



## Marketing: The new path to the top job?

By Guchu Ndung'u

Hard work, Vision and Interest. Add in a financial background and ethos of management and the CEO job was definitely yours.

Well not any more. Marketing, as *The Financial Post* found out after a brief survey of some of the top organizations whose CEO's have been appointed for the last few years, is the new added requirement for the plum job.

For during the aforementioned time, sales and marketers have increasingly taken up the role of CEO's with a gusto that almost smacks of determination.

Top on embracing the marketers are recently resuscitated government institutions and a resurgent private sector.

At Posta Corporation for instance, Fred Ojiambo, a career marketer has been appointed to steer the corporation. While at the New Kenya Cooperative Creameries and Kenya Re, Francis Mwangi, and Eunice Mbogo both have extensive experience in marketing.

The nascent Kenya Broadcasting Corporation has also fallen under the leadership of a marketer, in the name of David Waweru.

The private sector has also not been left behind as a crop of marketers are now at the helm of a number of blue chip companies including the Nation Media Group, KETEPA, Mumias, GlaxoSmithkline among others.

So, is being a marketer the new launching pad to the top most corporate job? Or just what is attracting these corporate to recruit CEOs with a marketing background?

According to the marketing society of Kenya chairman Tom Sitati, the emerging culture is a result of the changing economic pattern, which has seen a rebound of the Kenya economy after years of stagnation and pessimism among corporate.

"As the economy improves and spending power increases, organizations want leaders who can push their products and come with a strategy that attracts more growth in sales. Marketers are best suited to achieve this."

The change of focus from downsizing to pushing for more sales, according to Mwangi of New KCC is the kick that is knocking out other disciplines from the quest for Kingpinship.

"Traditionally, CEO's were in the finance industry and it used to be the breeding ground but currently several fundamentals are changing forcing organizations to change their style on recruitment.

A decade or so ago, there was an emphasis on cost cutting and finance was the right department to spearhead such reforms. But currently due to the rising competition in business, marketers may have an added advantage," opines Mwangi who did his sales and marketing bit at Kenya Breweries.

But Peris Nyaguthie, the general manager of HR & Management Agency Limited, a regional recruiting agency that employs for companies like Brookside and Bidco, offers that marketing is only an advantage in some companies' quest for the linchpin position.

"These, in most cases are companies in the fast moving consumer goods (FMCG) industry where there is a lot of competition and marketing plays a big role. Companies like Unilever, Brookside, and GSK obviously require a potential MD or CEO to have some marketing experience as it helps in positioning the company and its products.

Also companies who want to rebrand and reposition themselves are definitely going for marketers."

She cites companies like Safaricom and Kenya Shell among other IT companies which are successfully led by Engineers and IT persons as examples of how an industry and the stage of growth in a company determines its CEO candidate.

It is no surprise thus that GSK, a FMCG company, has produced top notch marketers including heads of marketing of Kenya Commercial Bank, Celtel and MDs including of Mumias and Nation Media Group's.

Nyaguthie is, however, quick to add that other companies have both roles of CEOs and MD's and the latter deals with most of the marketing while the former concentrate on other aspects of the company.

"It is also a change of mentality. The days when marketers used to be seen as guys who just print T-shirts for promotions are over. They are now adept strategists who can change a company's financial outlook for the best," adds Sitati who, however, says that there are not enough marketers who are CEOs. The marketing experience of the newly recruited CEO's has impacted on the companies that they have joined.

For instance Fred Odhiambo, of the Posta Corporation is leading a revolution of the company's products including the repositioning of Direct Mail and the introduction of PostaPay, a money transfer service that has recently expanded to the US and is aiming to tap the Ksh 50 billion remitted by the Diaspora yearly. Eunice of Kenya Re has set her eyes on the new products like terrorism and agriculture while at New KCC Mwangi and his team are raring the export market and has clinched a Ksh 1 billion export deal for the corporation.

John Musunga has his hands full especially with the recent allegations that one of GSK's products namely Hedex Extra will be withdrawn from the market.

However, the executives are up against competition from not only other companies offering similar products, but also a hugely liberalized market and an affront from products manufactured in the Middle East.

Interestingly, some of the CEOs graduated in different disciplines and only take up marketing later in their career or while undertaking their MBA's.

While Linus Gitahi was an accountant, Dr Evans Kidero was a doctor, John Musunga a scientist and Mwangi an economist but this did not stop their match to marketing.

But Linus's passion for marketing was so intense that he walked out of an accounting job to join marketing as an advertising executive for Oglivy and Mather.

"One week later, I was making a pitch to Dr Joe Wanjui then CEO of East African Industries (now Unilever Kenya) I felt honoured and knew this is what I wanted to be."

Even marketers agree on one thing; a lofty degree or training on the discipline is not enough to make you a good marketer.

"Marketing is not just about training. Training helps but you must have some natural flair and not introverted," says Eunice, sentiments which are also shared by Sitati and Mwangi.

However, Linus learnt the advantages of formally acquainting oneself to marketing in school, when he quit accounting to join marketing.

"When I left college I had not done an iota of marketing but I enrolled for a Diploma in Management and people thought I was crazy since it was considered less prestigious a degree but I wanted to have the technical bit of marketing. You need to have the theory to even discern market research," remembers Gitahi who also learnt more of the discipline during his MBA studies.

Of course there is always the controversy surrounding the difference between sales and marketing and which of the two is best suited for the top job. Fatima Alimohamed, the former MSK chairlady tries to put this to rest.

"Sales are the numbers guys and marketing the strategy people. In my view they are different, sales is about short term goals and vision whereas marketing is about achieving the goals on a long term. However, they are both interlinked and it is mandatory that both are inducted to each relevant field."

But as marketers rein in the limelight of the top job, with trends, economy and a wave behind them, Mwangi predicts that though this will be the trend in a long time to come, another department is beckoning.

"While sales and marketing will remain a hunting ground for CEOs, Human Resources maybe a credible competitor to finance and marketing as human resources become more critical to organizations."

However, they all agree on one thing; hardwork, vision and interest still count.

"First, you must express interest in the CEO's job and expose yourself to other operations of a company to be a better executive. One cannot just rely on the marketing bit only. I had the advantage of an accounting background," opines Gitahi who has worked for various organizations including GlaxoSmithKline Beecham.

Nevertheless they agree. Marketing helps but it is not an end in itself. So don't drop your current degree halfway to plunge into marketing.

## **CEO's speak**

Companies are increasingly recruiting CEOs who have a marketing background. FP's Samwel Kumba and Guchu Ndung'u bring you some of the CEO's, their roles, plans and how their marketing background is impacting on their management style and the organization they are heading.

Eunice Mbogo, MD Kenya Re

She is the current lady on the spot due to the ongoing Kenya Re Initial Public Offer, where the government expects to raise Ksh 2.28 billion but that has not killed her marketing and networking skills.

"I have just come in from Rwanda where I was seeking to retain some business and acquire more. I love marketing if I am able to lead the way and bring in more business, I do. This, among other things, I believe, is the reason I was recruited," she offers.

Growing up in a church's compound at Nairobi's Karen up market estate, Eunice's passion for marketing started at an early age and even when she enrolled for a Bachelors degree in Commerce at the University of Nairobi, she majored in marketing.

Eunice began her career even before her graduation. And immediately after her graduation, in 1989, she joined AIG Insurance, a Company she worked for 9 years to the time of her departure as a marketing and training manager. She immediately moved to join the British American Company (Britak) in 1998 in the same position.

And after two years of service, she was promoted to become an assistant general manager, a position she held for a short stint of two years before she was finally promoted to the full status of a general manager in charge of administration.

"I worked for Britak for 8 years handling the general insurance portfolio. I got into operations and underwriting as well as marketing. I always enjoy marketing. Even here, once I settle, I intend to fully engage in marketing."

On her radar is the introduction of more products including terrorism and agriculture, saying the former has a big potential in not only the country but also the region.

However, she realizes that the roles have changed and apart from being in charge of almost all of the company's operations, she also has to practice profit leaning marketing.

"I realized earlier on that it is not just about moving sales, one has to practice marketing that will lead to not only sales but profitable sales. The issue is always about the bottom line," notes the MD whose division was the most profitable while working for Britak.

She will definitely need those marketing skills when selling new ideas to new shareholders which if the past IPO's are anything to go by, will run into thousands.

## **Linus Gitahi, CEO Nation Media Group**

Currently, the Chief Executive Officer of the Nation Media Group, Gitahi, 44, graduated with a Bachelor of Commerce (Accounting option) from the University of Nairobi and earned a diploma in management from the Kenya Institute of Management.

He holds an MBA from the United States International University.

Gitahi has had a flirtatious relationship with marketing since he joined the corporate world as an audit assistant at Coopers and Lybrand.

"The day I passed CPA II is the day I resigned at my accounting job. I felt I was not cut out for accounting and moved to marketing." He joined advertising firm Ogilvy and Mather as an advertising executive in 1988 and this came with a price.

"Though I had to take a pay cut of 25 per cent, I loved marketing and I was at ease. Yes, I did accounting but I wanted a holistic experience."

Thereafter Gitahi joined the then SmithKline Beecham (SB) as the first Panadol brand manager and is credited for transforming Panadol from an ethical product- which meant it could not be advertised-to a household name, a feat that led to his promotion to the position of Business Development and Export Marketing Manager in 1992.

He is credited for bracing the company through tough competition between 1994 and 1998, when he was the regional Marketing Director and the tide of liberalization then threatened to erode a near monopoly that the company was enjoying in the region.

The next step in his marketing career took him to head SB's marketing operations in Africa, before joining SB Consumer healthcare division in Cyprus. He was the Managing Director of GlaxoSmithKline for West Africa since 2003, based in Lagos, and had served the company previously in Nairobi as General Manager for Consumer Healthcare for East Africa and the Indian Ocean Islands.

Gitahi, who is a non-executive director of Equity Bank, joined the Nation Media Group late last year.

His predecessor, Wilfred Kiboro also worked as sales and marketing director of Esso Kenya Limited before becoming the Managing Director of Xerox Kenya from where he was picked to head the group.

## **Francis Mwangi, MD, New KCC**

The geography and economics degree graduate from Moi university, Mwangi, joined New KCC as Managing Director from East Africa Breweries Limited (EABL) where he had spent 15 years in both sales and marketing.

To him the 15 year stint in marketing at EABL are packed with invaluable lessons, especially in dealing with an aggressive competitor.

“South African Breweries had pitched base in the Mt Kenya region when I became a regional manager in charge of sales. Their market share was close to 30 per cent and they were literally gaining on by using unconventional and streetwise methods including unexpected and massive drops in prices and plain undercutting. By the time we were coming out with aggressive competition, their market share had dropped drastically to a paltry nine to ten per cent.”

Two invaluable lessons, he offers, were learnt from the experience.

“You have to be flexible as sometimes conventional approach does not work. Also in the consumer goods arena, response time is critical to your survival. We managed because we adapted very quickly.”

Armed with a degree and a Diploma in Chartered Institute of Purchasing and Supply from the same university, he joined the beer company as a purchasing clerk, the lowest level in the purchasing department then after teaching for a few months.

By the time he was leaving EABL, Mwangi was the company’s national sales manager responsible for the planning and execution of promotional programmes, generation of sales revenue and providing strategic leadership for the giant brewer’s sales function.

At New KICC he brought in the position of the export sales manager to beef up the export market which has paid off handsomely.

“When I came into the business I realized that there was a huge unexploited export potential and brought in an export sales manager. Together, we have created one of the biggest export deals in the Middle East which is going to earn New KCC an approximate Ksh 1 billion each year. Last month, we shipped 108 metric tonnes of powder milk to Yemen. My marketing background helped me and the entire team in exploiting those potentials.”

Mwangi, however, admits that the top job is still a different ballgame from the hassles of marketing, as being a CEO one has to focus on the big picture unlike a marketer where ‘the picture is as narrow as the function is.’

“In sales and marketing there are some variables that affect you that you cannot change but as CEO you have to make sure all departments and functions are run efficiently and in tandem with the vision of the company while making sure you do not lose your pet marketing habit. But if you realize that you have a critical strength in sales, one can look at other functional areas needed to complement your sales efforts.”

Polycarp Igate, MD Haco Industries

A veteran marketer in the banking industry, Odhiambo started his career at Barclays Bank of Kenya in 1988 after graduating with a Bachelor of Commerce degree, Marketing Option, from the University of Nairobi (UoN). He rose through the ranks at the bank to the position of a Product Manager.

He then joined Standard Chartered Bank in 1994 where he held key positions, including Product Development Manager and Regional Marketing Manager covering East Africa before going back to Barclays Bank of Kenya in 1999 where he became the Head of Marketing until his new appointment to Postal Corporation of Kenya.

Odhiambo was appointed to steer PCK last year taking over from Dan Ameyo who left the Corporation in March 2006 upon the expiry of his three-year contract.

Odhiambo now runs a financially stable Postal Corporation based on sound management principles. The Corporation has a turnover of Ksh 2.6 billion annually.

His brief includes the revitalization of the state parastatal as well as repositioning its services amid competition and the decline in the number of letters as more people embrace e-mail and other forms of technology.

According to Odhiambo his marketing experience will come in handy while developing and improving new products and focusing on what the customer needs and appreciates.

“We have already created a marketing and customer service department. We are also in the process of refurbishing and re-branding our outlets to make them more comfortable and customer friendly,” explains Odhiambo.

## **John Musunga, MD Glaxo Smithkline Beecham**

The 37 year-old joined GSK 12 years ago as a sales representative and has risen through the ranks to become a marketing director at 30 years and eventually the CEO in 2005.

“I was trained as a chemist and when I came to GSK, we were oriented to become marketers.”

The company is famed for producing marketers who eventually become CEOs and top among them include Linus Gitahi, Evans Kidero and a host of other marketing managers.

According to Musunga, GSK mostly recruits personnel who have a scientific background and moulds them to marketers.

“It works for us as an employee has the technical bit of science, understands the market and how to position the products and learns other aspects of management. This is because our products are consumer driven and the MD has to understand and respond to consumer needs.”

Musunga has also worked for the company's offices in South Africa. At his current position Musunga, oversees GSK's operations in nine countries.

### **David Waweru, Managing Director, Kenya Broadcasting Corporation**

Appointed this year after the former managing director of the national broadcaster Wachira Waruru was re-deployed to the Kenya Film Commission, from where he resigned to join the Royal Media group, Waweru has extensive experience in marketing.

Prior to his appointment, he had been the general manager in charge of marketing at the Nation Media Group and has worked for the group both in Kenya and Tanzania.

Waweru also worked for The Standard Group, Kenya's second largest media house. He also worked for the New Vision, Uganda's largest media house.

He took over the parastatal as it was undergoing major re-branding changes and his experience is expected to play a large role in its marketing strategy.

Recently, KBC re-branded to Channel 1 and is continuously repacking its numerous stations with the recent being the conversion of Metro FM to Africa's first pure reggae station and Metro Tv to Channel two, also a the first free to air 24 hour entertainment channel.

### **Dr Evans Odhiambo Kidero, CEO, Mumias Sugar**

As the CEO of Kenya's biggest sugar company, Dr Kidero is a trained doctor who learnt the ropes of marketing at the then Glaxo pharmaceutical company, where he rose to the position of a marketing director.

He later joined Smith Kline Beecham as a general manager and when the two companies merged, he was promoted to be the MD of GSK West Africa, from where he resigned to take up the role of an MD of the Nation Media Group.

He has been awarded the presidential honour of the Moran of the Order of the Burning Spear (MBS) for his dedicated service.

He will need all the skills to steer the company amid intense competition from imported sugar and other local companies recently branding their sugar.

## **Government's divestiture program to ride on Safaricom IPO**

### **By Jackson Okoth**

A consortium of leading investment banks and financial advisers is building up ahead of the Safaricom Initial Public Offer (IPO) as retail investors hold on to their cash in anticipation.

Unlike last year when the secondary sale of Mumias Sugar Company shares was extended due to lack of adequate market response, the government's divestiture program now hinges heavily on the sale of its 25 per cent stake in mobile phone company Safaricom.

"The government's targets are likely to be realized because the Safaricom sale forms a large component of what it intends to raise by selling off its shares on the stock market," says Edward Gitahi, investment manager at AIG Global Investment Company.

Statistics from the Nairobi Stock Exchange (NSE) shows a steady recovery, with the 20-share index oscillating around the 5000 points level. This is after the end of a bullish run and dipping of the market during the first months of this year.

"The market has now moved from the correction phase and is on a recovery mode with perception changing from short to long term. The fact that investors are now going for the long term bonds indicates that the market is past the correction phase. Market perceptions have now moved from short to long term following the exit of retail speculative investors," says Gitahi.

With the government factoring a substantial amount of divestiture funds in this year's budget, it is already fast tracking its privatization program, with the Kenya Re and Safaricom sale slated to be first off the blocks.

The market is already excited by the profits made by Safaricom and are visiting investment banks, seeking for advice on how to position for the sale.

"We have been getting an increasing number of telephone enquiries concerning the Safaricom IPO indicating a high level of excitement in the market," says John Kirimi, Director of Sterling Securities Limited.

While the government intended to raise Ksh 7.8 billion from the KenGen IPO, the issue was oversubscribed to the tune of Ksh 26 billion. The sale of 25 per cent of Safaricom is expected to raise Ksh 35 billion, 7 times the size of KenGen offer.

This year's Ksh 693 billion budget has a shortfall of Ksh 109 billion, which is to be financed taxes, domestic borrowing and divestiture of government stake in state-owned enterprises as well as borrowing from the international market.

Apart from unbundling its shareholdings in both Safaricom and Telkom Kenya, the government is also set to offload its shares in Kenya Reinsurance Corporation.

In this financial year, the government plans to raise US\$ 0.5 billion (Ksh 36.1 billion) from the privatization program, a large component being the sale of 25% stake in Safaricom, expected to raise Ksh 35 billion.

It is also expected that Telkom will have a strategic partner as the government offloads more of its shares in KenGen when the price and market fundamentals are right. With a huge capital injection pumped into state owned National Bank of Kenya (NBK), its shares could be offloaded to third parties in the near future.

As a curtain raiser to the government's divestiture program, the much awaited Kenya Re IPO is finally on the cards.

Details from treasury mention that the Kenya Re IPO will open on July 18th, involving the offloading of 40 per cent of the government's stake, with each share retailing at Ksh 9.50. The exchequer is set to rake in Ksh 2.3 billion from this sale.

## T-bills remain attractive as financial year closes

By Jackson Okoth

As the government closed its books, the treasury increased its domestic borrowing requirements, leading to a tightening of the domestic credit market with Treasury bill auctions remaining oversubscribed for the eleventh week running.

It is expected that these government financial instruments will remain attractive in the coming financial year given the levels of domestic borrowing announced in this year's budget.

In this year's budget, the treasury is expected to finance a budget deficit of Ksh 109 billion through taxes, domestic borrowing, privatization and international borrowing. The Ksh 10 billion international bond will ease pressure, somewhat, on the domestic credit market an option being considered by treasury.

As the financial year 2006/07 closed, a tightening of the domestic credit market was reflected in a rise in the interbank rates. The average interbank rate edged up from 6.93 percent in the week ending June 21, 2007 to 6.94 in the week ending June 28, 2007. This was as a result of tight liquidity positions in the banking system following the end of financial year requirements.

The interbank rate is the rate of interest charged on short-term loans made between banks. Banks borrow and lend money in the interbank market in order to manage liquidity and meet the requirements placed on them. The interest rate charged depends on the availability of money in the market, on prevailing rates and on the specific terms of the contract, such as term length.

Banks are required to hold an adequate amount of liquid assets, such as cash, to manage any potential withdrawals from clients. If a bank can't meet these liquidity requirements, it will need to borrow money in the interbank market to cover the shortfall.

Meanwhile the Kenya shilling maintained its bullish run into this financial year, ignoring statements from the Treasury that increased borrowing from the domestic market to finance repairs on the road infrastructure is likely to put pressure on the shilling.

As at the end of trading on 28th June, 2007, the Kenya Shilling appreciated against the US dollar to exchange at Ksh 66.37 per US dollar compared

with Ksh 66.49 per US dollar during the week ending June 21, 2007. When the financial year ended, the government's domestic debt had increased from Ksh 357.8 billion at the end of June 2006 to Ksh 401.2 billion on 22nd June 2007. This increase in domestic debt during the period was attributed largely to a rise of Ksh 47.6 billion in Treasury bonds from Ksh 218.4 billion at the end of June 2006 to Ksh 266.0 billion as at 22nd June 2007. A significant part of the rise in the stock of Treasury bonds during the period was attributed to the Ksh 20 billion bank restructuring Treasury bonds issued to the National Bank of Kenya on 1st June 2007.

During the week ending 22nd June 2007, Government domestic debt decreased by Ksh 5.2 billion to stand at Ksh 401.2 billion from Ksh 406.4 billion at the end of the previous week. The stock market continued to record marginal improvements in performance as the government's financial year closed, with most market indicators increasing by more than 10 percentage points.

Turnover improved by 28.6 percent from Ksh 1.4 billion in the previous week to Ksh 1.8 billion in the week ending June 28, 2007. Market capitalization increased by Ksh 9 billion from Ksh 733.5 billion the previous week to Ksh 742.6 billion in the current week.

The NSE 20 share Index gained 19 points to settle at 5,163.9 points on June 28, 2007 from 5,144.9 points on June 21, 2007.

# Media cannot and should not be muzzled-Kembi

**Belonging to a class of MPs serving their first terms in Parliament, Assistant Minister for Foreign Affairs and Member of Parliament for Kiharu Constituency Hon Kembi Gitura, who is also a lawyer by profession, spoke with Mwangi Maingi on a wide range of issues ranging from the country's foreign policy, experience in parliament and achievements of the present government. Below are excerpts:**

**Q. What is your experience as a Member of Parliament, this being your first term in the House?**

**A.** Over the last four years, I have had plenty of experiences, different from my previous professional life of being a lawyer, spending time in the courts, chasing after cases.

**Q. What have you achieved for your constituency over this period as MP?**

**A.** The first thing that I did was to understand the constituency that I serve, both in terms of its size and the living conditions of the constituents.

Kiharu, as a constituency, has the size of Kangemi and Mathioya combined, with over 100, 000 registered voters.

Its poverty index stands at 28.5 per cent. This is down from 56 percent that was there before I was elected the area MP. This means that the Kiharu constituents are now much better off than before.

I am also happy to note that while the economy has improved, this has trickled down to the constituencies through the Constituency Development Fund (CDF), the Youth Fund and the recently launched Women's Fund. I believe that there is now an opportunity for Kenyans to empower themselves.

**Q. What is your experience with the CDF as the MP for Kiharu?**

**A.** Kiharu constituency has so far received Ksh 106 million of the CDF money. What we have been doing is engaging the fund in a bottom-up development programme, where the Constituency Development Committee (CDC) is not the one that decides on what project to be financed. It is those committees at the sub-location level that give proposals on what project should be undertaken.

In order to equitably distribute the fund in all the 32 sub-locations in the constituency, the CDF committee takes what remains, after making the statutory deductions. It then distributes it equally to all the sub-locations. Then the committees at the sub-location level plus the locals discuss and agree on the priority of the project.

I therefore believe the CDF has been an empowering instrument to Kenyans, modeled on the kind of devolved government discussed at Bomas. This is a system where people are able to decide their own fate and what they want to do with their own money.

CDF is the money that the government has collected from the people through taxation, and gives it back equitably across different regions of the country, depending on the poverty index and population.

**Q. Being your first time in the 9th Parliament, what would you judge of the performance of the sitting MPs?**

**A.** Many things have been said about the current parliament, some accusing us of being lazy, selfish and doing little work. I do not agree with that. Parliament is an important institution in the growth of a country and thus our critics should first confirm whether the economy is growing in all sectors. Parliament also does not work in isolation hence as sitting MPs, we have done what we were tasked to do by the constituents. However, the electorates are entitled to their opinions depending on their close relationship with the MP.

**Q. As a Minister for Foreign Affairs, perhaps you could give us a highlight of the factors that defines Kenya foreign policy?**

**A.** Looking back in the years of cold wars and the iron curtain separating the Eastern and Western blocs, our diplomatic policies were defined on these political grounds and alignments.

Many African countries defined their foreign policies based on the bloc one aligns to, depending on one's purpose and gains from them.

Kenya has a history on non-alignment. Kenya's first president Jomo Kenyatta and other leaders joined hands and started the non-alignment movement, where a country is able to leave the options open in that one befriends both blocs to avoid the involvement in their conflicts. This would give a country an international image, hence be able to relate both politically and economically.

For example, Eastern countries like Japan and China have shown interest on investing in Africa, a move the Western powers and European Union do not seem to support. This seems to be another scramble for Africa, but on economic grounds.

Any country's foreign policy must first take into account the interest of the citizens, as it is a defined role of the government to keep people's interest at the forefront.

Whether we deal with Eastern or Western blocs as a country, it depends on the gains a country achieves from its ally. This defines our foreign policy as Kenya, based on its economic interests. Our relationship with others depends on what citizens will gain at the end of the day.

For this reason, our country's relationship with East African states is far much important to us as it benefits the citizens of this region.

**Q. What then is the position of the government in terms of its foreign relations and alignment with the neighbouring countries and that of the world?**

**A.** Today, the aim of the government is to get to a point where Kenya is a middle-income nation, where citizens' living conditions are improved and all amenities are easily accessible. Every family can afford a house, good education and earn a living whether on employment or self-employment basis.

The government, therefore, has to consider whether to have full-fledged embassies in Far East countries or in the trade blocs like ECOWAS, SADEC or COMESA regions, depending mostly on the interests of the citizens.

Uganda is the country's biggest trading partner, compared with Britain or the United States of America; hence our diplomatic relations with them is rated higher than that of the USA or Britain.

Considering our diplomatic ties with Somalia and other war zones in the region including Southern Sudan, it is for the benefit of Kenya when peace prevails in these countries. This is because conflicts at our borders slow down the development in trade and infrastructure in these regions, resulting in a large influx of refugees into the country, entry of firearms into the country and general insecurity.

This, therefore, calls for the government to participate fully in the restoration of peace in Somali and other conflict regions.

**Q. What is your opinion on the Media Bill that is currently before Parliament?**

**A.** The spirit of this bill, as defined and discussed in the Bomas draft, is to have a free and responsible media. Take for instance, the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) and CNN. These are national and international media institutions. But there is hardly a moment when they provide coverage that compromises the national security of their countries.

The Kenyan media need to understand that they are part of this nation, which some of them are battling.

The media is an important part of the society and cannot therefore and should not be muzzled. If this is done, it will be in breach of one of the most fundamental pillars of democracy. That is freedom of speech, expression and association.

It is important for this bill to strike a balance between what is best for the media sector, the public and whether the media aligns with its role for the citizens.

Therefore, it is the media to determine whether it is sufficiently able to censor itself or not. A case in point is the media's coverage of the Mungiki menace. In these times of insecurity, part of the media fraternity has become alarmist.