



OFFICE OF THE PRIME MINISTER

Speech by the Rt. Hon. Raila Odinga, Prime Minister of Kenya During the 2nd Strategic Partners Consultative Forum on the Rehabilitation of the Mau Forest Ecosystem at the United Nations Office in Nairobi ; 5TH MAY, 2010

Dr. Achim Steiner, Executive Director of UNEP;
Your Excellencies;
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a privilege to meet again to apprise ourselves on where we are, with regard to the Restoration of the Mau Forest Ecosystem, and chart the course to expand the scope of our work to restore not only the Mau but also the other four Water Towers. All these water towers are so vital to ensure economic development which is rapid yet at peace with nature.

I am particularly happy to report that, despite the isolated resistance here and there, Kenyans have, by and large, 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.

We have made considerable progress. The rehabilitation of the Mau Forests Complex was to be implemented in three phases. So far we have completed Phases 1, and 2, and Phase 3 is ongoing.

To date, 4,530 hectares was repossessed almost immediately after the establishment of the Interim Coordinating Secretariat during Phase I. This consists of land that remained empty and unoccupied.

Additional, 19,000 hectares were repossessed during phase two from illegal squatters in keeping with the recommendation of the Task Force on the Mau Forests Complex and as approved by Parliament. As at December 2009, all squatters had vacated the Mau Forests Complex.

We are now in Phase 3. The bulk of the activities are going on behind the scenes as we work to identify bona fide allottees of land under the 2001 excision; confirm the legality of the title deeds; and establish an Ogiek Council of elders to address the interests of the Ogiek as indigenous forest dwellers. In the meantime, we have replanted 1,4000 hectares and plans are on course to rehabilitate additional 5,000 hectares.

As evidence of the acceptance by Kenyans of the urgent need to rehabilitate the Mau Forest, up to 42 titles have been surrendered back to the government without any demand for compensation.

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.

I am truly grateful to our private sector colleagues who share our passion and desire to restore the Mau to its past glories. The *Save the Mau Trust Fund* has been established, and a substantial sum has already been donated. I want to pay tribute to those companies and organizations that made this possible and appeal to others to come forward and be part of this important initiative.

Ladies and Gentlemen;

Our goal goes beyond the Mau Forest Ecosystem. Environmental issues are necessarily interconnected. We are expanding our restoration efforts to the other Water Towers. Together with President Kibaki, I launched the restoration of Aberdares several weeks ago. We will soon initiate comprehensive restoration programs for the remaining Water Towers.

By covering all Water Towers, we will ensure that we are comprehensive in our solutions. The Ministry of Water and Irrigation has already gazetted two catchments management strategies covering the Mau Forests Complex, and in addition established eight Water Resources Users Associations (WRUA) for the entire area.

The extent of the work and resources required to restore all the country's water towers is such that a lot of support will be required. Some of the priority conservation areas will include:

- 1) Implementation of an effective management framework;
- 2) Survey and demarcation of the boundaries;
- 3) Relocation of people residing in the forests and the critical catchments areas;
- 4) Building institutional capacity to attract private sector investment and secure community participation in conservation;
- 5) Development of a long-term ecosystem management plan;
- 6) Rehabilitation of the degraded forests;
- 7) Development of financial mechanisms to sustain the management of the forests and conserve the critical ecological services they provide.

This ambitious Restoration Programme will of course require commensurately large financial resources. The government will provide as much as possible from our budgetary resources. We will also rapidly develop "bankable" forestry development projects, so that Kenya can access our fair share of the \$30 billion fast track Climate Change Financing for 2010 – 2012, that was pledged in Copenhagen.

Moreover, we want to ensure that the rehabilitation of the Mau and the other Forests can be exploited as a source of financial resources. Specifically, we see opportunities in the REDD Plus initiatives on the horizon. I am traveling to Norway in 3 weeks to participate in discussions of Partnership Agreement, which should facilitate in making REDD Plus more readily available for Kenya and other developing countries.

In addition, we see opportunities in the evolving carbon markets as negotiations continue under the U.N. Framework Convention on Climate Change. We are already engaged in serious discussions with investment bankers and others, all of whom see real and considerable opportunities in carbon trading in our forestry development programs.

I am convinced that these sources combined will give us financial resources much larger than we currently have. However, this will not be enough.

That is why we are establishing the Kenya Water Towers Conservation Trust, to which all of you – donor agencies, private enterprises, philanthropies, and you as individuals – can pool resources together, for the shared vision of Glorious Forests covering all of Kenya. The Trust has its own Board and governance structure that will ensure your own preferred projects are implemented and that the use of resources will be fully and transparently accounted for.

Ladies and Gentlemen;

Our efforts to meet the challenges of Climate Change extend to low carbon growth and to green energy. We are examining how we might develop other green sources of energy in a presently hydro-predominant power generation system. The current system is too sensitive to the vagaries of weather and the now established climate change risks.

Our aim is to generate, within the next three years, an additional 2,000 megawatts of power from renewable energy sources. We are well on our way.

Finally, Ladies and Gentlemen;

The Government is grateful for the support it has received from many development partners. The solidarity demonstrated during tree planting events and the public support for the Mau initiative by many partners has been humbling.

I plead that we put together the necessary resources to ensure that the Mau Forests Complex and the other Water Towers are restored to its former glory to provide the ecosystem services it was supposed to provide. I urge all of you to contribute to the newly established Water Towers Conservation Trust.

I need to reemphasize that the whole purpose of rehabilitating the Mau Forest, other water towers and ecosystems is to guarantee sustainable development. To do so, we must look after the welfare of those who will, of necessity, have to move out of the forest. I assure you that modalities for assisting indigenous forest dwellers, like the Ogieks, is receiving active attention by the government.

I thank you for coming and for your support.