



Legacy of achievement

PROFILE OF H.E. JAKAYA MRISHO KIKWETE

PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED REPUBLIC OF TANZANIA

President Jakaya Mrisho Kikwete was born on October 7th, 1950 in Msoga village in the Coast Region, the sixth of nine children. His grandfather was a local chief and his father a District Commissioner in colonial Tanganyika and Regional Administrative Secretary and an Ombudsman in post-colonial Tanganyika and the United Republic of Tanzania.

After completing his education at the University of Dar es Salaam in 1975, where he earned a degree in economics, President Kikwete joined the armed forces, rising to the rank of Lieutenant-Colonel. He retired in 1992 to enter politics.

A low-paying job within the ruling CCM Party, gave President Kikwete the opportunity to work at the grassroots in rural regions and districts of Tanzania.

His first ministerial post came under President Ally Hassan Mwinyi who appointed him Deputy Minister for Energy and Minerals in 1988. Two years later he took over the ministry.

Later the same year he successfully contested a parliamentary seat in his home constituency of Bagamoyo. In 1994, at the age of 44, he became one of the youngest Finance Ministers of Tanzania. At the Treasury, he established discipline in public finance management and accountability, as well as help set up the Tanzania Revenue Authority.

In December 1995, under the administration of Benjamin Mkapa, he became Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation.

During his tenure at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Tanzania played a significant role in bringing about peace in the Great Lakes region, particularly in Burundi and the Democratic Republic of Congo. Mr Kikwete was also deeply involved in the process of rebuilding regional integration in East Africa, overseeing the delicate process of establishing a Customs Union between Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania as Chairman of the East African Community's Council of Ministers.

In 2005, he was elected as the Fourth President of the United Republic of Tanzania, winning a second mandate in 2010.

President Kikwete's governing philosophy and political views are influenced by those of Mwalimu

Julius Nyerere whom the President was privileged to be close to. So far Kikwete's government has received accolades across the country and in the international community for fighting corruption, investing in people, particularly in education, and pushing for new investments.

The Kikwete administrations have focused particularly on education: a remarkable 1,500 new secondary schools have been built, along with new 40,000-student science university in Dodoma, the new capital in central Tanzania. These successes led the US to grant Tanzania US\$698 million under the Millennium Challenge Account assistance program, the UK government US\$500 million for education, and the New York based Africa-America Institute (AAI) to award Tanzania the Africa National Achievement Award in September 2007 in New York.

Health has also been a priority, and President Kikwete launched a national campaign for voluntary HIV/AIDS testing in Dar es Salaam.

A firm believer in pan-African unity, President Kikwete was elected as Chairman of the African Union in 2008. His first notable success as AU Chairman was to help bring a two month political crisis in Kenya to an end by brokering a power-sharing deal between Mwai Kibaki and Raila Odinga as well as helping to resolve the political crisis in Côte d'Ivoire. He also strengthened the partnerships between Africa and the outside world.

Under his two terms, he has steered the country towards a free-market economy without totally rejecting the socialist principles of founding President Julius Nyerere: inflation dropped, the economy has grown by around 7 per cent a year, and Tanzania's foreign debt was wiped out.

President Kikwete will stand down after the 2015 general election and has pledged to pass a new constitution before then. The process is underway and the Constituent Assembly has passed the draft constitution that will later be submitted to the public for the final approval.

As he enters his final year in office, the challenge President Kikwete faces is to ensure that many people benefit from the economic growth that the country has been enjoying for several years from big off-shore finds.

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