

**SPEECH BY HON. MUSALIA MUDAVADI, EGH, MP, DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER AND MINISTER FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT AT THE INAUGURAL VIHIGA COUNTY FORUM, MULTI-MEDIA UNIVERSITY OF KENYA, MBAGATHI, NAIROBI SATURDAY FEBRUARY 12, 2011**

I wish to congratulate all of you and express my appreciation for honouring this meeting today.

This event is important because it enables a cross-section of Vihiga leaders to **hold a conversation about the meaning** of Vihiga County. After this meeting, it is expected that we will all be informed enough on critical matters related to devolution and County Government to begin to focus our energy, imagination and initiatives towards making Vihiga a model County.

In this Forum, you will be inducted to appreciate what devolution and County government means in the context of the Constitution. You will also get information on critical elements that need your attention related to economic, financial and human resource planning for County Government. This information should help us begin the process of crafting frameworks for debate on what we want to do with and in Vihiga County.

Under the Constitution, Vihiga County is a political, economic, social and cultural entity. I know all that. But if you asked me to choose the priority, I do say that Vihiga – and any other County - should first and foremost be seen as an economic expression of our collective responsibilities as residents. We must see the County as a business that requires qualified managers to run it.

For a long time, Kenyans have decried inequity in the distribution of resources. **The key purpose for which County Governments will exist is to mitigate inequity and bestow on Kenyans the right to equitable resource allocation and at the same time the responsibility to micro-manage the resources for their own development. All of us must therefore ensure we understand the Objects of Devolution in Chapter Eleven of the Constitution.**

In failing to comprehend the purpose of devolution, we may run the great risk of losing the focus to the provisions in Chapter Eleven on political positions. Granted

that County Government will exist to manage resources, it is important to start asking “what resources will such a government manage, and how?”

The reason I advocate for the focus on Vihiga County as an economic entity does not mean I am oblivious to the reality of political necessities. To the contrary, I believe that to fix the political angle, we must first address the economic pillar of realities, limitations and opportunities. Once this is done, we can begin sourcing the calibre of managers we require to effectively and profitably.

As you discuss therefore, be modest in ventilating your political positions and ambitions. Let us save that for the public pulpit after we have created the business for which we will apply to be managers.

The resource people are by far the best that we could source. **Both are in the Task Force on Devolved Government under my office.** These are the experts who are going to propose policy and legislative frameworks to anchor County Government. Let them give you hints on what they are looking at.

Lastly, I see this Forum as the beginning of structured engagement and dialogue, and not one for contests and competition. We are not here to stream role people. The professionals and others who have already started some dialogue should continue after this Forum. We however need a focal point for collation of our ideas. I do hope you will be able to agree on some structures to push the agenda forward.

Finally, this Forum should be the beginning of our forging the **Vihiga Identity**. Each one of us is called upon to begin shading-off the domestic tag of constituency and district. Like the famed snake, shade off the village skin and grow the healthier one of Vihiga County. Think Vihiga County; I assure you it is better.

Let us all be the richer by working from the same template, and begin thinking and formulating the **Vihiga Identity** together.

**THANK YOU**