The African Development Bank President, Donald Kaberuka,

Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am indeed very pleased to officially open the Nairobi-Thika super-highway.

This road is an important commercial and transport corridor serving the densely populated areas of Kasarani, Githurai, Kahawa, Zimmerman, Ruiru and Juja as well as the rapidly growing Thika town. The road also links the main commercial centres of Isiolo, Marsabit, Moyale and Mandera to Nairobi. Moreover, this highway constitutes an important part of the regional and continental transport corridor from Cape Town, South Africa to Cairo, Egypt.

The improvement and upgrading of Nairobi-Thika highway, therefore, provides a reliable transport corridor linking Kenya with Ethiopia via Moyale in the north and with Tanzania via Namanga in the south.

I take this opportunity to commend all those involved in the planning and implementation of this hallmark project for their hard work and dedication.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

My government recognizes that infrastructure development not only promotes trade and helps to create a conducive business environment, but also plays an important role in national unity and integration. As Kenyans interact and do business together, they get to appreciate and value people as well as cultures from different parts of the country. In addition, better roads provide proximity to major commercial centers and open up areas for residential settlement where citizens from different parts of the country can buy or rent houses. Indeed, the areas near this super highway are a case in point. In the past few years, vast areas in Juja, Ruiru and Thika have now been developed into residential areas.

It is in recognition of the importance of roads that my Government has continued to allocate a substantial proportion of its budget every year to finance road programmes. In the Financial Year 2008/09, for instance, the Government allocated 90 billion shillings to the roads sub-sector, which increased to 104 billion in the Financial Year 2009/10. This Financial Year, we have further scaled up resources to the roads sub-sector to an all-time high of 125 billion. These resources are going towards improvement and upgrading of the road network in order to strengthen transport linkages with our neighbouring countries and enhance trade opportunities for our people.

This super-highway is a great example of these efforts and of our commitment to transform Kenya into a strong economic hub for the region and beyond. Besides this super-highway, we are upgrading the entire road from Isiolo to Moyale by developing it into a modern highway. The first 136 kilometer section from Isiolo to Merille is complete; and just two days ago, I launched the construction of the road section from Turbi to Moyale.
With regard to our border with Tanzania, we have recently completed rehabilitation of the Athi River-Namanga section of the Athi-River-Namanga-Arusha Road to modern specifications.

We are also rehabilitating and upgrading the road from Kisumu-Kakamega-Webuye-Kitale at over 10 billion shillings while plans are at an advanced stage to upgrade the road from Endebbes to Suam. The improvement of these road sections is expected to enhance trade with Uganda.

In addition to these, we are rehabilitating the road from Mau Summit to Kericho to Nyamasaria and on to Kisumu, including the Kisumu bypass, at a cost of over 20 billion shillings. In our coastal region, the construction of the Dongo Kundu bypass in Mombasa will start next year at a cost of 35 billion shillings.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to reiterate that despite remarkable improvements of our road network, it is unfortunate that about 3000 people lose their lives annually from vehicle accidents in Kenya. Majority of these accidents are the result of lack of discipline by drivers and motor cycle riders. All road users across our country must abide by the Highway Code and exercise caution and patience. There are now more stringent penalties for traffic offenders following the enactment of the Traffic (Amendment) Act. It is our hope that this will motivate good behavior on our roads.

I also wish to emphasize that road projects are costly investments. Installations such as lights, road signs and guard rails are put in place for the safety of all road users. It is, therefore, in the interest of all of us to be vigilant and report vandals or those who are found to be trading in road furniture stolen from our roads. I direct security agencies to be more aggressive in dealing with this menace.

Finally, I would like to appreciate the support from our development partners in infrastructure development. I thank the African Development Bank which has partnered with us in the financing of many infrastructure projects across the country. The Bank has funded Lot 1 and Lot 2 of this project.

I particularly thank the Bank President, Mr. Donald Kaberuka, for his unwavering support that has contributed to the transformation of our roads sub-sector. I fondly recall my conversation with Mr. Kaberuka soon after he joined the Bank when we discussed construction of this Superhighway. I am happy that he has joined us to see that our conversation has been transformed into this magnificent Highway. I salute him for his support for infrastructure projects that link African nations.

We are also most grateful to the People’s Republic of China for funding Lot 3 of this project through the China Exim Bank.

With these remarks, Ladies and Gentlemen, it is now my pleasure to declare the Nairobi-Thika Super highway officially open.

Asanteni na Mungu Awabariki.