



December 17, 2013

## **Press Release**

The Third Kenya Diaspora Conference in the United States concluded on a high note on Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> December 2013. The Conference was generally perceived by participants to have been a resounding success. Our target was to have 300 participants. We were honored to register 415 participants, comprising members of the Diaspora, Friends of Kenya, as well as business and government representatives from both Kenya and the United States. The theme of this year's rebranded forum was *"50 years onwards: Enhancing the role of the Diaspora in Kenya's future Development"*.

The annual Diaspora Conference is convened by the Embassy of Kenya in Washington DC, in partnership with the Kenya Diaspora in the United States. Its main aim is to strengthen existing linkages and networks between Kenyans in the US, the business sector in the US and Kenya, and the government, with the overarching goal of building alliances for Kenya's development and standing in the world.

This year's conference had added special significance. The conference began on the eve of Kenya's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of political independence. It was a great joy to witness the renewed optimism, interest and goodwill that was generated, which will hopefully culminate in more involvement of the Diaspora in national development matters.

The inclusive and participatory format of the conference enabled participants to fully utilize and benefit from the numerous deliberations that were rich in detail and content. The exhibitors and speakers from the private sector were able to showcase their new products and services which they had purposely tailored to fit the Diaspora community. They expressed great optimism about the potential growth of their future business linkages with the Diaspora community.

The Diaspora was also able to discuss key issues affecting the community and their ability to effectively contribute to Kenya's social, economic and political development. For the first time, the Diaspora conference provided a platform to discuss issues such as Women's rights and Adaptation challenges facing the US based Diaspora. Alongside the

conference, General Electric(Africa) and Barclays Bank also organized recruitment drives targeting the Diaspora.

Intimate discussions were held between the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IEBC) and the Diaspora on the issue of the Diaspora Vote in 2017. The conference reopened dialogue on this critical issue and served to initiate new ideas on how to ensure that Diaspora voting is a success in the next General Elections.

There was also participation from new entrants, such as the Somali American Leadership Council and young high school students from Hopewell Valley Academy in New Jersey.



**Amb. Jean N. Kamau**

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