



**SPEECH BY H.E DR. HILLARY BARCHOK DURING THE SUMMIT FOR
DEMOCRACY - OFFICIAL SIDE EVENT ON DECEMBER, 6TH 2021 AT 10 A.M ET**

- *Dr. John Coonrod, co-founder and coordinator, Movement for Community-led Development and the Vice President at the Global Hunger Project*
- *All MCLD Global Chapters represented today including the Kenyan Chapter led by Steve Ogutu*
- *The civil society*
- *Development partners*
- *Government representatives*

Ladies and Gentlemen

Good morning,

It's a great pleasure that I get this rare opportunity to speak at this event. Thank you so much. I'll share my thoughts on Democracy both at the national level and the County level of Bomet where I am the Governor.

Democracy in Kenya has grown since the introduction of the multiparty democracy in 1992 and the promulgation of the current constitution in 2010. In between, we've gone into multi-party elections 6 times with presidential transitions 3 times. Further the current constitution ushered in new levels of leadership at county levels introducing the Governor, senator, Women Reps and the Members of the County Assemblies. Next year August will see a completed cycle of this new system.

The benefits that have come with the system cannot be over-emphasized. New roads have been constructed, education systems have been expanded, enrollment increased, health facilities built and equipped, more people have been employed and the livelihood of the locals changed for the better. In short, every household in Kenya today has to some extent tasted the fruits of devolution. For now, we have just scratched the surface, there's more that needs to be done.

Untimely disbursement of funds from the central government has led to insufficient funds for county governments leading to slow take off of key programmes, projects and activities.

Bomet County is one of the 47 counties in Kenya located in the Western part of the county. It has a population of almost 900,000 people, with the predominant economic activity being farming. The last few years have seen Bomet emerge as a serious socio-economic and political player.

The reason behind this is I was able to embrace the bottom-up approach where I allowed key populations drawn from the 5 constituencies and 25 wards; and grouped in 20 different demographic groups, develop home-based ideas. My government has over the years facilitated these groups to incubate their ideas, develop unique strategies and oversee their implementation. The results have been tremendous.

Movement for Community Led Development has well thought out and tested programmes, which if introduced fully in Bomet and anchored to our existing systems and structures will Bomet emerge as a model county in the country for Community led participatory development.

Bottom up and middle out approach as initiated by the US President Joe Biden has breathed life and revitalized community led approaches in matters development. This concept allows the community to name, own, control and manage projects at local levels where it also offers them rare opportunities to access them, protect them and sustain them for posterity.

My government in partnership with the local communities have seen the achievement of a number of projects and programmes. Allow me to cite a few examples of how engaging communities can cause sustainable socio-economic development:

1. The Dairy project- Farmers from Chepalungu constituency came together under an umbrella body and saw an opportunity in the local dairy industry. They brought on board other farmers from Bomet Central, Bomet East and as far as Konoin and Sotik, encouraging them to rear hybrid dairy cows. As a result, my County Government honoured their efforts by constructing a modern dairy processing plant that is 80% complete. Once operational, the farmers; through their cooperatives, will sell their milk to the dairy plant. Further the country government through the Early Childhood Development Programme will supply part of the processed and packaged milk to children in Early Childhood Development Centres. This will help us improve on enrollment, fight malnutrition and raise literacy levels in the community.
2. The Tea Growing farmers in my county decided that they will not take the aggressive steps that other tea growers in other counties were taking by uprooting their tea due to low and inconsistent payments. Rather they came together and challenged my office to

look beyond the conventional tea buyers. I took the challenge positively, knocked on several doors and luckily the Government of the Islamic republic of Iran opened the doors for us and now we are directly exporting our tea to them. Better tea prices have ensured that farmers are happy with an improved economic status and the community's dignity has been restored.

3. Lastly, the elderly men in Bomet felt that they were more isolated by different programs and initiatives either from the national or the County Governments. According to them the governments were putting more emphasis on youth and women isolating the elderly men in the process. Six men came together and shared their ideas with my office. I saw in their eyes people that felt that their hope is lost, their dignity taken from them and their lives shortened. Much as they had challenges, they also shared solutions. I encouraged them to bring on more elderly men sharing in their tribulations. This has resulted in over 600 elderly men who have formed the Bomet Veterans Association, a unique network of men over 60 years, who share their experiences with different cadres of our society.

Ladies and gentlemen, we would wish to inspire as many grassroots organizations to take part and play their rightful role in community development. We would wish to strengthen the teams and empower them through training. We would wish to open avenues for these grassroots organisations and create platforms for the exposures. We would wish to see a society that is just, productive, progressive and sustainable in social and economic development.

As Bomet County we are looking forward to partnerships that will assist us in implementing more community led projects, programmes and activities.

Thank you and God bless.