

SPEECH BY PROF. JUDI W. WAKHUNGU, PhD; CABINET SECRETARY FOR ENVIRONMENT, WATER AND NATURAL RESOURCES IN KENYA DELIVERED DURING THE OPEN-ENDED INTERGOVERNMENTAL AD HOC EXPERT GROUP MEETING ON INTERNATIONAL ARRANGEMENTS ON FORESTS. 24TH FEBRUARY 2014. NAIROBI. KENYA.

Chairman of the Bureau of United Nations Forum on Forests

Current Bureau Members

Esteemed Delegates

Distinguished Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

All protocols observed.

On behalf of the Government of the Republic of Kenya, it is indeed my pleasure to welcome you all to Nairobi this morning, This is the second time that the United Nations Office in Nairobi is hosting a function of this nature, the first time having been in September 2010 when the open-ended intergovernmental ad hoc expert group convened in these same premises to deliberate on financing forestry (that is, Sustainable Forest Management). Kenya had the privilege then to present a side event on the implications of this type of management on a country with a low

forest cover, like ours. The Ministry of Environment, Water and Natural Resources continues to take keen interest in such forest-related deliberations.

Today, I am delighted to be part of this gathering and to participate in discussions during which two major items on forests will be reviewed; the first being performance and effectiveness of the international arrangement on forests within the context of Economic and Social Council resolutions and the second, the multi-year programme of work for the United Nations Forum on Forests. At the onset, I commend the Forum's Secretariat for leadership in this important process.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Kenya's forest legislation was last enacted in 2005 but is once again under review to align the law with the country's new constitutional dispensation and to capture emerging global issues such as climate change and carbon markets, to mention but a few. The review comes at a time when the government has identified sustainable forest management and conservation as one of the key sectors for delivering our climate change mitigation and adaptation goals under the National Climate Change Response Strategy. The proposed law will therefore anchor sustainable forest management as a key pathway in achieving national development goals. In addition, Kenya has an economic blue print known as Vision 2030 which aims at propelling the nation into a middle income country by the end of the target period. The vision is implemented in five-year medium term phases, the first of which was 2008 – 2012. This vision identifies forestry as one of the key sectors of the social pillar responsible for delivering a secure and stable environment.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Globally, agriculture and timber extraction are the clear driving forces behind deforestation, with commercial and subsistence activities accounting for 40% and 33% respectively, and mining, infrastructure and urban expansion cumulatively being responsible for the remainder. The main drivers vary between tropical regions. Africa, however, remains in the early phases of forest cover transition, with small-scale activities such as fuel wood collection and charcoal production still playing a central role. Kenya is a low forest cover country with a cover of about 6.94% of the total land area according to a study recently commissioned with support from the Government of Japan. The latest figure includes both closed and plantation forests in state and private lands; mangroves and woodlands. However, this percentage is still less than the recommended minimum of 10% tree cover as required in the Constitution.

The forests contribute to the national economy of the country many ways, which include the following -:

- Account for 3.6% of the national GDP on an annual basis;
- Through provision of fuel-wood for bio-energy (firewood and charcoal), which meets more than 70% of national energy supply and is valued at Ksh 48 billion annually;
- Provision of wood for the construction industry valued at Ksh 20 billion annually;

- Value addition to different sectors of our economy such as: agriculture (8.4%); manufacture of food, beverages and tobacco (5.3%); chemical industry (24.4%); and construction (25.6%).
- Water catchment forests, for example, the Tana River basin which supports production of 70% of Kenya's hydropower which is produced in 10 hydropower stations. Hydro power constitutes 46% of national electricity requirements or 3,209 million kilowatts of electricity. The continued of successful production of hydropower depends on the continued protection and sustainable management of the forested catchments.

Ladies and gentlemen

Allow me to say some few words on sustainable forest management. Increasingly, we seem to view economic, environmental and community needs as separate, competing entities with mutually exclusive values. Of course, this perspective undermines sustainability because it creates scarcity - a zero-sum situation in which there must always be a winner and a loser. We can see different scenarios unfolding in many ways such as in the challenge of accommodating growth while maintaining viable communities; and in the tension between conservation and development. Nowhere, is this more evident than in the conflict between forest resource extraction and environmental stewardship. To find meaningful solutions, we must be willing to move beyond this zero-sum approach and conduct meaningful discussions, appreciating the multiple use concept that is becoming more popular over time . That is what sustainable forest management is all about and I believe that it can help move us beyond these conflicts by putting in place appropriate forest policies and laws. In Kenyan context, and in the way I see it, sustainable forest management rests on a foundation of six key building blocks:

1. Formulating policies and legislations which drives the forest sector;
2. Defining the relationship between national and county government on the forest;
3. Reframing the opinions between commercial forestry and environmental stewardship;
4. Basing decisions on interdisciplinary science;
5. Managing resources at the landscape level;
6. Ensuring public participation and ownership of the management processes.

Esteemed delegates,

I am happy that this meeting will receive input from various stakeholders who will spend ample time discussing long term arrangements, in preparation for the eleventh session of the Forum. The outcome will form a strong basis on which to review effectiveness of the international arrangement on forests and make a decision for its future. Implementing resolutions is also considered to be part of the international arrangement. The recommendations of this week's consultations will thus provide a strategic direction on the function and institutional arrangements of the international arrangement for the period beyond 2015, which will encompass:

- The Forum and its member states, acting individually and together as the Forum,
- The secretariat of the Forum,
- The voluntary partnership of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests and other relevant intergovernmental organizations that contribute to the work of the Forum individually and collectively,
- Regional organizations and their processes as well as

- Major groups which take part in sessions of the Forum.

Keep in mind the objectives of the international arrangement in your deliberations, which are to promote the management, conservation and sustainable development of all types of forests and to strengthen political commitment to this end. Let the purpose of the arrangement guide you to promote the implementation of internationally agreed actions on forests at the national, regional and global levels in order to provide a coherent, transparent and participatory global framework for policy implementation, coordination and development. Take into account the connection with and implications of the continuing deliberations on the sustainable development goals and the post-2015 United Nations development agenda.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The discussions and report produced following this meeting will inform continuing work on the independent assessment, in addition to serving as a basis for further reflection, by the group of experts who will be preparing for a second inter-sessional meeting of the Forum. You are equal to this enormous task. With these remarks, allow me to wish you further fruitful discussions beginning today and for the rest of the week.

THANK YOU.