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REGIONAL OFFICE FOR EASTERN AFRICA  
NAKURU ALTERNATIVE JUSTICE SYSTEMS COUNTY ACTION PLAN LAUNCH  
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*Honourable the Chief Justice*

*Honourable Governor for Nakuru*

*All protocols observed*

It is with great pleasure that I am part of this momentous occasion. We as UNODC congratulate everyone – under your leadership, Chief Justice, and under the vision and leadership of Prof. Joel Ngugi – in the launching of this AJS County Action Plan for Nakuru.

Today is a great step in implementing the national AJS Policy – which in turn is a realization of a promise to Kenyans in our Constitution which is to integrate customary, or traditional, forms of justice as a legitimate form of dispute resolution. Indeed, this captures what is already happening.

For centuries, such Alternative Justice Systems have been part of the fabric of this country. Within the region, AJS is also practiced widely. We need to look at Eritrea, Somalia, Sudan, Uganda and of course Rwanda where AJS was used to handle one of their biggest crises: the genocide.

So, we can reflect on their rich history and cultural worth, and marvel right now at the progress that Kenya is making. The Baseline and Framework policy documents were unveiled less than two years ago at the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the promulgation of the Constitution of Kenya in 2020.

The multi-stakeholder AJS Task Force that devised the policy was reconstituted as the National Steering Committee, focused on implementation. Last October, the first AJS County model – for Kajiado – was finalized. That brings us to today.

It's our hope that this very first County Action Plan will inspire a chain reaction across the country, with other counties accelerating their own, customized approaches to integrating AJS. As we all know, each county has its peculiar challenges, and so each county will come up with ways of dealing with their particular challenges of giving justice.

Alongside the European Union, UNODC is proud to have supported the Judiciary and the rest of the justice stakeholders under the National Council on the Administration of Justice (NCAJ) for almost four years in developing and now operationalizing the policy. That's why it is especially satisfying for us, as a key technical partner, to be here celebrating today.

At the global level, UNODC works with Member States like Kenya to promote justice and the rule of law and build resilient societies that leave no one behind. In line with Goal 16 of creating peaceful societies, we bring an international perspective to Kenya's justice sector reform agenda.

For example, the UN Handbook on Basic Principles on the Use of Restorative Justice Programmes in Criminal Matters. This has been published by our organization and highlights that restorative justice is an evolving response to crime that respects the dignity and equality of each person, and builds understanding, promotes social harmony, and the healing of victims, offenders and communities.

We also at this point highlight the need to look at vulnerable people across the justice sector and within AJS – looking at the rights of the child, rights of women and rights of people with disabilities.

Access to justice is a right guaranteed under international and national human rights frameworks – and especially as it relates to vulnerable people.

The enjoyment of these rights requires active participation by multiple stakeholders whose roles are key in the dispensation of justice.

Justice Prof. Ngugi, Dr. Akoth and all Steering Committee members – the inclusive and tailored approach you've taken is to be applauded. We know you have spoken across-the-board to both state and non-state actors.

Knowing that this action plan will serve as a pilot for other counties, let me single out and laud the specific objective in the Nakuru Action Plan of protecting the rights and voices of the vulnerable and marginalized groups – thus bringing peace to Nakuru County and enhancing the peaceful collaboration of the communities living within the county.

With the Nakuru AJS Model, the Nakuru County Action Plan introduces a grand hybrid model with five tiers that will handle civil, criminal and land issues.

As the County Action Plans are due to facilitate action, problem-solving, collaboration, coordination, and accountability amongst different stakeholders, each inclusive parameter should create firm foundations for further goodwill, collaboration and empowerment.

It is our hope that in addressing the dominant issue of violent crime in this county, including the issue of youth gangs, AJS may be used to resolve these matters in a restorative way, as envisioned in the model and action plan.

We want to continue to pledge UNODC's support to the rolling out of AJS which includes the entire justice sector – and as stated by the Chief Justice – AJS not only falls under the Judiciary but also falls under the NCAJ.

Our support is through PLEAD which is a partnership between the Government of Kenya, the European Union, the UN and civil society. This is aimed at improving the delivery of justice services, settlement of disputes and use of alternatives to imprisonment.

UNODC was pleased to assist the Steering Committee with an awareness programme with the Isiolo CUC, members of the Council of Elders and elders from the Borana, Meru, Turkana, Somali and Samburu tribes.

We also want to acknowledge most recently the support that was given to the faith leaders in Nakuru and their active involvement in looking at AJS and how they can roll out support to the people who come to their places of worship.

Ladies and gentlemen, in promoting AJS, the Steering Committee is really changing the justice narrative. Their focus is consistent with the Judiciary's promotion of a "multi door" approach to justice through alternative forms of dispute resolution, such as mediation and AJS, which is championed by the Chief Justice.

Our specific target through PLEAD is to achieve a 50 per cent reduction in the backlog of criminal cases. From what we have seen here, we do believe that this is now going to be such an achievable goal and we want to congratulate you all for coming up with this model.

So thank you all.

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