



**MEDIA OWNERS ASSOCIATION OF KENYA**  
Empowering The Fourth Estate



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## **Media Owners Association, Media Council of Kenya and Kenya Editors Guild Launch the Kenya Presidential Debates 2022**

As Kenya prepares for elections, a lot is expected from the media to enable citizens make informed choices on issues and on candidates seeking electoral positions. The media plays a critical role in democratic processes such as elections including setting the agenda, conducting civic education and providing general information on the governance and electoral processes. A credible, free, fair and transparent General Election therefore calls for joint approach by media stakeholders, pursuant to their role as the society's watchdog.

Kenya is getting into a critical phase of a transitional election with all eyes trained on the key contenders for the Presidency, and by extension their running mates. The media's place in leading the way in facilitating Kenyans to evaluate the Presidential and Deputy Presidential candidates is most vital now than before.

The strength of any democracy depends on citizen participation in issues of governance where the culture of a country values and protects free expression of ideas. In Kenya, we have walked a long journey - from the days of one-party system to multi-party and finally to the second liberation - to expand the space of political discourse. We are a country of diversity of opinions as demonstrated by the existence of about 100 registered political parties.

Our democracy journey is intertwined with the story of our media. These are Siamese twins of our public discourse. Free speech and free media have emerged as the epitome of our democracy. Indeed, we have experienced the progressive growth of our democracy and vibrant media over the years.

We are mindful that our duty as media to facilitate conversations becomes even more pertinent during an election year. This is the reason why from 2013, media has collectively moved to entrench the culture of Presidential Debates as one of the cornerstone pillars of our democracy and electoral process for the benefit of the Kenyan people. In 2013, all eight (8) candidates came together to engage each other and the Kenyan people on the future of Kenya across two (2) debates, each over 2 hours long. In 2017, media again came together and held yet again two (2) Presidential Debates and one (1) Deputy Presidential Debate. It is this culture of freedom of expression that has encouraged various stakeholders in the electoral process to hold debates for political and other professional organisation elective positions.

For a country that has so many diverse political voices, debates have become the place for clarity of priorities, public policies, ideas and other development aspects key to the Kenyan people. The debates play a significant role in the way we choose our leaders. During these debates, the public gets to listen to the candidates and gauge what their priorities could be once they assume office. In that way, they catalyse issue-based elections; provide an opportunity for candidates to debate, interact and engage; and enable Kenyans to make informed decisions. Such efforts call for collective action by media stakeholders, given the centrality of the media in shaping public opinion.

It is for this reason that for 2022, we are pleased to announce the partnership between Media Owners Association, the Media Council of Kenya and Kenya Editors' Guild to organise the 2022 Presidential and Deputy Presidential Debates that will take place in July 2022, in consultation with Political Parties, ahead of the August 9<sup>th</sup> General Election.

The three entities have agreed on a joint inclusive approach to the process. In this regard, the aforementioned media partners have effectively today appointed Clifford Machoka, currently Head of External Affairs & Marketing, Nation Media Group as the Head of the Presidential Debates Secretariat. He will coordinate a diverse team of members from the partner institutions to engage political party partners, stakeholders in the electoral process and organise the 2022 Presidential and Deputy Presidential Debates. Mr. Machoka will be assisted by Leo Mutisya, Head of Research & Media Monitoring, Media Council of Kenya and Rosalia Omungo, Chief Executive Officer, Kenya Editors' Guild.

A team of senior editors from across media houses has been established to provide stewardship of the content aspects given how critical the debates are to ensure the public interest obligations are served. Structures have been put in place to secure the interest of Kenyans and to deliver fairness to all concerned, especially audiences and candidates. What we launch today is a journey that will see the various arms of the media industry play their rightful role during this electoral process.

We reassure the public and stakeholders in the electoral process that we will give Kenyans quality issue-based Presidential and Deputy Presidential Debates that will enable their decision making and effective participation in this year's election.

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#### **About Media Owners Association**

*MOA is an umbrella body drawing membership from leading media houses and organisations in Kenya. The organisation advocates for the advancement of media interests and coordinates with educational institutions on media training and development programmes.*

#### **About Media Council of Kenya**

*The Media Council of Kenya is an independent national institution established by the Media Council Kenya Act, No. 46 of 2013 for purposes of setting of media standards and ensuring compliance with those standards as envisaged by Article 34(5) on Freedom of the Media of the Constitution of Kenya.*

*The MCK is guided by the vision of a society where media freedom is respected, upheld, protected and maintained and where journalists, media practitioners and media houses are professional, responsible and adhere to media ethics. It runs on a co-regulation model where it receives modest funding from the Government while at the same time it levies media houses and individual journalists. The funds are used in running the several activities the MCK undertakes.*

#### **About Kenya Editors' Guild**

*The Kenya Editors' Guild is the professional association for editors in Kenya, including senior print, broadcast and online editors, and scholars of journalism and media studies. The association and its members commit themselves to defend and promote media freedom and editorial independence; promote quality and ethical journalism; and provide a forum for sharing ideas and experiences that are critical in and for the media.*

#### **For further information contact:**

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