



NAIROBI CITY COUNTY ASSEMBLY

OFFICIAL REPORT

Second County Assembly – Fifth Session

Tuesday 28th September 2021

The House met at 9.30 a.m.

[Hon. Temporary Deputy Speaker (Ms June Ndegwa) in the Chair]

PRAYERS

QUORUM

Hon. Temporary Deputy Speaker: Clerk, confirm whether we have the quorum.

(Clerk-at-the-Table confirmed there was quorum)

MOTIONS

Hon. Temporary Deputy Speaker: Hon. Majority Leader.

RENOVATION OF UHURU PARK AND CENTRAL PARK

Hon. Abdi Hassan: THAT, aware that the Fourth Schedule to the Constitution under Paragraph 4 provides for the functions and powers of county governments as amongst others, cultural activities, public entertainment and public amenities, including county parks, beaches and recreation facilities; recognizing that parks and green spaces occupy a critical place in the urban environment, providing opportunity for recreation and wellness, as well as environmental management promotion and sustainability for urban communities; observing that in furtherance of this critical role the Nairobi City County currently retains, operates and maintains various parks and green spaces, including Uhuru Park, Central Park, Michuki Memorial Park, Jeevanjee Gardens, Jamhuri Park, Uhuru Gardens etc.; welcoming that the rehabilitation and retrofitting of urban parks and green spaces in Nairobi City County is a presidential legacy project which needs the full support of the County; regretting that the status of some of the Parks and green spaces has waned over the decades as maintenance and renovation have not kept pace with growth in the urban population and demands for use of the parks by city residents; deeply concerned that parks of historical and national significance such as Uhuru Park and Central Park, risk losing their international appeal, recognition and status given the neglect they have suffered and the state of disrepair of facilities and amenities; Noting that while the Nairobi Metropolitan Services has invested heavily in the renovation of Michuki Memorial Park,

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which investment has greatly boosted the usage of the Park, with ever greater numbers visiting the refurbished Park on a daily basis, the same has not materialized for Uhuru Park and Central Park which remain in a state of disrepair; now therefore, disturbed that if the state of disrepair of Uhuru Park and Central Park is not remedied, the parks risk losing their appeal, historical significance and recognition; this Assembly resolves as follows, that:

1. The Nairobi City County Executive and the Nairobi Metropolitan Services urgently coordinate the immediate notification to the Members of the Public of the closure of Uhuru Park and Central Park for purposes of carrying out rehabilitation and retrofitting, taking into account the interests and well-being of stakeholders who carry out certain licensed activities in the Parks, with a view to restoring:
 - a. Modern aesthetics for recreational areas;
 - b. Facilities for outdoor events;
 - c. Botanical spaces; and
 - d. All such related undertakings as are essential to return the two parks to their former glory.

Madam Speaker, allow me to underscore the value of parks and other green spaces for cities such as Nairobi. We must cherish parks and green spaces. As you are aware, when you go to Uhuru Park now, it has turned into a den of thieves and a haven for street families. Around the City, the only area where someone can go and release his or her stress is Uhuru Park, but now members of the public cannot access the park because of these vices. During this period where COVID 19 pandemic has ravaged all over the world, Kenyans of all walks have visited the parks and other green spaces to unwind and relax, especially at Michuki Park.

With those few remarks, I beg to move this Motion and ask my counterpart to second the Motion. Thank you.

Hon. Michael Ogada: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and congratulations for being in the Speaker's Panel. This is the first sitting we are sharing with you. We are glad.

Madam Speaker, as I second the Motion which has been brought about by our Leader of the Majority Party. I wish to thank the Executive and the Majority Party for having seen sense to relook at the Central Park and the Uhuru Park. For the last 25 years I have been moving around the City as a politician, I have never had an opportunity to see any meaningful activity taking place within these parks. If you go to Uhuru park or Central Park currently, what you will see there is simply undeveloped parcel of land, but generally there is nothing there. So, it is just an open space where people can come and walk around and it ends there. But the main intention of the planners who established the park, was supposed to be recreation centers where people could get opportunity to go and enjoy the goodness of the City. That doesn't happen now. Currently, if you are told to go to Uhuru Park on foot, I think you will not accept because it has turned in to a den of thugs, as Majority Leader had put it. It is scary.

Having come up with this Motion that the parks need to be closed down for at least three months so that some good meaningful rehabilitation can take place, we are for it. We support it. We urge the Executive and the NMS that once the facilities are closed for renovation, we request them not to fence off the place and then disappear. As Members of the County Assembly, it is in the interest of the members of the public that

those places remain open for them to be using. But because we want them to be renovated and rehabilitated, then we will urge the Executive and the NMS to work within the specified time so that they do meaningful work within the shortest time possible and be given back to the public for their use.

Madam Speaker, I second. Thank you.

(Question proposed)

Hon. Moses Ogeto: Thank you so much, Madam Speaker. First, I would like to give my sincere congratulation because today is the first time I am sharing a platform in this Assembly with you.

Madam Speaker, I stand here to support this Motion. The way the Leader of the Majority has said that nowadays Uhuru Park, which is located in my Ward, has turned to be a den of thugs. I remember when I came to Nairobi around 2009, as I was walking toward Uhuru Park, I was almost killed because someone snatched my mobile phone and started shouting that I am a thief. The same boy turned against me and said that I am a thief. Then he ran towards the lake that is in Uhuru Park and into the tunnel and managed to escape with my mobile phone. That was in the year 2009, imagine now the year 2021 how chaotic it is.

Madam Speaker, there were some reports which came and I tried to report at the Central Police Station, about those thugs who are at Uhuru Park. The OCS of that station was overwhelmed. This Motion has come at the right time. We can now flush out those thugs who are in that place.

Madam Speaker, this park was first gazetted in 1969 by our founding father Mzee Jomo Kenyatta. The reason why he gazetted is because he wanted a green environment within the Central Business District.

Madam Speaker, when you go to a country like the United Arab Emirates, they want to get recreational facilities within the Central Business District. The Leader of Majority has also said that botanical spaces---

(Loud consultations)

Hon. Temporary Deputy Speaker: Just hold on, Hon. Ogeto, Board Member, kindly consult in low tone.

Hon. Moses Ogeto: Thank you, Madam Speaker, I did not see that and it is very important. Madam Speaker, I was trying to say that botanical spaces and planting of trees will increase the circulation of oxygen in Central Business District.

I was once told that there is a plane that moves around checking the oxygen levels of CBD, and it is very chaotic. Madam, you will find most of us become sick because our oxygen levels have been interfered with the big buildings and the smoke from the cars. This botanical spaces and planting of trees in this Uhuru Park will be of great help.

I believe this Motion will not turn again into land grabbing because they may take advantage of it. There were two towers which were supposed to be built in 1989 before I was born. Hon. Wangari Mathai was then a Member of Parliament and defended the park during the Moi Era.

I hope the Leader of the Majority Leader will protect this place so that we do not see some towers coming up after a few years. The Motion is very clear that it is to bring this place to its original glory. Some government officials usually take some advantage of it and then they grab this land and they start building their own things. This Motion should be followed to the latter by the Leader of Majority. After ten years when

our sons and grandsons will be coming to this city, he will be recognized for bringing a Motion in this Assembly which has effected the green environment in the city.

With those few remarks Madam Speaker, I beg to support this Motion.

Hon. Temporary Deputy Speaker: Majority Whip, I saw your hand on the computer, are supporting the Motion or it was by mistake? I saw you had requested form the ICT department.

Hon. Paul Kados: Thank you, Madam Speaker, I also stand to support this Motion. We as a County should start thinking of rehabilitating, not only Uhuru Park.

This County should come up with a law to protect all public spaces. We have travelled to many countries and get to visit the parks, but here in Kenya we do not have even one. When you look at City Park, you will regret having been there because there are people who are mugging others and other things.

Therefore, I request that after the rehabilitation, the County Government should come up with measures of ensuring its security because it is unsafe. The Government should find ways of protecting all parks in Nairobi. I second

Hon. Temporary Deputy Speaker: Thank you Mheshimiwa. Board Member, Hon. Charles Wakarindi. I was told that I have to mention the name

Hon. Charles Thuo: Thank you, Hon. Speaker. This is a very important and happy day for Nairobianians because it has an emotional connection to them. Those of us who were not financially endowed used to go there and take our families for activities such as boat riding. I say that many marriages have started from there. The uplifting, modernization and taking care of the parks is very important. If you visit Uhuru Park today, you will find that nature has tried to modernize it. People are trying to put up structures such as swings and they have not been regulated. The message that is being sent by the investors doing that is that they have realized that there is a gap that needs modernizing.

Hon. Speaker, I had the privilege of accompanying the NMS to Addis Ababa. We visited a few parks there. They are exemplary and beautiful, and you will be forgiven to think that you are either in Europe or UAE countries. It has taken their commitment.

I am glad to say that General Badi agreed to replicate that here. We took that trip on our own expense and what we saw there is something that is going to change the outlook of Nairobi. Beautiful spaces are not only exceptional but rare to find. People who do not lie in the leafy suburbs do not have places where they can go to have fresh air therefore.

By upgrading the parks and fencing them, then we are going to make it secure and give investors an opportunity to make money without harming the environment. It is an idea whose time has come and those who doubt this should take our word for it. The Assembly is going to ensure that not a single inch of public land is going to go into private hands. I know that the Director NMS, our Majority Leader and the Deputy Governor have their eyes set for completion of this project which is going to be beneficial to Nairobianians.

Thank you, Hon. Speaker. I support the motion.

Hon. Temporary Deputy Speaker: Hon. Majiwa.

Hon. Geophrey Majiwa: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise to support this Motion. This is not new to Nairobi County alone. It has been happening in the world over and those who have had the opportunity to travel outside the country know what it means to have a park within the city. Therefore, anything that will be

done to improve Uhuru Park is something that needs the maximum support of Members and education to the members of the public.

There was a similar scenario along Langata road when the Government fenced off Uhuru Gardens and it got people talking. People thought that the garden had been grabbed but instead, a very wonderful installation is being worked on and it looks good. This initiative needs our maximum support.

I urge the Majority Leader to ensure that many others spaces within the city are improved. If you drive along Thika Road, you will find out that the superhighway has so many roundabouts that act as exits to the main highway. The roundabouts are filled with a hive of activities and people are also relaxing with their families. This tells us that there is a need within the city for open spaces for residents to use during their free time to enjoy the fresh air and greeneries.

It is important that we also consider the partnership that we have; for example, the partnership between Nairobi and Denver City, which has been there for many years. Some time back, we used to have Denver Park along Museum Hill near the former casino, I don't know what happened to it because I don't hear of it nowadays.

When you go to Denver City, there is Nairobi Park which they have maintained up to date. These are the things that we need to look at so that when we have relationships with other parts of the world, we maintain these ties so that when they have retained theirs, we should also take the responsibility of maintaining ours.

Madam Speaker, this needs to go to the residential areas, though we may not have enough spaces there but there are spaces like the one I saw when driving along Outer Ring Road on the side of Buruburu facing Umoja, which is very beautiful. If it is upgraded to a park, it can be used by people who live in that area so that people do not sit in the roundabouts because this is a disaster in waiting. When a drunkard will drive on such roundabouts one Sunday afternoon, we will be talking of a different story. Thank you, I support the Motion.

Hon. Temporary Deputy Speaker: Mover!

Hon. Abdi Hassan: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I want to assure the Member for Kilimani Ward that as Members of this House, we will make sure that the beautification and recreation of Uhuru Park will not turn into a grabbing board as Nairobians are thinking.

Madam Speaker, the oxygen levels in Nairobi has reduced to a worrying situation. If this park is rehabilitated and more trees are planted at Uhuru Park and other parks in Nairobi, we will have good oxygen levels in this city. The population of Nairobi has doubled with the mushrooming of high rise buildings in Kilimani and other places, this adds to the depletion of oxygen levels in the City. By doing this, it will cement the legacy of H.E the President of the Republic of Kenya, not only by doing the infrastructure projects in Nairobi, but also by making sure that Nairobi maintains its green culture since 1963.

Madam Speaker, with those few remarks, I want to thank Members for supporting this Motion. I want also to urge the Nairobi Metropolitan Services to move very fast and close Uhuru Park and make sure that the rehabilitation does not take longer than desired because Nairobians need this park as soon as possible. Madam Speaker, I beg to move.

(Question put and agreed to)

ESTABLISHMENT OF A STREET TO SCHOOL PROGRAM FOR THE STREET CHILDREN

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Hon. Temporary Deputy Speaker: I have not seen Hon. Benson Mwangi. Can I refer this Motion back to the Business Committee for reallocation? He is not on Zoom also.

(Point of Order)

Hon. Moses Ogeto: Madam Speaker, there was a ruling which was made before this House that Members who are moving Motions should be present in the House. The Hon. Member is not in the House and sometimes things with IT may go haywire. If the Member is not there, let this Motion be returned to the House Business for reallocation because some Members make these Motions for *vipindi* and they don't want to attend the House sittings.

It is very ridiculous, Madam Speaker that the same Hon. Member has failed to appear for more than three times before this House to move this Motion. It is ridiculous that we are sitting in this House and somebody does not want to move his Motion. That is not right. Thank you.

Hon. Temporary Deputy Speaker: Thank you Hon. Ogeto. As I had said earlier, I refer this Motion back to the House Business Committee for reallocation or expunging.

(Motion dropped)

ADJOURNMENT

Hon. Temporary Deputy Speaker: Hon. Members, there being no other business, the Assembly stands adjourned till Thursday 30th of September 2021 at 2.30 p.m.

The House rose at 10:30 a.m.