

**SPEECH BY HON. DR. NOAH. WEKESA, EGH,  
MP, MINISTER FOR FORESTRY AND  
WILDLIFE DURING THE THANKS GIVING  
DAY FOR KENYA WILDLIFE SERVICE AT  
NAKURU AFRAHA STADIUM ON 3<sup>RD</sup>  
NOVEMBER, 2009 FROM 9.00 A.M.**

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Assistant Minister, Forestry and Wildlife,

**Hon. Josephat Nanok**

Permanent Secretary, Forestry and Wildlife,

**M. A. M. Wa-Mwachai**

Chairman KWS, **Hon. David Mwiraria**

Director KWS, **Dr. Julius Kipng'etich**

Invited guests,

Kenya Wildlife Service Staff

Members of the Press,

Friends,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my great pleasure to attend this thanksgiving day, a day that provides the KWS family the opportunity to reflect on the year that has gone by, and thank God for the progress and achievements that have been experienced.

Indeed, we have plenty to thank God for. May I take this early opportunity to thank the staff of Kenya Wildlife Service for the wonderful job they are doing. Without their dedication to the Service, all that was achieved would not have been possible.

This year has been successful in many ways. Having been greatly hit by last year's post-election violence, this year has seen a marked recovery in the tourism industry, thus increasing our revenue significantly. As a result, various conservation programmes that had to be shelved are now well on course. These include park branding, which is expected to raise the profile of the parks and enhance both visitor experience and improve staff working environment.

Hell's Gate National Park was the first beneficiary this year. The branding of the Kisumu Impala and Ndere Island parks are on course, and this is one of the strategies put in place to open up the Western circuit. During this year, KWS made history by being the first parastatal to win the coveted Company of the Year Award in Leadership and Governance.

During the same ceremony, the Director, KWS was awarded the CEO of the Year Award, while the Head of Human Capital, Ms Sharon Kisire was runner up for the Manager of the year Award. These were no mean feats: they clearly demonstrate that KWS is on the right track with regards to management. We do thank God for these achievements.

KWS also plays a significant role in the restoration of the Mau Forest Complex, through the Task Force and the secretariat both of which have been set up by the Prime Minister. Having been appointed to head the combined security force, the leadership of KWS was recognised. The work of the task force helped highlight the importance of Kenya's five water towers.

Public interest has therefore been raised on conservation matters, thus increasing the awareness and concern for the environment. Issues such as climate change have taken centre stage in the agenda, at first it seemed to be a mirage, but it's now here with us. Just yesterday, drought was killing our animals and now it's feared that the ensuing heavy rains will wipe out those that survived.

The completion of the Aberdare Fence was also a significant event during last year. That the fence has been built over a period of twenty years, through the collective efforts of the government, private sector and various individuals who played a significant role in fundraising for the project. We have great reason to celebrate this event, which is a milestone in the history of conservation in Kenya.

We have learnt lessons from this experience: the urgency with which we must conserve our environment cannot be over-emphasized. We risk perishing, unless we restore our environment. As we thank God for the rains, I want to believe that the worst is behind us. We shall step up the conservation efforts to even greater heights. As we take time to reflect upon the achievements of the past year, we also must think of the future. The lessons learnt should help propel us to even greater heights.

We must continue to share our experience with all our stakeholders so that together, we can do much more to conserve our wildlife and habitats for posterity. We owe this to our country, our future and generations to come. This is therefore a wonderful opportunity for us to reflect on where we are going, and to ask for God's guidance and blessings.

We have the ability to make a huge impact during our time. The challenges are many. However, I am confident that we are up to the task before us. May God help us all as we carry out this noble task of caring for our delicate biodiversity.

**Thank you**