

**SPEECH BY HON. DR. NOAH WEKESA, EGH,
MP, MINISTER FOR FORESTRY AND
WILDLIFE ON THE OCCASION OF THE 7TH
GRADUATION CEREMONY AT THE KWS
TRAINING INSTITUTE NAIVASHA ON
TUESDAY, 30TH JUNE 2009, AT 10.00 AM.**

Assistant Ministers for Forestry and Wildlife,
Hon. Josphat Nanok, MP

Permanent secretary, Ministry of Forestry and Wildlife,
Mr. M. A. M. Wa-Mwachai

Chairman, KWS Board of Trustees,
Hon. David Mwiraria

Members of the Board of Trustees

Director, Kenya Wildlife Service,
Dr. Julius Kipngetich

Senior Government Officers

Principal KWS Training Institute,
Prof. George O. Owiti

Graduands

Distinguished guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen, it gives me great pleasure to join you here today to preside over this graduation ceremony. I take this early opportunity to express my sincere gratitude to the Director Kenya Wildlife Service for inviting me to officiate during this seventh Graduation ceremony. I also wish to mention that this is the second time I have been invited to preside on this occasion in Naivasha. I extend my congratulations to all the graduands for successfully completing their respective Certificate and Diploma Programmes.

I have noted in the short time I have been here that this prestigious institute is fast becoming a centre of excellence to reckon with in Natural Resources Management and Tourism Development. I am also delighted to see so many people from the Government, Universities, Conservation agencies, Non governmental organizations and the General public.

The Kenyan population is projected to hit 51 million by 2025 further stressing the country's natural resources. The scientific evidence of environmental change paints a grim picture of our nation's natural and environmental resources. There is, therefore need to strengthen and implement sustainable development policies, plans and legislation to protect our natural resources and environment.

The Government of Kenya recognizes that if sustainably managed, natural Resources are crucial pillars for economic growth and national development. Indeed, we are cognizant that achieving Vision 2030 goals depends on maintaining our natural systems to support agriculture, energy supplies, livelihoods and tourism. I believe the passing of the long overdue land policy by the cabinet will provide the much needed order with regard to how we use land in our country.

Conservation of the environment (especially as a home for wildlife) is a noble venture. Environmental change in the form of degradation is threatening the natural resource base, and therefore affecting Kenyan livelihoods. However, all the functional attributes of the environment are safe once the people involved have got the knowledge which is cultivated through education, training and awareness.

I trust that the graduating students have gained the required knowledge and technical skills in their respective disciplines to manage our environment. My ministry, through KWS, is determined to protect the rich Kenyan natural heritage of wildlife and their habitat legally and scientifically. By ensuring that many Kenyans have appropriate knowledge through this training, the KWS vision of becoming the World Leader in the conservation of biological diversity will greatly be enhanced.

To further build capacity to enable adequate protection of our ecosystems, my ministry supports the accreditation of KWSTI Training Programmes to enable execution of technical degree programmes in Natural Management and Tourism Development in collaboration with other key tertiary Institutions. Further commissioning of public-private partnerships for improved efficiency should be encouraged

Kenya is privileged to have the world's richest natural resources and ecosystems that contribute significantly to the national economy. This heritage is however threatened by increasing demands of a fast growing populations and development. We need to encourage development without destruction of the natural resources base.

Today's event therefore, reaffirms KWS commitment in fulfilling its vision of being a world-class leader in wildlife conservation. If we fail to sustain our natural resources, the country's economic development will suffer since many developments and people's livelihood depend on the natural resources. I take this opportunity to call on all Kenyans to assist the government in conservation efforts.

To the graduands, I once again congratulate you all for the successful completion of your studies and achievement of your credentials.

I believe that the pursuit for a better world for animals and people has enabled you to learn something from this institute, which you will put into practice, and as the saying goes, the will of creativity is the wheel for success. You have been ushered into a world of harsh realities but which is humanely conquerable. This ceremony marks the beginning of fulfilling your expectations as well as those of your parents, society and the country at large. Take to the world excellence and servant leadership.

I encourage you to be bold and courageous to look for job opportunities abroad and regionally. Kenyans in the Diaspora have opened doors for the youthful graduates to be able to get jobs out of this country.

This ceremony does not mark the end of your education, but rather a beginning. I would further encourage you to be avid readers, and where possible, as quickly as you can, ensure you keep on upgrading your academic levels for even greater success. You are still young, with a lot of opportunity ahead of you. You must leverage what you have gained from here to climb to higher credentials.

Let me take this precious opportunity to commend the Principal, Institute lecturers and members of staff and parents who devoted their time to produce these wonderful graduands we have here today.

As I conclude, I want to assure you of my ministry's support to KWS as you endeavour to be a World Leader in Wildlife Conservation and Management. I believe we can also count on the continued support of our partners and stakeholders in this very noble duty of preserving our heritage for posterity.

Finally may I wish you all a safe journey and God's blessings.

Asanteni sana.