

Ufungamano – Joint Forum of Religious Organisations

Ufungamano House, Mamlaka Road, P.O. Box 54746-00200, Nairobi, Mobile: 0722-341829,

Dated : 26th March 2019

NB. Forwarded to Office of the President, Deputy President, Senate, Parliament.

PRESS STATEMENT: REFERENDUM AND CORRUPTION

Ufungamano – Joint Forum of Religious Organisations background

Ufungamano Joint forum of Religious Organisations (U-JFRO) originally known as Ufungamano Initiative comprises the main religious organizations.

As a forum of religious organizations U-JFRO has been a key player in the democratization process in Kenya and in the Constitution of Kenya review process since 1999. U-JFRO became the stage from where the clamour for a new constitution intensified as it brought together all the major stakeholders including political parties and Members of Parliament.

Ufungamano – JFRO continued to play its part in pushing the agenda forward until the new constitution was promulgated on 27th August 2010. Since then we have focused our attention to the implementation of the new constitution. We believe this is an area of the constitution which will require the attention of all the citizens of our country to ensure that their struggle was not in vain.

The new constitution will be meaningless to the people of Kenya unless drastic and deliberate changes are made in the way the National and County governments and the legislatures manage the resources of our country equitably and prudently.

Unfulfilled promises

Fifty years since independence Kenyans have been striving for a better quality of life. After so many years of hard work they still have not been able to satisfy their basic need for food, education, health – care, shelter, clothing etc. Over the years political parties have been making promises in their election manifestos which are quickly forgotten after they get into power. Successive governments have completed their 5 year term with many unfulfilled promises or with very little achievement and the dream of Kenyans for a better country has remained a mirage.

Today the cost of living for ordinary Kenyans has risen beyond imaginable level because the Government and Parliament have failed to create policies conducive to reasonable prices of food, housing, clothing, fuel and other basic commodities and policies which would promote job opportunities.

Need for Referendum

In an earlier press statement, Ufungamano-Joint Forum of Religious Organisations expressed the need for a referendum to amend the constitution in order to cut down the size of the Government and the legislature.

It is now common knowledge that the 2010 constitution governing the country for about 9 years has been a big burden to the tax payer and that the ordinary Kenyan has not benefited much from the constitution. In short it is elitist. It has too many political positions and too much money at the expense of development and services which would benefit Kenyans in general.

Continuing with the current constitution in its present form would mean entrenching poverty in the country and more suffering to the poor.

Ufungamano-Joint Forum of Religious Organisations has a moral responsibility to point out the shortcomings of our Constitution. We propose the following amendments through a referendum. **The amendments are for the benefit of all Kenyans and the country, not for creating positions for politicians. The amendments aim at cutting down the size of Government and the legislature making them efficient and lowering the public wage bill and the public debt.**

NECESSARY AMMENDMENTS

National Assembly

The number of constituencies and elected members of the national assembly be reduced to 150 down from the current 290. In many countries the MPs not only represent a much larger constituency but give a very high level of service. On the other hand, according to the recent survey and hansard reports, some MPs attend Parliament but contribute very little in terms of objective debates. Kenyans are over-represented. There are 347 MPs and 67 Senators with a **GDP of \$70.53 billion**. USA has a population of over 325 million, with 535 congressmen and 100 Senators and a GDP of **\$18.75 trillion**.

To comply with the 1/3 gender rule, we propose that up to 75 women be nominated for the assembly from among those who have contested but are the best losers. This will give a total of a maximum of 225 members of National Assembly. The women nominations will be for the gender balance as enshrined in the constitution. The parliament under the previous constitution had 222 members and the citizens have not seen any extra benefit whatsoever from the current enlarged parliament which has proved to be a burden on the nation.

County Assemblies

Similarly, elected MCA's should be reduced to 750 down from the current 1450. To comply with the 1/3 gender rule we propose that up to 300 women be nominated from among those who have contested but are the best losers. On this basis the total number of MCA's would be a maximum of 1050 from 2250.

The Cabinet

Section 152 of the Constitution provides for a cabinet of between 14 and 22 Cabinet Secretaries. It is our considered opinion that Kenya does not need more than 16 Ministries (16CSs) at the moment and in the near future. Compare the current number of Cabinet Secretaries and their assistants, with the number of Ministers in more developed countries.

Independent Commissions

There are too many commissions which duplicate the roles of Government Ministries. These should be rationalized to reduce the public wage bill and to avoid unnecessary cost to the tax payer.

County Governments

At the current number of 47, the counties are too many and some are not viable. They are also too costly to Kenyans. The Counties should be clustered into viable economic blocks. We propose that counties be reduced to 16 and the current counties become sub-counties. This could easily be achieved if the previous provinces were split into two counties each, the Rift valley split into three counties because of its larger size and Nairobi retained as one county.

U-JFRO rejects the proposal to create another layer of county governance as proposed by some politicians.

Senate

We propose that in the 2022 General Elections senators should be elected in the new reduced number of counties and each county should elect one man and one woman senator similar to the US model. This will reduce the senate to 32 senators down from the current 67 and will provide a good solution for the gender balance. In order to control parliamentarians, it should become an upper house to be of use to the country.

Nominations

We propose that all other nominations in the national assembly, senate and county assemblies be scrapped because the system has been abused with only relatives and political cronies being nominated. Every elected leader is supposed to represent all types of interest including vulnerable groups.

CORRUPTION

Corruption is a very worrying subject in our country today. Kenyans have lost billions of shillings through widespread corruption everywhere, largely in high offices in the public sector supported by the private sector.

U-JFRO urges Kenyans to engage in the war against corruption aggressively. The fight against corruption is about a disease capable of consuming the whole country if it ignored for too long. Fight corruption from where you are, in your community, in town, on the road, in school, at work and everywhere. Reject corruption in all its forms. This is the only way to eliminate the epidemic from our society.

We commend the president's efforts in the fight against corruption but a more drastic effort is required from him in disciplining those appointed in the high offices of his government when implicated in corruption.

U-JFRO proposes the following measures, among others to intensify the fight against corruption.

- 1) That the judiciary prioritizes corruption cases in our courts with a view to completing them within two years utmost.
- 2) That all State Officers and all the public servants mentioned or associated with corruption vacate their offices awaiting conclusion of their cases, as a matter of government policy and in conformity with chapter 6 of the constitution.
- 3) The State Officers and Senior Public Servants should not preside over Harambees and other fundraising activities.
- 4) That Churches and Religious communities should stop inviting them as chief guests in their fundraising activities.
- 5) That the Ethics and Anti-Corruption Commission Act gives the Commission specific power's in dealing with the proceeds or gains from corruption.
- 6) That the law empowers EACC to carry out life style audit on all Cabinet Secretaries, Governors, MPs, Senators, MCAs and other senior public officers urgently.
- 7) That the law gives EACC specific powers to recover all the assets of corruption.