

## Speech by German Deputy Head of Mission in Kenya, Alexander Fierley, at PBI-Kenya's 10th Anniversary

Honorable Okiya Omtatah, Senator of Busia County; Mrs. Naomi Barasa, Alberto Fait, and all the others, you are the heroes and you are the ones I think we celebrate today.

You know, I have been in this country for nine months only. So, probably I'm the youngest amongst you here in Kenya, not by age but by residence here in Kenya. Most of the time, I see the beautiful places, the rich and nice people, and the beautiful people. Sometimes, it's very healthy also to see the other side of society. Every society has different facets, brighter sides, and not so bright sides.

For instance, this morning, I was in a children's home that is run by very encouraging and very strong ladies. They care for sometimes babies whose mothers are in prison. They care for pregnant girls at the age of 12 who have already children or are just pregnant, who have been raped, who have been kept under very dire situations, and who have not had any education so far. This is also, I think, one kind of human rights defense that you can do. So, that shows me that what you all do is a big variety of action, and there are many different facets of human rights defenders, and I think that's good. And I think the situation here in the country is very lively. You have the space; you can do your work, and it's very encouraging to see that you're all here.

We have been supporting PBI's work here in Kenya for many years now. We have seen that PBI has been doing good work. But it also shows that the need for support for human rights remains relevant until today. This is especially true when it comes to women's rights and women's human rights defenders. I'm therefore very proud that today we are also celebrating the launch of the new women's human rights defenders' photo. Because genuine equality has not yet been achieved in any country in the world, Kenya and Germany included. Gender Equality makes society stronger and more resilient. Strengthening the rights, the resources, and the representation of women and girls is fundamental to economic growth and development in a country. This is why Germany is following a feminist foreign and development policy. Let me take a minute to explain briefly what this policy is all about. Feminist foreign and development policy offer ways of tackling the problems of discrimination and oppression. It is grounded in the conviction that all people enjoy the same rights and deserve the same freedoms and opportunities. It also rests on the understanding that societies are more peaceful and prosperous if all people are able to participate in political, social, and economic life. It seeks to achieve gender equality worldwide and to guarantee that all people have equal representation in all areas of life, that everyone has equal access to resources. The German government is very strong in this policy. Since we have our current government, which was installed two and a half years ago, Embassies have to report every year what they do to promote women and other neglected parts of society. Against this background, the Embassy has supported many human rights projects in Kenya, including the excellent work PBI Kenya is doing. Let me single out the women human rights defender's toolkit which was developed by PBI and which provides human rights defenders with information and tools useful for improving their understanding on security and protection. The network of toolkit users has increased the confidence and the professionalism of human rights defenders and improved their ability to engage with diverse actors. This proves that there is a great need for continued collaboration and cooperation with all stakeholders involved. Only when we work committedly towards a common goal can we truly achieve development for all. I want to congratulate PBI again for their commitment and resilience over the 10 years of work in Kenya, but I also want to congratulate everybody else in this room today who has worked on defending human rights in Kenya. Civil society

space is rapidly closing in many countries, but Kenya has a strong and resilient civil society, one that is well-organized and comes with a powerful agenda of change. The strong civil society space in Kenya makes the country a hope and a role model in the region. Defending and further expanding the resilient Kenyan civil society is, therefore, of strong importance. PBI is a very active and important member of the civil society and human rights defenders' network in Kenya. You advocate against corruption and for democratic institutions, for safe spaces for human rights defenders, and to protect the rights of minorities such as LGBTQ plus people, among many other issues. I look forward to witnessing the continued positive impact that your work will keep having in Kenya. We are committed to playing our part and to support the important work you are doing. I wish PBI and all the human rights defenders in the room great success going forward. Thank you very much.

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