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Managing New Realities in a Renewed Nation

By Mwangi Wanjumbi for Newtimes Articles & Info Library updates

Media reports indicate that the US is facing its fair share of challenges. Unemployment is currently anything up-to 30 per cent reported by the press. Official figures which are at 15 % are however a bit conservative compared to those of the press. Apparently, reflection on this experience of the US reveals that there could be nothing unusual. The only difference is that in this land of opportunities, they probably strictly follow the adage which says that, "if you can't measure it, you can't manage it," as advocated by the quality management discipline.

Exit US and think of our situation; how could we be fairing? It is actually difficult to imagine. There are no census reports more than one year since we spent billions on the process. Or, is there another way of determining the unemployment levels? Certainly, there are, as opinion pollsters would want to confirm. But, who would want to bring such figures to light anyway?

In fact, it may be safer to let the sleeping dogs lie. This is so because it would not be surprising to find that the same employment figures for Kenya and many other developing countries could be the exact opposite of those of the US. That is 70% or thereabouts of the population could account for the unemployed whereas only about 30% would be gainfully employed. But never mind that these mind boggling figures would not cause sleepless nights to anybody in authority as of now. Indeed, not just as yet.

But, there is consolation at last, if the new constitution lives to our expectations. All Kenyans will after all be guaranteed of food on the table, healthcare and compulsory free primary education – that is too good to be true. It can be said again and again. And, it is not even enough. The day to day management of the welfare of Kenyans will no longer be in the hands of the perpetual sweet talkers called politicians. They are especially good at it whenever seeking electoral favours. In future, these people will permanently be holed up in parliament whenever not in their constituencies. Never again will they be calling the shots from ministerial offices.

Instead, the ministries which will be no more than 22 as constitutionally mandated will be manned by technocrats bearing the title 'cabinet secretaries.' What a saving for the exchequer? These professional Kenyans who will most likely be endowed with lengthy CVs - curriculum vitae, will be charged with managing all sectors of our economy as well as the social fabric. It will be interesting to witness situations like this in parliament.

"Bwana Cabinet Secretary for Labour, what are you doing to address the current unemployment levels which have topped almost 70% during the current budget period?" asks the MP for Makuyuni Constituency.

"Hon members we are just recovering from an economic down turn. In realization that this has given rise to numerous job losses, we have been in close consultation with the Cabinet Secretary for Finance as we work out requisite solutions. We noted that this is an inter-ministerial challenge hence the teamwork (a rare occurrence in the past). With your indulgence, I will call upon my Finance colleague for more updates on the matter," the labour secretary beckons his colleague as he takes his seat.

Hon members, "the challenge before us is certainly mind-boggling. We are however not leaving anything to chance. We are taking concerted measures of improving the economic situation especially with regard to strict management of the fiscal and monetary policies. In particular, we have directed the Central Bank to lower the bank liquidity ratio, so that more money can be released to the economy. There will be more lending in the banking sector which is expected to reduce interest rates. This will lead to more investment projects....With these measures, we expect to create an additional 10% or so jobs," explains the cabinet secretary for Finance.

Such will be the scenarios in a parliament that will no longer be jostling for ministerial positions, when the new constitutional order takes shape. Meanwhile, the cabinet secretaries will no doubt perform their roles; else expect to face the wrath of the parliamentarians.

In any case, the Honorable Members will legally be expected to sanction not only the appointments but also the performance of the cabinet secretaries. Certainly, it will no longer be business as usual for this renewed nation. After all, Kenyans voted for change on August 4th 2010 and will therefore expect new realizations.

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