

This is Hon. Najib Balala, E.G.H, M.P's official statement of commitment for the declaration of his Presidential bid, 2007.

Fellow Kenyans,

I am excited and overwhelmed to appear before you in an occasion I consider to be extremely important to all of us who believe in the political stability and future prosperity of our country. For me, it is a culmination of deep soul-searching and intense consultations with my family, friends and supporters.

To those of you who have been working with me, no words of mine can fully express my gratitude and appreciation. Nevertheless, I would like to point out a few. My campaign secretariat, which has made this day a reality and my constituents in Mvita who gave me a chance to serve them for the last four years. Equally important, are the multitudes of Kenyans all over the country, in their homes, in their work place and their places of worship who have consistently encouraged and motivated me; I would like to take time out to thank, my wife, Najaah, my children, my brothers and sisters, my colleagues Tendai, Ken and Abdul, who have worked so close to me that I feel that they are an extension of my family. They were always there to share in my trials and tribulations; I thank my dear mother, who like many other strong Kenyan mothers, single-handedly brought me up. I thank all those who stood by me and continue to stand by me because of their staunch belief in my political convictions.

Tonight, is not an occasion for too many words. I simply stand before you to make a public declaration and that I need your support to offer a noble service to my nation. As your humble servant, I need your approval and profound backing as one of the Orange Democratic Movement's presidential candidates. Many a time, I have been asked to make my candidacy public and my declaration official, and I believe that the time has come - and the day is today.

Mine is a call, to serve you my people, my country and nation. I have the strongest conviction and a most fertile vision for this great nation and the wonderful people of Kenya. I am talking about a generation change and quality leadership for posterity. Any nation's wealth lies in the vision of its leaders and the discipline of its government. A leadership and government that will ensure perpetual regeneration and refinement to suit the social, economic and technological changes in today's world. A leadership and government that will ensure our hard-earned freedom rewards us with abundant wealth and not punishes us with chronic poverty. A leadership and government that will unshackle our minds and hearts from tribal, religious and ethnic affiliations. A leadership and government that will enhance our prosperity in our diversity.

I Najib Balala have a dream and I have hope for a better tomorrow. This dream and hope is of a responsible leadership, honest as well as full of conviction and integrity. One that is sensitive to the aspirations of its citizens.

With this in mind, I would like to make clear from the outset, to my colleagues in ODM-Kenya, that my aspiration for this position is not a passion for personal ambition and should not imbue a basis for enmity within ourselves but rather should form a benchmark for a united platform in enabling all of us to provide a common stand to face our adversaries without.

I reach out to all of them today to collectively strive to finish what we started and to fulfill the promise we made to them not long ago.

My fellow brothers and sisters remember together we stand to win, divided we stand to lose so much. A victory for our party in 2007 will spell a victory for our entire nation. A failure to unite will create a blunder for us and for those millions of Kenyans who placed their trust in us. Therefore, let us heal the wounds of our divisions and stifle the voices of our personal ambitions, let us try again to collectively dig deep within ourselves in soul-searching and place our responsible convictions to provide this country with a better option.

Empty rhetoric and shallow brinkmanship will not bear fruits for our people nor provide a solid foundation for the development of our country.

Let there be no reason for hatred due to our diversity in tribe, creed, race or religion. For some of us the cause of tribal, ethnic or regional affiliations means nothing, but the cause of freedom, democracy and social justice means everything. Let us free ourselves from the apparent safety of our tribal, ethnic and religious cocoons and appeal collectively to Kenyans to take pride in our cultural diversity. It should always be a source of wealth and prosperity and not a source of hatred and animosity.

It is not by accident that I have chosen my venue tonight to be the Kenya National Theatre and to demonstrate through the play you have all witnessed, the symbolism of the status quo in our nation. As you all notice how overwhelming the cultural diversity is in our country; this is a melting pot of Kenyan cultures and peoples; a place in which artistic talents of young people are tapped; people innovative enough and Kenyan enough to think out of the box, out of the confines of our tribes and race; a place that constantly challenges the past mistakes. It is not far fetched to think that a new culture of good governance, honest and patriotic leadership will emerge out of our dynamic efforts and our fresh vision of a new Kenya.

My vision is not only of free primary and secondary education but also all the way through to secure employment. My vision is not only for primary health care but for universal health care. My vision is not only freedom of association but also incorporation and egalitarianism of youth and gender. My vision is not only economic prosperity but also rather powerful institutions of social justice. My vision is not only to have political and religious liberties but also rather a wholesome system of social, economic and political liberation.

I have a strong conviction and am an investor in people not in material wealth. I promise to invest in you my people. I promise to invest in strong institutions that will hold our nation together, through a solid and a people driven constitution that will ensure our prosperity and that for the generations to come. I promise to seek the advice of the best brains of our nation to enhance the social, economic and political status of our people. It is easy to project arithmetic figures in our individual manifestos but it is very difficult to actualize those figures.

Therefore, I would like to stress that the answer lies in the discipline of our convictions. I cannot say that there will be zero tolerance to corruption and be the first not to exemplify in words and deeds myself. I cannot say my government will provide millions of jobs annually and not have a solid plan of vision doing that. I cannot say I will give my people a new constitution within a hundred days and betray the faith of my people in me and the conviction of my promise. I cannot say I shall provide free primary education and have many dropouts due to scarcity of secondary schools and university placements.

I have a vision and a plan for all that. I cannot promise social justice and economic empowerment if I have not created the institutions that will provide for them.

Ladies and Gentlemen, we were once told that we would have water and health care for all by the year 2000. Indeed, we were told that we will be a newly developed country by 2015. As we move closer to that time they have now changed the view and they are talking about Vision 2030! We are no longer that gullible.

We refuse to wait! Life is now, now is the time to make real the promises we have given to our people. For how long are we going to wait? Positive change must come now! The world is changing and progressing; Kenya can not be left behind; our potential remains enormous and untapped. It is this change that I pledge to you my esteemed people of Kenya.

I know that it is possible to transform this country from the quagmire of tribal politics into a real social democracy. It is possible to get rid of the grinding combination of poverty and disease from the face of this nation; it is equally possible to liberate ourselves from the shackles of mediocrity and nepotism.

Let us join hands and together we will improve governance in our midst; let us encourage our people to challenge the status quo; let us stand and ask why we are not progressing like the rest of the world; why today's mother is not sure of having pre-natal and post-natal services; why today's child does not have a guaranteed future and access to quality education. We will uplift the lives of many of our marginalized people by putting in place structures of a federal system of government through which we will empower them. That much, my fellow Kenyans, I pledge to you - a real break from the past.

If we have to move in the direction that is in conformity to the demands and desires of our people, urgent constitutional reform is quite critical. We need to change constitutional provisions for our system of government to make it modern, effective and efficient. E-government is the way to go; free information flow between government and the people is the key to progress as opposed to the current situation in the so called classified information used as a camouflage for patronage and corruption.

Nowadays we hear much about the more than 5% economic growth and a working nation. Beloved Kenyans, believe me, it is not just the question of figures for economic growth and rhetoric of a working nation; nor is it a question of GDP. GDP must translate into jobs; must translate into *irios* for our people; indeed it must translate into *pilaus* and *ugalis*; school fees and above all into multiple voices that determine the direction our country is taking.

We are not going to develop and make the life of our people better unless we make our investment environment amiable to both local and foreign investors. The private sector is the engine of any economy. My government will work to change the attitude of government institutions that have turned into hindering not facilitating business. From KRA to NEMA, things will have to change in such a way that they promote and facilitate economic development without compromising their core duties.

And when that happens, our motherland will be the great nation, which it was meant to be. Our people in kiosks, jua kali shades, business sectors and agricultural farms as well as those all over the Kenyan landscape are very hopeful and forgiving. We need to establish for them a new Kenya, new leadership and new ways of doing things. The time to act is now and I promise action.

Kenya is greatly crippled by the state of insecurity at the moment. No one is safe. It is obvious that our burglar-proof doors and high fences are not, have never, and will never be a source of security. Neither will the barrel of the gun be. For violence begets violence. We need measures informed by serious research, policy changes as well as an independent and effective police force.

It is only when and if that happens, will there be the possibility to create a secure social environment in which businesses can thrive; where our people will move freely; where our property will be secure; and where our youth will be in schools and colleges, not in hidden places arranging for bank robberies and violent crime. Security will be my priority. For me, security means a good economy; it means freedom; social justice indeed, it means democracy.

When we advocate for security in the world, we must ensure that there is security in this land; when we advocate for peace in the world, we must ensure that there is peace in this country; when we preach equality we must ensure that that there is equality in our midst; when we castigate corruption, we must make sure its beings with us; when we talk accountability and transparency, we must ourselves practice what we preach.

Fellow Kenyans, this is a long journey that I have embarked on. A grand march indeed. A march that is replete with all sorts of challenges, all sorts of dangers and all sorts of skeptics. But we shall overcome as I walk with you. I shall move with unshakable conviction that you will be with me all the way until victory dawns on us. We shall climb the mountain together and if we tire or falter we shall draw from each other's strength and hope to rise up again. I say to you my brothers and sisters, hold my hand and together we shall make it. God willing.