FRONTIER COUNTIES DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL (FCDC) – SWISS DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION (SDC) BREAKFAST MEETING WITH DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS HELD ON 17TH OF AUGUST AT THE EKA HOTEL IN ELDORET.

Meeting Report

1. Introduction

The Frontier Counties Development Council (FCDC) convened a high-level breakfast meeting bringing together Governors from the ten FCDC member counties and key development partners operating within the region. The meeting was chaired by the FCDC Chairman, H.E. Hon. Mohamud Ali, Governor of Marsabit County, and provided an important platform for dialogue on development priorities, partnership opportunities, regional coordination, and the future development trajectory of Kenya's frontier counties.

In his welcoming remarks, the Chairman acknowledged the significant support that development partners have provided to the region over the years. He noted that investments in infrastructure, human development, service delivery, peacebuilding, conflict management, and social cohesion have contributed substantially to the socio-economic transformation of the region. He emphasized the need for continuous reflection on the effectiveness of ongoing interventions, enhanced coordination, and greater collaboration to ensure that development outcomes are commensurate with the resources invested in the region.

The Chairman further highlighted the importance of strengthening partnerships, identifying emerging opportunities, improving resource utilization, and enhancing the role of FCDC as a regional coordination mechanism that supports both county governments and development partners in delivering sustainable development outcomes.

The FCDC Chief Executive Officer, Dr. Idle Farah, underscored the Council's role as a strategic bridge between county governments and development partners through its various Sector Forums. He explained that these forums comprise County Executive Committee Members from all ten member counties and serve as platforms for joint planning, policy harmonization, and coordinated implementation.

Dr. Farah noted that with support from the Swiss Development Cooperation and the Millennium Water Alliance, FCDC recently established a Water Sector Forum that has developed a regional water strategy aimed at addressing water insecurity across the region. He also highlighted the establishment of the Blue Economy Sector Forum, which currently focuses on four pilot counties—Lamu, Tana River, Turkana, and Marsabit. Working closely with the Kenya Maritime Authority, the forum has developed a strategy to unlock and harness the significant blue economy potential within these counties.

2. Objectives of the Breakfast Meeting

The meeting was organized to achieve the following objectives:

1. To facilitate interaction between high-level county leadership and development partner representatives.
2. To obtain strategic perspectives from development partners on the current development landscape and future opportunities within the frontier counties.
3. To provide a platform for dialogue on regional development priorities and explore opportunities for alignment between county development agendas and partner programming.

3. Key Messages from Development Partners

European Union (EU)

The European Union emphasized the urgent need for a comprehensive catch-up development strategy for the Frontier Counties. The EU noted that without deliberate interventions to address historical inequalities, the development gap between frontier counties and the rest of the country is likely to widen.

The EU further highlighted the strong relationship between development and security, observing that sustainable security in northern Kenya can only be achieved through inclusive development. The Frontier Counties were recognized as strategically important to national stability, and FCDC was commended for providing an effective platform for inter-county cooperation and coordination.

The EU expressed willingness to support efforts aimed at strengthening the Equalization Fund framework and indicated that technical expertise could be provided based on international experience. However, successful implementation would require strong political commitment at both national and county levels.

In addition, the EU encouraged FCDC counties to position themselves strategically within continental and global climate discussions by showcasing their achievements in resilience building, climate adaptation, and carbon-related opportunities. The EU reiterated its commitment to supporting climate resilience initiatives and highlighted its contribution to the establishment of the National Drought Management Authority (NDMA).

The EU also stressed the importance of attracting private sector investment into the region and noted the opportunities available through the Global Gateway initiative, which seeks to mobilize financing through European development finance institutions. Counties were encouraged to strengthen the enabling environment necessary for attracting investment and leveraging available financing opportunities.

The World Bank

The World Bank reaffirmed its strong commitment to Kenya's devolution agenda and particularly to the development of the ten FCDC counties. The Bank noted that the Northern and Northeastern Development Initiative (NEDI) was specifically designed to address historical marginalization through transformative investments in infrastructure, water, sanitation, energy, transport, climate-smart agriculture, and social protection systems.

The Bank highlighted its new Country Partnership Framework, which focuses on three strategic pillars: increasing productivity, promoting inclusion, and strengthening resilience. The framework recognizes that Kenya's future growth depends on maximizing productivity, ensuring that no population groups are left behind, and building resilience against recurring economic, climatic, and social shocks.

The World Bank emphasized that the Frontier Counties will remain a key priority within this framework and encouraged county governments to accelerate implementation of ongoing investments and demonstrate measurable results. Strong performance and effective delivery were identified as critical factors in securing future investments and expanding development support.

Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands (EKN)

The Embassy outlined its new strategic focus on economic cooperation between Kenya and the Netherlands, with particular emphasis on agriculture, water, energy, health, and logistics.

The Embassy indicated that future programming would prioritize trade promotion, investment facilitation, job creation, private sector development, and removal of barriers to business growth. The need to balance economic growth across all regions of Kenya was emphasized, with particular attention given to climate resilience, food security, and water security.

The Embassy also highlighted emerging opportunities in Marsabit and Turkana Counties, particularly around unlocking the economic potential of Lake Turkana. Plans are underway to develop a €10 million investment programme targeting the region, with a strong emphasis on attracting both domestic and international investors.

The Embassy encouraged counties and partners to focus on designing transformative regional projects that benefit multiple counties rather than fragmented small-scale interventions.

4. Governors' Perspectives

Governors reiterated the transformative impact of devolution while acknowledging that significant development disparities still exist between frontier counties and the rest of the country.

Several governors emphasized that water security remains the most pressing challenge facing the region. They observed that improved access to water would significantly contribute to enhanced food security, livestock productivity, health, education, sanitation, and overall economic development.

Climate change was identified as a major threat, with counties experiencing recurrent droughts, declining livestock productivity, and increasing environmental degradation. Governors called for greater investment in long-term resilience-building initiatives, particularly in water infrastructure, climate adaptation, and livelihood diversification.

County leaders also emphasized the need to modernize pastoral and agricultural livelihoods through skills development, technology adoption, and market-oriented approaches.

Stronger investments in major infrastructure projects—including roads, water systems, and energy infrastructure—were identified as critical to unlocking the region's economic potential.

The governors further called for timely disbursement of county allocations, strengthened equalization mechanisms, increased support for large-scale transformative projects, and sustained collaboration with development partners.

5. Key Conclusions and Strategic Recommendations

The meeting concluded with a strong consensus on the need for enhanced collaboration between county governments, development partners, and the national government in advancing the development agenda of the Frontier Counties.

Participants agreed that addressing historical inequalities through a structured catch-up framework remains essential for achieving equitable national development. Greater investments are required in water security, climate resilience, renewable energy, infrastructure, and economic transformation.

The meeting emphasized the importance of strengthening regional coordination through FCDC Sector Forums, which continue to provide an effective mechanism for policy dialogue, joint planning, and coordinated implementation.

Development partners encouraged counties to pursue larger, transformative regional projects capable of generating significant economic and social impact. Investments in major water infrastructure, trade corridors, renewable energy systems, and climate resilience initiatives were identified as priority areas for future collaboration.

Participants further agreed that **sustained communication, coordination, and partnership** among all stakeholders will be critical for achieving long-term development outcomes and improving the livelihoods of communities across the Frontier Counties region.

6. Overall Strategic Takeaways

The breakfast meeting reaffirmed the strategic importance of the Frontier Counties in Kenya's development agenda. It highlighted the growing commitment among development partners to support **transformative investments in the region** while underscoring the need for stronger county leadership, enhanced coordination, improved project implementation, and **increased private sector participation**.

The discussions demonstrated a shared commitment to building a more resilient, prosperous, and inclusive frontier region through collaborative action, strategic investments, and sustained partnerships.