

Multimillion dollar response to Mau appeal brings restoration hope to Kenya and the region

UNEP pledges support and calls for donor action to meet the USD \$ 99 Million Target

Nairobi, May 5, 2010 – Donors on Wednesday pledged approximately USD \$10 million in support of the Kenyan Government's appeal to save the vital Mau Forest Complex, at a second Partners Forum convened by the Kenyan Government and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).

The appeal, launched last September, aims to mobilise resources for the rehabilitation of the Mau, the largest closed-canopy forest ecosystem in Kenya covering over 400, 000 hectares - the size of Mount Kenya and the Aberdares.

In recent years, over 25 percent of the Mau Forest cover has been lost to ecosystem encroachments threatening natural capital, biodiversity and livelihoods in Kenya and the region.

According to a Kenyan Government project document, over USD \$ 99 million are needed to restore the entire Mau ecosystem.

A total of USD \$ 7 million was pledged by the United States Government to finance a Watershed Conservation pilot project in the upper catchment of the Mara River. The project aims to help restore forest ecosystems and to create more secure land titles and better livelihoods for residents.

Meanwhile, the European Union is expected to contribute Euro € 2.3 million (approximately USD \$ 3 million) to be disbursed over a period of 36 months to restore the Mau Forest Ecosystem and create a sustainable basis for its conservation and management. The EU project aims to strengthen key capacities and develop innovative approaches in support of governance, livelihood development and ecosystem rehabilitation.

UN Under-Secretary-General and UNEP Executive Director Achim Steiner said: "I would like to commend the Kenyan Government for the sensitive way it is handling the complex issue of resettlement and the involvement of forest dependent people in the process."

He added, "I would also like to commend donors for having risen to the request for assistance. Together we have gone from the science, spotlighting the degradation of the Mau, through the economics in terms of what this large close canopy forest means to key sectors and the Kenyan economy as a whole, to beginning the implementation of restoration and rehabilitation."

Prime Minister, Rt. Hon. Raila Odinga, said: "Kenyans have accepted that the restoration of the Mau and other water towers is a critical sustainable development imperative. Consensus has now emerged that the very existence of many communities and the welfare of the country depend on how we live with our forests and our ecosystems, and indeed how we address the key environmental challenges of our time."

The Prime Minister added: "As we move forward to rehabilitate the Mau Forest, we are conscious of the fact that we have a duty to be sensitive to the human and social needs of those who must leave the forest. This is essential, because the sustainability of any rehabilitation efforts will depend on these very people as friends of the forest. So far, illegal activities have been reduced by an estimated 60 - 70 per cent in southern Mau."

The Government is undertaking the rehabilitation of the Mau Forests Complex in five phases, of which the first two phases have been completed. During phase one, 4,530 hectares of unoccupied forest land were repossessed. As part of phase two, an additional, 19,000 hectares were repossessed from illegal squatters by December 2009; a decision that was in keeping with

the recommendation of the Mau Task Force report, approved by the Cabinet and Parliament. Over 1,400 hectares of forest have been replanted and plans are underway to rehabilitate an additional 5,000 more hectares during the current rain season.

Prime Minister Odinga noted that the goodwill and commitment of local communities to the Mau restoration project have been crucial to the success of the project pointing out that, so far, up to 42 large-scale titles have been surrendered back to the Government without any demand for compensation.

The news comes as UNEP and the Convention on Biological Diversity launch on Monday a report entitled Global Biodiversity Outlook 3 in which the challenges and opportunities of improved forest management are brought in sharp focus in 2010 - the UN International Year of Biodiversity.

A report released by the Mau Interim Coordinating Secretariat in September warned that if encroachment and unsustainable exploitation of the forest ecosystem continue, it will only be a matter of time before the entire ecosystem is irreversibly damaged with significant socio-economic consequences and ramifications to internal security and conflict.

At the global level, there are increasing concerns over biodiversity loss and increased carbon dioxide emissions as a result of forest cover loss and poor soil and water resources.

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Notes to Editors:

- The Mau Complex is the single most important source of water for direct human consumption in the Rift Valley and Western Kenya. Continued destruction of the forests will inevitably lead to a water crisis of national and regional proportions that extend far beyond the Kenyan borders.
- The Mau Complex is the largest of the five "water towers" of Kenya, forming the upper catchments of all main rivers in the Western part of Kenya.
- These rivers are the lifeline of major lakes in Kenya and trans-boundary lakes such as Lake Victoria in the Nile River Basin; Lake Turkana in Kenya and Ethiopia, and Lake Natron in Tanzania and Kenya.
- Perennial rivers in the Mau are becoming seasonal, storm flows and downstream flooding are increasing and wells and springs are drying up. The water stress in the Mau is largely attributed to land degradation and deforestation.
- The strategic importance of the Mau Forest lies in the ecosystem services it provides to Kenya and the region, including river flow regulation, flood mitigation, water storage, reduced soil erosion, biodiversity, carbon sequestration, carbon reservoir and microclimate regulation.
- Over the last two decades, the Mau Complex has lost around 107,000 hectares - approximately 25 per cent of its forest cover due to irregular and unplanned settlements,

illegal resources extraction, in particular logging and charcoal burning, the change of land use from forest to unsustainable agriculture and the change in ownership from public to private.

- Excised areas include critical upper water catchments for the rivers and the lakes fed by the Mau, bamboo forests and biodiversity rich areas, as well as parts of the Mau escarpment summit.
- Deterioration in the Mau ecosystem has impacted major natural assets and development investments around Kenya.
- While climate change may be a major contributor to the current crisis, the destruction of the forests has reduced the ability of the Mau ecosystem to absorb or reduce the impact of climate change, increasing the vulnerability of the people to changing weather patterns.
- Extensive degradation of the Mau Forests Complex could cost Kenya billions of Kenyan Shillings annually from losses in key economic sectors supported by the Mau ecosystem services, including energy, tourism, agriculture, and water supply.
- The estimated potential hydropower generation capacity in the Mau Complex catchments is approximately 535 MW - which is 41 per cent of the current total installed electricity generation capacity in Kenya.
- The growing geothermal potential in the area is directly dependent on groundwater. If the water table declines the geothermal potential diminishes.
- A 10-point intervention plan has been identified by the Interim Coordinating Secretariat to implement the recommendations of the Mau Forest Task Force for immediate and medium-term action. Key interventions include:
 - Creation of Effective Institutional Frameworks
 - Strategic Management Plan for the Mau Forest Complex
 - Public Awareness and Community Sensitisation
 - Boundary surveys and Issuance of Title Deeds for Forest Blocks
 - Monitoring and Enforcement
 - Relocation and Resettlement
 - Livelihood Support and Development
 - Restoration and Replanting of degraded Sites
 - Private Sector Investment
 - Resource Mobilisation