

SPEECH
Nairobi County Interactive Stakeholder Forum
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Distinguished leaders from national and county government, heads of regulatory and enforcement agencies, representatives of the private sector, SME associations, traders, manufacturers, and fellow Kenyans,

I am pleased to join you at this Nairobi County Interactive Stakeholder Forum, a platform that brings together government and business to confront a shared challenge—how to protect legitimate enterprise and unlock inclusive economic growth.

The Government of Kenya has placed industrialization, enterprise growth, and job creation at the centre of its economic agenda. Under the Bottom-Up Economic Transformation Agenda, SMEs, traders, and manufacturers are not peripheral actors; they are the engine of our economy. To push the government agenda, the State Department for Industry is currently focusing on the following strategic issues; global competitiveness and a vibrant and sustainable manufacturing sector; thus increase manufacturing contribution to GDP and employment creation; all which are highly affected by counterfeiting.

Government policy must therefore work for business, not against it.

However, we must speak honestly. Counterfeiting and illicit trade continue to undermine legitimate businesses. They distort competition, discourage investment, and punish those who follow the rules. For SMEs and traders who struggle daily with costs, compliance, and market access, counterfeit goods represent an unfair advantage enjoyed by criminals at the expense of hardworking entrepreneurs.

Nairobi County is at the heart of this challenge. As Kenya's largest consumer market and distribution hub, what happens here determines whether legitimate businesses succeed or fail. If we cannot secure Nairobi markets, we cannot secure the national economy.

From a policy perspective, industrial growth cannot take place in an environment where fake, sub-standard, and illegal goods flourish. No investor—local or foreign—will invest in innovation if their products can be copied overnight without consequence. No SME will grow if counterfeiters are allowed to undercut prices and erode brand trust. This is why intellectual property protection and market integrity are not optional—they are fundamental to economic reform.

The State Department of Industry, working under the Ministry of Investments, Trade and Industry, is committed to building an industrial ecosystem that rewards compliance, quality,

and innovation. Our role is to ensure that policy, regulation, and enforcement are aligned to support business growth while protecting consumers.

We are therefore strengthening collaboration with agencies such as the Anti-Counterfeit Authority to ensure that enforcement supports—not suffocates—legitimate trade. Tools such as recordation, import compliance, and targeted enforcement are designed to separate compliant businesses from criminal operators, not to burden law-abiding traders.

For SMEs and manufacturers, government policy is clear: your innovation must be protected. SMEs are the backbone of our manufacturing and industrial base. They create jobs, drive local value addition, and expand our export potential. When SMEs are protected from counterfeiting, they are empowered to scale, invest, and compete—both locally and regionally.

For traders and distributors, we are pursuing a predictable and transparent trading environment. Traders who comply with the law should not be disadvantaged by those dealing in counterfeit goods. Policy reforms are therefore geared towards reducing uncertainty, improving compliance clarity, and strengthening trust between government and business.

County governments, including Nairobi County, are critical partners in delivering these reforms. Counties are closest to the markets, traders, and consumers. The national government is committed to working with counties to strengthen market surveillance, trader engagement, and consumer awareness. Industrial policy must be felt at the market level—not remain confined to policy documents.

We also recognize the importance of consumers in shaping market outcomes. A well-informed consumer base that values quality and authenticity strengthens demand for legitimate products and supports local businesses. Public awareness and accessible reporting mechanisms remain a priority.

I wish to reiterate the government's commitment to facilitate a conducive environment for business, even as we fight the illegalities. Our commitment is to ensure that SMEs, traders, and manufacturers who play by the rules are protected, supported, and empowered to grow.

As we engage today, I urge all stakeholders to see this forum as a platform for partnership. The success of our industrial and enterprise agenda depends on trust, collaboration, and shared responsibility.

In closing, I reaffirm the Government's commitment to building a competitive, inclusive, and resilient industrial economy. By securing our markets, protecting legitimate businesses, and supporting enterprise growth, we can ensure that Nairobi County—and Kenya as a whole—remains a safe and profitable place to do business.

Thank you.