



TALKING NOTES FOR BONFACE MAKOKHA PRINCIPAL SECRETARY, STATE DEPARTMENT FOR ECONOMIC PLANNING DURING THE INTERACTIVE SESSION WITH DIRECTORS OF PLANNING AT THE KENYA SCHOOL OF GOVERNMENT ON 5TH FEBRUARY 2026

Salutations/Welcome

1. I am greatly honoured to join a cohort of highly trained economists who are expected to play a decisive role in shaping the economic trajectory of our nation. I congratulate the newly appointed and promoted Directors and Chief Economists, and I warmly welcome all new officers joining the SDEP family and the wider public service.
2. This induction is not a ceremonial formality. It marks your entry into a State Department that is undergoing a deliberate and structured transformation — one aimed at strengthening analytical rigor, policy coherence, and delivery discipline. Your presence here signals that Government is investing in technical capability as the primary driver of economic and development outcomes.
3. Today's session is therefore an opportunity to align our understanding, recalibrate our roles, and reflect on how economists can more decisively drive policy formulation, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation across government.

The Role of the State Department for Economic Planning

4. The State Department for Economic Planning is meant to be the nerve centre of the nation's development architecture. We coordinate the

formulation, implementation, and tracking of Kenya's long-term and medium-term development plans.

5. At the national level, we are expected to drive policy, advise Government, and shape the country's development trajectory. But as we critically reflected in Mombasa last year, we must ask ourselves: are we truly playing this role? Are we leading the economic agenda, or merely supporting it? Within MDAs, are we shaping policy, or reacting to it? Are our CPPMDs functioning as engines of change, or as administrative secretariats?
6. If we are honest about these gaps, then we must also be honest about the reforms needed to reposition SDEP — and that is the essence of our engagement today. Getting this right will determine whether we are seen as system leaders or back-office planners.

The Role of Economists in Government

7. Economists in government are the architects of the nation's economic blueprint. You are expected to analyze data, identify trends, forecast outcomes, and propose policies that are empirically grounded and methodologically sound.
8. You sit at the analytical core of government decision-making. Your work must move beyond descriptive analysis toward **counterfactual thinking, cost-benefit analysis, and scenario modeling**. This is the standard adopted by countries that have modernized their planning systems, such as Chile through its MIDEPLAN reforms.
9. We have already demonstrated this capability — the Fourth Medium Term Plan was led by one of our own, **Mr. James Maina**. That is the calibre of leadership we expect from SDEP economists.

10. As researchers and policy advisors, you must be current on key economic indicators. For instance, what was the inflation rate in January according to the latest Consumer Price Index? What has been the trend over the last three months? These are not academic questions — they are the foundation of credible policy advice.
11. We must also clearly understand our roles within MDAs and how agencies under SDEP — including KNBS and KIPPRA — support our mandate.

Why Economists Are Not Always at the Decision-Making Table

12. We must interrogate our own professional practice. Are we routine in our work, or are we strategic? Are we proactive agenda-setters, or reactive implementers? Are we innovative in our analysis, or complacent in our methods?
13. Are we providing timely, rigorous, and actionable policy advice in our respective MDAs? As Directors and team leaders, are we fostering teamwork and inclusivity, or concentrating decision-making in individual offices?
14. If we do not elevate our analytical contribution, we will remain in the background of decision-making, regardless of how much work we produce.
15. We must leverage high-quality data from KNBS, evidence from KIPPRA, and development instruments such as NG-CDF. How many of us have conducted rigorous analysis on the effectiveness of NG-CDF in driving local development? Without such evidence, our policy advice remains weak.

Highlights of Key SDEP Initiatives 2026 — Re-engineering in Action

16. SDEP is undergoing a structured re-engineering process, anchored on four pillars:

- **First**, we are modernizing **our data architecture** by integrating administrative data, survey microdata, and real-time indicators to reduce dependence on lagging statistics.
- **Second**, we are shifting from activity-based reporting to results-based management, where your analytical outputs will be directly linked to measurable development outcomes.
- **Third**, we are strengthening cross-Directorate/agencies coordination so that planning, budgeting, and monitoring no longer operate in silos.
- **Fourth**, we are institutionalizing **peer review and technical quality assurance** to ensure consistent professional standards in all analytical products.

17. In addition, we are:

- Revamping the national Monitoring and Evaluation framework to strengthen accountability and learning.
- Aligning county planning with national planning through capacity building, with economists now deployed to all counties and assigned expanded roles in project design, monitoring, and reporting — including within NG-CDF.
- Finalizing arrangements for economists to be housed at KNBS county offices to strengthen the planning–data nexus.
- Expanding “Gumzo la Uchumi” engagements with stakeholders such as religious leaders and youth.
- Implementing a Mandatory Economic Planning Clearance Framework to improve coherence and quality in government planning.
- Finalizing the Economic Policy and Bill to provide a stronger legal foundation for economic planning.
- Undertaking Vision 2030 assessment to identify the hits, misses and lessons learned

Rallying Call

18. 2026 must be the **year we decisively turn SDEP around** — from **planning for documentation to exercising system leadership**.
19. I call on all of you to be proactive, innovative, and analytically rigorous. Challenge assumptions. Strengthen evidence. Shape policy rather than simply record it.
20. We must deepen synergy within the SDEP family — between Headquarters, MDAs, and Counties — so that we speak with one technical voice.
21. As PS, I reaffirm my commitment to support you through **open consultations and continuous engagement**. This is a professional partnership: leadership will provide mandate, data, and institutional backing; in return, we expect **intellectual integrity, disciplined reasoning**, and **a steadfast commitment to public service values**.

Thank you.