

# Heavy land agenda awaits Lands Cabinet Secretary Alice Wahome in 2024

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## Vast and busy docket

When she reported to the Lands Ministry at Ardhi House in October last year, Cabinet Secretary Alice Wahome walked. Done occasionally, this style would acquaint her with what happens at the precincts of this humbling building. It disrupts the not-so-well-intentioned actors. Indeed, her occasional easy visits to sections in the Ministry would be a boon. It'd demystify many things. The default practice is to be chauffeured to the basement, ushered into the lift and quickly delivered to the seat of power on 12<sup>th</sup> floor, which can alienate her.

CS Wahome holds a big and busy Ministry. She has to steer firmly. She's responsible for the vexing housing programme, which will occupy lots of her time. However, she mustn't allow pressure from housing to deny her time for the land agenda, which is huge, and impacts everyone. Tenure security provides the foundation to major national projects, including housing.

## Digitization and conversion of old title deeds

Several land issues beg attention. A primary one is the digitization initiative. Intention was to roll this out to the rest of the country once Nairobi was done. Wahome must put her thumbs on this and ensure that user concerns are fully resolved before national rollout. Being a lawyer, she will need to find out the status of the conversion initiative, aimed at converting old titles to the Land Registration Act 2012. This is a prerequisite for uploading documents onto the digital ardhisasa platform. Its pace will therefore determine the pace of rolling out the digital system countrywide.

## Settlement of landless people

The Cabinet Secretary will also be responsible for actualising the Kenya Kwanza aspiration of purchasing private land for the settlement of persons. Coast Kenya, expected to be a major beneficiary in this, will be eagerly waiting. Given that high octane politics will begin revving in the third year of the current government's tenure, 2024 will be a most defining year on this matter. She's also expected to handle the controversial matter of the transfer of the valuation role for land acquired for public projects from the Land Commission to her docket. It's however self-serving for government, the beneficiary of the land to be acquired, to seek to undertake its valuation as well. On this, and the proposed increase on costs of services offered by her Ministry, Wahome should expect a public beating.

### **Review of National Land Policy; implementation of Community Land Act**

The review of the 2009 national land policy, along with the implementation of the Community Land Act which is key to enhancing tenure security in Kenya's North, ought to be fast-tracked. Furthermore, the implementation of the Sectional Properties Act, which is pivotal to vertical development and the housing agenda, will need good support. The enactment of a Survey Bill to repeal the outdated Survey Act of 1961, critical to the implementation of the new laws and titling in general, remains outstanding. The CS will also need to work closely with the Land Commission, the DCI and the EACC to banish the cartels responsible for invading and irregularly processing ownership documents to private property.

***Dated: 4th January 2024***

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