

**Sen. Olekina:** Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. Let me begin by appreciating Sen. Khaniri for always bringing in Statements that require us to rethink about where we came from and where we are going.

I am going to read to you the Government policy in terms of culture. It says:

“The Government shall promote culture as a centerpiece and driving force behind human, social and economic development and shall encourage cultural pluralism. The Government shall take appropriate measures for the protection, conservation and preservation of tangible and intangible national heritage situated within its boundaries.”

Madam Deputy Speaker, in this country, everything is good on paper, but when it comes to the practical, it becomes a very big challenge. Modernization is a big challenge; free trade, talking about democracy and the need for good governance. These are some of the things that have eroded the need for us to really value our culture.

I am very grateful to Sen. Khaniri for re-emphasizing and also giving credit that the Maasai nation has fully protected the Maasai Mara Game Reserve. That is why Narok County, today, receives over Kshs3 billion a year because of the protection of their cultural heritage.

It now behooves us, as leaders in this House, to think beyond. When we are trying to consume the text of the Statement brought by Sen. Khaniri, we need to think about our diversity and the need for us to be respected for our views.

Madam Deputy Speaker, culture is very important. I grew up in a place called Olombogishi. I was trained by my grandfather to pass on the cultural heritage to the future generation. When we come here, instead of trying to force others to believe in what you want, it is either your way or their way. It will be imperative for us to appreciate our diversity. That is what helps us. We speak our own mind.

It is wrong for you to be pointed out and thought that you are speaking on behalf of somebody else. When you speak, it is your culture that has given you that ability to express yourself.

Sen. Khaniri, it is this House, it started with the British colonial masters who introduced pieces of legislations that have completely alienated our cultures. They have completely guaranteed that it is only the “west” and their cultural practices that will continue speaking. I am very grateful and I thank you that even today, you started this sitting by speaking in Swahili. This is something that we are closer to.

I thank the other Temporary Speaker, Sen. (Dr.) Mwaura, for encouraging us to speak Swahili. I will butcher the language, but I will keep trying to speak it. There is need for us to balance our diversity, but not move away from our culture.

I want to echo the words of my brother, Sen. Mutula Kilonzo jnr., when he pointed out that we have completely missed the point. Instead of looking at the economic viability of our cultural heritage, we are trying to modernize everything. It will not help.

I have lived in so many countries. In the United States of America (USA), every State is proud of their old cultural heritage. This is why I strongly believe that when we are having this conversation of coming up with the new Constitution, it is about time we moved that issue of that policy. This is because I have seen it is a function of national Government. In fact, it says, ancient and historical monument of national importance. That is a function of the national Government.

These are some of the functions that I want to encourage county governors to engage with the national Government and take them back for them to develop them. Tourists should not just be coming to Kenya to visit Maasai land. However, if other counties do not want to, we will continue. We want when we are having this national conversation on how we want this country to go, not to forget where we have come from.

Madam Deputy Speaker, as a matter of fact, I always say, I have one foot in the modern culture and one foot in the traditional culture.

The traditional culture is the stronger one because it tells me that I am my brother's or my sister's keeper. That is why some of us are a little bit controversial in our sentiments when we talk about the change we want for this country.

We want a change that will recognize that today, because of modernization, we the Maasais have agreed that we will no longer circumcise our girls. However, we must be respected as a culture, because that is what has brought me here.

If you tell me to think or walk like a Kamba, I do not know. I do not expect Sen. Mutula Kilonzo Jnr., to think and walk like a Maasai. Sometimes while he speaks, he throws his hands but I should respect him because he is from Kamba land. When I stand here and I say, no, before you accuse me of being a messenger, first of all, find out where I come from and how I was trained while I was growing up.

It is about time that we relooked our legislations and ensured that the pieces of legislations that we have are the ones that will respect our culture. As a matter of fact, I want to state here categorically that as from the next sitting, I, Sen. Olekina will never come here in a suit. I will come here dressed the traditional way.

**Sen. Olekina:** Madam Deputy Speaker, my culture requires me to fully express myself. Therefore, I said that in the context that we must respect divergence of opinions so that when you rise at any occasion and speak---

I want to go back to what Martin Luther King said that we should judge people by the content of their character, but not looking at the person and asking who they are.

To clarify what I said is that let us appreciate each other. I am grateful that Sen. Khaniri has reminded us that we have a rich culture, which the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) recognises and we have to defend it jealously.

One of the things that Kenyans should know is that the World Bank is currently trying to remove certain communities from the list of indigenous groups of people. If you say because of modernization and we allow it in this House for someone out there to come and say that from today, since Sen. (Dr.) Mbiti is from Trans Nzoia, he is no longer indigenous or Sen. Mutula Kilonzo Jnr., is no longer indigenous because of economic reasons. All these challenges that I am talking about are things that we need to embrace.

In summary, I hope that the Committee that you will task with this Statement by Sen. Khaniri, will come up with a statement and hand it over to the Building Bridges Initiative (BBI) Taskforce so that this issue of preservation of our cultural heritage is included in the Constitution, so that we can bequeath it to our children. The county governments can then be able to appreciate the diversity that modernization has brought in.

However, when we have one huge national policy on cultural diversity, we will be trying to do things that we cannot handle. That is because I have no clue how the people

of Tana River live. I am a Maasai. I stand up, walk, sleep and think like a Maasai. Our culture is important.

I hope that it is not only the economic aspect of the culture that we are going to look at when we are thinking about these historical sites and natural heritage, but also how we can be able to relate to one another and respect one another.

Thank you.