REPUBLIC OF KENYA

COUNTY ASSEMBLY OF LAIKIPIA

THE HANSARD

Thursday, 17th September, 2020

The House met at the Assembly Chambers at 9.00 a.m.

[The Speaker (Hon. Patrick Waigwa) in the Chair]

PRAYERS

QUORUM CALL

Speaker: Clerk, please confirm whether we have quorum.

(Lack of Quorum confirmed)

Speaker: Serjeant at Arms to ring the bell.

(The Quorum bell was rung for five minutes)

Speaker: I believe we have quorum. Clerk can confirm that.

(Quorum confirmed)

MOTION

ESTABLISHMENT OF COUNTY TOURISM POLICY

Hon. Peter Matunge: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, Sir. I beg to move the following motion;

THAT NOTING THAT trade development and regulation including local tourism is a function of the County Government as stipulated in Part 2 of the Fourth Schedule of the Constitution of Kenya, 2010;

FURTHER NOTING THAT the County Integrated Development Plan, 2018-2022 nurtures promotion of domestic tourism as one of the objectives in the tourism sector;

AWARE THAT tourism remains the corner stone of the economy, and a leading foreign exchange earner of the country, moreover, the sector has high multiplier effects as its growth stimulates further development on other activities;

FURTHER AWARE THAT following the shocks that hit the tourism sector orchestrated by COVID-19 pandemic, cognizant that the County Governments are the custodians of tourism resources hence they have the vital role to play in tourism;

APPRECIATING THAT a range of ecotourism and community-based projects should form part of a diversified and enhanced tourism product, including home stays, agro-tourism and sports tourism;

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OBSERVING THAT the success of domestic tourism is dependent upon effective and creative marketing and promotion of the County as a destination;

This House URGES the County Government to establish County Tourism Policy that will seek to;

1. Revive county tourism after collapsing due to the COVID-19 pandemic through putting in place measures such as redeeming of destination image and positive publicity by employing public relation tolls, product diversification, provision of high quality standards of products and services, tourism era planning and incentives to attract investments in tourism sector.
2. Support communities in the development of local tourism products through technical assistance.
3. Diversify, develop and implement innovative tourism products that enhance economic growth, environmental sustainability and preserve heritage.
4. Support communities in designing and developing authentic innovative tourism products at the local areas.
5. Enhance the uptake of Meetings, Incentives, Conferences and Exhibitions (MICE) tourism in the Post-COVID era.
6. Ensure that tourism circuit roads are mainstreamed into the National and County Roads Investment Plan.
7. Give high priority for upgrading, rehabilitation and periodic maintenance and signage for access roads to local tourist destinations.
8. Develop a County Tourism Marketing Strategy to guide and inform tourism marketing and promotion in the county.
9. Fasten the development of available tourist sites like Kirimon National Reserve, Manguo Hippo point and other available tourist sites within the county.

Mr. Speaker, we have been talking of tourism issues as one of the corner stones in the economy of this county. I have severally said that after Mara, Laikipia stands to be the second county destination in terms of tourism. It continues to raise concerns on how much we benefiting as a county. How many jobs are we creating out of this sector? Are we putting efforts as a county to enhance tourism?

It is stated that after every eleven tourists who visit this country, one job is created. If we have eleven tourists coming to Laikipia, we then have one job that is created. In the last four years, this country has been able to get to up to about Kshs. 411 Billion in terms of revenue to the economy. This is equivalent to 11% GDP in the country. The sector has again continued to create jobs that rate to 12%. This gives to about Kshs.1.7 million jobs.

It is projected that by 2027 this country is able to create up to Kshs.1.7 million jobs. This gives to about 8.9% employment rate in this country. If the benefit of this sector is

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translated to the county level, we can then be able to create the 30,000 jobs that we are talking about. We do not forget that this sector has a very big multiplier effect. The hotel that these tourists come to stay has a direct benefit. The person who grows tomatoes and kales will be able to supply those products to the hotels. At the same time he can be able to benefit directly. We should not forget the number of families that are supported by the employment in this sector.

It was estimated some years back that about 1,300 people were employed by this sector in Laikipia. This a market value of about Kshs. 106 million per year that this industry is creating. Unfortunately, in our effort as the county, we have been unable to make Laikipia a destination for tourism and benefit the county and the local communities.

Tourism in Laikipia is being run by the private sector and the private conservancies. We know that the top destination in Laikipia today is Ol Pejeta, Ol Jogi, Loisaba, Fair Mount and Mount Kenya National Park. It is unfortunate that we as a County Government do not have a sector that we are running. Counties like Samburu; the Samburu National Reserve is generating billions of money. The Maasai Mara National reserve that is run by the County Government is generating millions of money and jobs.

Mr. Speaker, sometimes back I moved a motion here that we need to fasten the establishment of Kirimon National Reserve and the communities' opportunity conservancies that can be able to create direct benefit jobs to these people. Up to date we have not done anything to see that we are investing as a county and that this sector is growing and benefiting the local communities.

We cannot continue blaming the private sector that it is getting direct tourism to their facilities and destination. They are investing and marketing. We as the government need to give a competitive hand to the private sector. There are a few products that are run by the communities. We know that they are supporting the local economies and creating employment for those communities. They are even generating revenue to this county.

We need to have a very strong strategy. We develop Laikipia niche tourism so that we are able to sell Laikipia as a niche world. Sometime back, we launched something called Summer Laikipia and Destination Laikipia but they went nowhere. It is just there moving around in Facebook. We are not putting in a lot of aggressiveness, partnering with the Kenya Tourism Board and doing external exhibitions. We are not putting an effort in those strong benefits.

We need to have a proper strategy for us to be able to enjoy this and develop tourism for the benefit of the county. What is so unique in Laikipia? What product do we have in Laikipia that we are able to sell as a county? Example, Kirimon, the unique culture of our communities, conservancies and eco-tourism are products that we have but we are not using them. We ought to have a marketing strategy. How do we know that we are in a world that is competing? The private sector is competing with us. How then as a county are we able to market our products and strategies? We need to to partner with the Kenya Tourism Board.

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We also have to do an investment strategy. How do we bring more investors to partner with us to put those facilities that we need not forgetting the infrastructure. The circuit that we fall in is connected by a number of roads, airstrips and the refurbished railway. We need to see how we can then invest in those infrastructures.

As a department we need to develop a strategy for each product and get to a point that we are able to sell Laikipia as a tourist destination. We also need to develop visitor information that is able to store information for selling Laikipia. We again need to expand and improve the existing. When we say that we develop and expand the existing facilities and products, we are talking of the current Kirimon Reserve and the community conservancies.

I took some Members here to Samburu. They saw a community that is generating over Kshs. 30 million per year. They have employed more than 200 local communities. Those are the things that we need to pick. We see that we expand and have those facilities for the people of Laikipia to continue enjoying. There are already existing ones. As county we are not putting any effort to see that more communities and products are coming on board. We again need to identify opportunities on community based tourism.

I have severally said that we have a very big opportunity as a county. The strategy for the country now is moving from the protected areas to open areas that are available for the communities to develop their products. With those things, we can be able to enjoy, create more employment and more revenue to this county.

We cannot continue to say that the county pushes the *mama mboga* and the *boda boda* people to pay more taxes while we have an opportunity to generate more income and we are not using it. We cannot continue blaming the private sectors that are investing and generating income for themselves while we as the County Government do not have any single strategy to see how we can come up with this thing.

Some time back Laikipia Wildlife Forum came up with Laikipia Conservation Sustainable and Tourism Master Plan which has never been adapted. The department has never moved any step ahead to come up with a policy or with a bill leave alone a strategy. Those are things that we need to come up with as a county so that we are able to enjoy. This is a very big sector that is able to support a very big industry. With those few remarks, I wish to call the Hon. Member from Thingithu to second this motion.

Hon. Stephen Ndiritu: Asante, Bwana Spika. Nataka kuchukua hii nafasi kuafiki huu mjadala ambao umeletwa na Mheshimiwa Matunge. Huu ni mswada unaoweza kuwa na manufaa kwa Kaunti yetu ya Laikipia. Laikipia ni nambari mbili katika mambo ya utalii. Ukilinganisha Kaunti ya Laikipia na zingine kama Kwale na Isiolo unakuta ya kwamba wako mbele yetu. Nafikiri ni ile hali ya kukosa roho ya kutaka kufanya kazi na kuweza kuvutia watalii katika Kaunti yetu ya Laikipia. Mheshimiwa ameeleza kinagaubaga ya kwamba kama tungeweza kuzingatia utalii katika Kaunti ya Laikipia, tunaweza pata ushuru na kuinua hali ya wananchi wetu. Wananchi wetu watapata kazi ya kufanya.

Mheshimiwa Matunge ameelezea ya kwamba katika Kaunti ya Laikipia tuko na sehemu tunayoweza kutengeneza na iwe kivutio cha watalii ambayo ni Kirimon. Kaunti ya Samburu

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imekuwa ikiitumia katika siku za hapo awali. Katika Kaunti yetu ya Laikipa tuko na serikali na idara ambayo ingefaa kuwa mbele kwa kuhakikisha ya kwamba tumepata hiyo sehemu na itengenezwe vizuri ili iweze kuvutia watalii.

Nakumbuka wakati mmoja tuliweza kutembea katika Kaunti ya Samburu. Tuliona vile hiyo serikali imeweza kusaidia sehemu ambazo ni vivutio vya watalii. Mheshimiwa Spika, tulikuwa tumeenda sehemu ya Isiolo ukiingia hapo mbele ndivyo uelekee Samburu ambapo nimesahau jina lake. Nafikiri Mheshimiwa Matunge anaweza kupakumbuka. Tuliweza kuona ya kwamba hiyo jamii inatengeneza mabilioni ya pesa. Inaweza pia kupata nafasi ya kazi kwa vijana wanaotoka shuleni na wenye haja ya kufanya kazi inayoinua jamii.

Hilo ndilo jambo sisi kama Laikipia tunalofaa kuwa kulifanya na kuzingatia. Tujuavyo ni kwamba katika Laikipia tumeegemea biashara, kwa sana Laikipia Magharibi, Laikipa Mashariki na sehemu zingine za Kirimon. Wakati tunafanya biashara, serikali inaingia katika hizo biashara na kuwatoza ushuru wananchi kama mimi wanaofanya biashara. Tuko na sehemu tunazoweza kufungua na ziwe vivutio vya watalii. Tutaweza kupata pesa na kuokoa biashara kutoka kwa kuekewa kodi ambayo ni nzito sana.

Huu ni mswada unaoeleza kinagaubaga. Nafikiri Wajumbe wote wanaungana na huu mswada. Tuko katika eneo linaloweza kuvutia utalii kwa zaidi. Nafikiri hata kwa siku zijazo kama ni uongozi ulio na shida labda katika ngazi za juu, tunaweza furahi tukiwa na Magavana kutoka upande wa kaskazini watakaoweza kuwa na huo mwenendo wa kuinua hali ya utalii. Sehemu nyingi ziko katika hayo maeneo. Hayo ni mambo tunayoweza kuangalia. Tuweze kuhimiza serikali iweze kuangalia huu mswada na kutekeleza yale yote yaliyotajwa na Mheshimiwa Matunge.

Nafikiri huu ni mswada ambao umekuja kwa wakati unaofaa. Tunajua ya kwamba wananchi wengi waliokuwa wanafanya kazi katika hiyo idara wamekosa kazi kwa sababu ya huu ugonjwa wa Covid-19. Huu ndio wakati mwema ambao serikali inafaa iingilie na kufufua ile sekta kwa sababu inabeba wafanyikazi wengi wa Laikipia. Inaweza pia kutupatia ushuru.

Tunafaa kama idara na nimekuwa katika mstari wa mbele, kuingia katika hizo *conservancies*. Tujue ni pesa ngapi na ushuru upi wanapata. Hivi ndivyo ili serikali iweze kuingilia na kuokota pesa zinazoweza kusaidia katika ujenzi wa Kaunti yetu ya Laikipia. Naunga mkono na kumpongeza Mheshimiwa Matunge kwa kufikiria mambo ya utalii na kuweza kuleta mswada kama huu. Tunaomba ya kwamba serikali inayoongozwa na Ndiritu Muriithi, Waziri wake Nicholas Biwott na mimi kama Mwenyeketi, tuwe katika mstari wa mbele kuhakikisha ya kwamba utalii katika Laikipia umeinuka. Nashukuru sana.

(The Speaker left the Chair)

(Deputy Speaker (Hon. Daniel Nyausi) took the Chair)

(Question proposed)

Hon. Chris Mark: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to commend the mover of this motion. This is a very timely motion. It is sad that when we talk of tourism in Laikipia we just talk about the equator here. We have something called Brand Laikipia but the biggest thing

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they brand themselves with is that we have an equator. This has been there. We cannot ignore something that is related to the county but we can do more.

The Tourism Committee Chair, in which I am also a Member, talked of the experience that we had. I happened to be in that team taken by Hon. Matunge. I remember and if I am not wrong, in Kaluma Conservancy we saw a community running a conservancy for the county and employing their people, making roads, paying school fees up to university and taking care of the medical fees of some of their residents in case they have been attacked by the wild animals or the banditry attacks that happen once in a while. That is something to pride with. When you look at Narok they have the Mara Triangle, Samburu has their national reserve, Isiolo has one called the buffalo springs and Kajiado has one called Amboseli.

I think a while back this whole House had a chance to go to the Buffalo Reserve when we had a workshop on the issue of Spatial Planning. I was telling my colleagues that those people we found at we gate are not national guards. They are county guards. They get the collection fee done by the county.

There is the Finance Bill in Laikipia. What we are benefiting from in Laikipia is what we call bed charge. It is very little. We cannot say it is what we are growing our tourism with as a county. If you go to Kwale they have the Shimba Hills. The list is endless. We have our own here in Laikipia. We were told that research says that if we can set up our own it will beat the rest because we have a variety of animals. The only things that we would not get are the wild beasts that are found in the Mara Triangle. We have all these other animals. We even have the Grevy zebras which are not found anywhere. It is the high time that we as a county take it upon ourselves to do more in the tourism industry.

I remember one thing when we were looking at the budget. I saw an item called Kirimon. What was being put there was Kshs. 2 million to put a fence. I think that is little money. I had heard that there were donors insisting on something that they call a top up. This is whereby the county puts a bit and they then add more. If that was a true thing, I then think that this county should have taken that opportunity.

The other issue is that every time over the weekends when I decide to go to Nairobi the traffic flow to Nanyuki is a lot. These people are coming to Nanyuki for the experience. The experience that they come for are the cottages, drinking, meat eating and water view. They think that those are the only things in Laikipia. If we can make the access roads accessible, we can then be making a lot of money.

A while back the Governor was talking about a challenge that they have as a county. This is that they have so many reserves and conservancies. In fact, if people read the Daily Nation, there is a writer called John Kamau. He always does very nice articles. One Sunday ago he wrote an article about Ol Jogi and the secrets of Ol Jogi. He talked about the family having billions worth of with houses in Europe and America and an art collection. They had a very serious divorce case in the New York Court. All the revenue was coming from Laikipia. As a county when you look at what is going outside even the National Government is not enjoying.

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At one time we engaged the Executive. I heard the Governor saying that you know these people come with their own planes and private jets from Wilson and JKIA. They land directly into these conservancies. They are taking advantage because the county does not have its own. The county itself has to depend on the one that is there.

These conservancies that are there are mostly private to the extent that even a public road is made private. It is in this same Laikipia that a certain conservation writer was almost shot at Ol Jogi barely a month ago. I saw a release from the Minister of Tourism, Najib Balala saying that Ol Jogi is to be investigated yet he was in the public road.

In Laikipia we have left the issues of conservancies and wildlife to be a private affair. We should be on the fore front. I can tell you for sure that even Ol Jogi and Ol Pejeta would not want Laikipia to take them up as a county. They know that we would be the best in practice and be setting the standard. This motion is timely. I support it fully.

As a House we can come up with policies as the one that Hon. Matunge has come up with and even come up with a Tourism Bill. I would like to commend my youthful colleague; it does not stop here. We should go ahead and come up with a Tourism Bill that puts the infrastructural practices, how we can economically sustain that Kirimon and how we can be sourcing money from donors.

There are people who would want to invest in such a project but there is no legal frame work. We put money for Kirimon and then what? What if it is diverted? It is an investment that is worthwhile. I would like to commend this. We should not be left behind by Counties like Garissa. Garissa, Tana River and Isiolo have their own. Marsabit is even upgrading the Marsabit National Park. Why are we being left behind? I fully support. Thank you.

Deputy Speaker: Hon. Members if there is no other Member contributing, may I call upon the mover to give a reply.

Hon. Peter Matunge: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I know that today is a Thursday and the Hon. Members would want to go to other businesses. I wish to thank the Hon. Members who have contributed to the motion. They have so much enriched it and they have enough information. The Hon. Member from Thingithu was talking about Namonyak and Kalama in Samburu. Today Samburu is running about nine community conservancies that are supported by the County Government of Samburu. There are about eight others supported both by the NGOs and the County Government.

Mr. Speaker, I know that Hon. Chris Mark, and the Hon. Member from Thingithu have talked about Laikipia as unique. That was what I was talking about. We need to continue developing our niche as Laikipia. It is only in Laikipia that within two hours you can be able to sight the big five. You are able to see the Lion, black rhino, buffalo, leopard and the elephant.

It is only in Laikipia that a visitor can be able to pay a million Kenyan shillings in a day. It is not far; it is here in Loisaba. You pay a million shillings in a day just because of the Black Panther. What they were doing is marketing themselves through the Black Panther. I know that Hon. Chris has talked about the Mara Triangle. Mara Triangle is not only about the Mara National Reserve. There are many several conservancies that form the Mara Triangle

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which are generating a lot of revenue to the County Government of Narok and the communities. I know that Narok has what they call a group of conservancies. This means that me and a few other Members can join our small parcels of land, lease and receive millions of money as we just sit.

Another important thing is the issue of security. I know the Hon. Members here thinking of going to Nakuru for the issues of security in Baringo and in our borders in Isiolo and Samburu. If it was not for these few conservancies that we have in the north, we would today be speaking a very different tone about the security issues. Conservancies employ those people called rangers whom Hon. Chris was talking about. They are people from both the local communities and our County Government.

The Hon. Member was talking about the wildebeest in Mara. We still have unique species that we call the northern unique species. You cannot find them in Nakuru, Mara or Amboseli. This is the reticulated giraffes, wild dogs and the critically endangered Grevy's zebra. The Grevy's zebra, over 70% of them are in Laikipia. They are only found in Kenya and Ethiopia and the only remaining population in the world is found in Kenya, Ol Jogi.

Conservation has remained under the hands of the White. It is the only sector that the colonials have never released to the black population. Today, if you move to Doldol you will see those people blocking the public road sites. I know the incidents of Dr. Mordecai who was a lead carnivore conservationist. He was threatened on a public road. Today as I was passing Naibor, I saw that they are putting a very big fence around some land there. They are putting soil such that you cannot get to bypass some potholes on the road because they are so bad.

Some counties like Garissa are ahead of us. They have a Director of Conservation. They are in charge of many conservation programs including the Ishakbin Sanctuary which is very unique. They are developing a unique niche of the white giraffe. I know that we have a way to go. I am working on a Community Conservancy Conservation Bill. It is going to give an opportunity to set up for a conservation fund and give an opportunity to set a conservation directorate.

Mr. Speaker, with Hon. Chris Mark we can talk about the issues of conservation in the Tourism Bill with the Chair from trade. Very soon the Community Conservation and Directorate Bill will be in this House. I just urge the Hon. Members to support because we already have a draft on the same. I know that the Hon. Members have other tasks and they want to go. I thank you Members and urge for your support.

(Question put and agreed to)

ADJOURNMENT

Deputy Speaker: The sittings of this House stands adjourned until Tuesday, 22nd September, 2020.

The House rose at 9.15 a.m.

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