity reaches the audience, the market, and the recognition it truly deserves.



## **Ladies and Gentlemen,**

5. The Creative Economy sits at the very heart of our Bottom-Up Economic Transformation Agenda, not merely because it entertains, but because it empowers our people, especially our youth, by unlocking talent, creating opportunity, and driving inclusive growth.
6. It turns talent into enterprise, ideas into opportunity, and creativity into jobs, activating an entire value chain that spans creation, production, distribution, and consumption. From the artiste and performer to the producer, technician, marketer, and digital innovator, it unlocks livelihoods, fuels innovation, and transforms imagination into sustainable economic value.
7. That is why, for the first time in our country's history, we have established a dedicated State Department for the Creative Economy, backed by a fully approved public service structure that gives this sector the weight, framework, and permanence it deserves. What once sounded like a mere aspiration is now institutional reality embedded within the architecture of Government.
8. We will soon have a Director of Gaming, a Secretary of Film Services and a Head of Music and Fashion, among other officials, in the Creative Economy.



9. To further entrench our commitment, I have established a Creative Economy Office at the State House. This is because it is a priority, a commitment to the creative sector, and not an afterthought.
10. We have a clear and unambiguous goal: To position Nairobi as the creative capital of Africa. And we are matching that ambition with action.
11. The film incentives you helped shape are now ready. I have already directed the National Treasury to move with urgency, align with growth, and unlock this sector.
12. We made a deliberate push to secure Kenya's place on global monetisation platforms - and we have succeeded. Today, Kenya is among the select few countries in Africa with access to Meta monetisation, opening new frontiers of opportunity for our creators.
13. But that was only the starting point. Next, we have to scale it up. That's why we are moving toward directing 30% of Government advertising be spent on creative platforms.
14. I can confirm that the government has the resources to support and partner with creatives who tell our stories. When you bring to life narratives on affordable housing, the Social Health Authority, or other real experiences shaping our nation, we will stand with you, invest alongside you, and help amplify these stories through powerful, authentic storytelling grounded in our lived realities.



## **Ladies and Gentlemen,**

15. Nations that lead in the creative economy do not merely participate in global value chains; they critically shape them. They invest, they own, and they define the narratives that travel the world. We are now positioning Kenya to take its place in that league.
16. For instance, why should we only work hard to attract box office movies? Why should we not own and produce them? What stops us from stepping into the global arena as partners in blockbuster productions? We sponsor the biggest movies and, in turn, demand a stake, with our Kenyan actors, our crews, and our stories written into global cinema.
17. That is how we change the game. We stop chasing a fraction of the market and instead become the gravitational centre of the global creative economy.
18. As we do so, I urge Parliament to fast-track the Creative Economy Bill 2026 and strengthen copyright laws so that our artistes are not only celebrated, but also safeguarded and funded.
19. As part of our global ambition, I will be meeting Panos Panay, president of the Recording Academy, the organisation behind the world-acclaimed Grammy Awards, later this month to begin the journey of positioning Africa, and Kenya in particular, for its own globally recognised creative platform.



20. In that meeting, I will not just be pushing for the African Grammys to come to Nairobi. I will also be advocating a bold, structured pathway that connects our creative products to global commerce. It is no longer enough for our artistes to be seen internationally; they must earn, scale up, and compete at that level.
21. This is about moving from showcasing talent to building an industry, from global applause to global market share. It's time we equip our creatives not just to participate on the world stage, but to win.

### **Ladies and Gentlemen,**

22. As Chinua Achebe reminded us - "until the lions have their own historians, the history of the hunt will always glorify the hunter" - Kenya's lions must now tell their own stories.
23. The Kenya Film Commission should consider taking this awards ceremony to every region of Kenya. Encourage a cluster of counties to bid and host, and let Kenya compete. State House will bid to host the 2027 edition of the Kalasha Awards.
24. To ensure we have infrastructure to support the creative economy, I have directed that all future affordable housing developments must integrate a creative ecosystem in the form of fully equipped audio-visual studios.



**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

25. Tonight is a declaration that Kenya is not waiting for the future of global storytelling; we are shaping it. Roll the cameras. Tell the stories. Shape the future. Congratulations to the winners.

**I thank you.**

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