

THE EMPLOYERS' MANIFESTO

INTRODUCTION

Africa's underdeveloped economies are largely caused by poor leadership and inappropriate policies. Kenya needs visionary leadership to overcome the challenges that have constrained the country from realising its full potential since independence. The current Constitution provides opportunities for balanced development of all regions through a devolved government system.

ELECTIONS 2013 AND BEYOND

The 2013 elections will be different from past elections. The electorate will elect the President, Senator, Governor, Member of Parliament, Ward Representative, and Women Representative. Experience reveals that voter education in Kenya is very low, resulting not only to low turnout and participation in the election processes, but also high influence on the electorate by the political class. Also, poor handling of election processes has in the past resulted in destruction of both public and private property, resulting to huge losses to the investors, loss of employment opportunities and low investor confidence. Further, as a result of uncontrolled expenditures by the political class during campaigns, real and perceived political insecurity and fear of change of public policies, election years and the years after elections have been characterised with price instability and low levels of investment resulting in a volatile economic growth.

Comprehensive civic education is therefore a prerequisite to achieving political security and ability of the electorate to elect good leaders. The electorate need to be educated on: the right to vote, how to vote, and the consequences of bad leadership on the country's development. The citizens need to understand that in a devolved government system, visionary leadership is crucial to a county's allocation and usage of resources and therefore the county's development. The ability of individual counties to attract investment will determine how fast a county develops and creates new jobs opportunities.

Civic education can be realised with limited resources. The previously utilised manual system of voting and vote counting has been open to malpractices. The country is of age and ready for an electronic voter registration and voting system. This requires huge investments on equipment and machinery, voter registration, and technical and analytical competencies. To have a credible voting system in place and conduct free and fair elections, the government needs to ensure that the election process is well synchronised to minimise wastage of resources.

THE ROLE OF EMPLOYERS

Employers acknowledge that the country's leadership is important for creating an appropriate climate for enterprise growth. For this reason, employers have a role to ensure that the country's leadership remains stable and that the transition from a centralised system of governance to a devolved system does not destabilize enterprise growth. For this to be realised, the employers have the following roles to undertake:

- Uphold the Constitution;
- Use workplaces as a platform for peace building;
- Invest in innovations, research and development;
- Invest in value addition to create more wealth and productive jobs;
- Provide industrial training and attachment opportunities;
- Remain non-political and non-partisan;
- A rigorous objective analysis of parties manifestos to ensure they are enterprise friendly and give feedback;
- Disseminate information on the impact of political party manifestos on businesses;
- Engage political party leaders to discuss enterprise growth and job creation priorities;
- Engage media stakeholders to promote responsible media campaign on electioneering and elections; and
- Identify challenges and opportunities in the run up to the next general elections.

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THE EXPECTATIONS OF EMPLOYERS

To improve the country's investment environment, employers expect comprehensive reforms on the country's leadership, business climate, industrial relations and social economic issues.

LEADERSHIP

Experience from failed states reveals the essence of good leadership. Kenyans have not enjoyed balanced development due to inconsistent policies, and political alienation among other reasons. The employers' expectations on the country's leadership include:

- Comprehensive and timely implementation of the Constitution;
- Responsible leadership during the Campaigns;
- Free and fair elections;
- Election of competent leaders to the central and county governments;
- Competitive selection of Cabinet Ministers/ Secretaries;
- Optimal merging of Ministries for effective service delivery; and
- Competitive salaries to Constitutional office holders.

INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS

A strong labour force and observance of harmonious industrial relations is important for wealth and job creation. Also important is a transparent litigation process. This requires the government to:

- Mainstream the Industrial Court into the Judiciary
- Adequate equip and resource the Industrial Court
- Promote fair and timely court awards:
- Put in place non- punitive appeal processes;
- Harmonise salary awards in the country;
- Strengthen the institutional capacities of the Ministry of Labour; and
- Fast track labour harmonisation with the EAC;

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Macroeconomic stability, continuity in governance reforms, infrastructure and human resource development underpins enterprise growth and sustainability. To create an enabling business environment, employers expect the government to:

- Pursue low and stable levels of inflation, sustainable level of public sector deficits, a stable exchange rate, and low interest rates;
- Put in place a good governance structure for optimal utilisation of resources;
- Undertake infrastructural development to ensure that enterprises are interconnected through a network of roads, railways, ports, airports, water ways, and telecommunications; and
- Put in place a good education system that meets the ever changing labour requirements of industry.
- Expend the tax base and reduce the that tax level.

CONCLUSION

Good leadership, sound industrial relations, macroeconomic stability, effective human resource, and infrastructure development are crucial to enterprise sustainability, growth, and therefore the country's development. Employers look to government for creation of an enabling business environment to attract investment and bring the economy to full recovery. Employers are committed to playing their role of wealth and employment creation. The expectation of the employers is that the next government will remain committed to comprehensive implementation of Vision 2030 and that the employers will continue to play a crucial role in the planning and implementation of policies and strategies.