

SPEECH BY KWS ACTING DIRECTOR GENERAL, DR. ERUSTUS KANG DURING THE LAUNCH OF KAKAMEGA FOREST FENCE PROJECT PHASE ONE AT KAKAEMGA FOREST STATION ON FEBRUARY 24, 2023.

The Cabinet Secretary for environment, climate change and forestry, Hon. Soipan Tuya, CBS

Chief conservator of forests Mr. Julius Kamau

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am glad to witness the launch of this fence project around the unique and ecologically important Kakamega forest. The forest is home to many wildlife species that KWS is mandated to conserve and protect. As a Service we are therefore delightful that the fence will augment wildlife conservation activities that my wardens and rangers undertake on a daily basis.

This being a project that involves several partners, I wish to commit that KWS will meet all its obligations, among them development of technical designs, specifications and bill of quantities for materials, tools and equipment for the 15Kms fence. Additionally, the Service will strive to provide security in Kakamega Forest office for all the procured materials, tools, equipment and consumables for the fence construction and to manage the stores and issuance of requested materials, tools, equipment and consumables.

Kakamega forest is rich in ecological diversity of animal and plant species, with about 385 species of plants which are not found elsewhere in Kenya. It is home to the Elgon teak and *Prunus africana*, which are species of special conservation concern. The Forest is designated as an Important Bird Area that hosts the Turner's Eremomela and Chapin's Flycatcher which are listed as globally threatened species, in addition to 15 species regionally threatened.

This beautiful forest is home to various mammals including bush pigs, giant forest hedgehogs, colobus monkeys, Debrazzar monkeys and pottos. Some of the birds to be seen here include the Blue Headed Bee Eater, Black Billed Turaco, Turner's Eremomela and Grey Parrots. Tourist attractions in the forest include Bird watching, hiking and rock climbing that can be enjoyed in the serenity of the forest.

KWS is optimistic that the fence project will protect the ecological integrity of this important protected area that forms an integral part of our over fifty parks and reserves across the country. The fence will further guard the forest against encroachment and degradation and enable forest regeneration and rehabilitation by securing its boundaries, minimizing grazing pressure and controlling Forest resources extraction. The Service works closely with all partners involved in this initiative, and once again I wish to reiterate that we shall adhere to all the agreed points of action.

Finally, let me take this opportunity to appeal to all us gathered here to take some time after the close of this ceremony to tour Kakamega forest. I promise that you will derive a lot of pleasure from the plethora of scenic sites, wildlife and above all the fresh air that we all need to refresh our bodies.

THANK YOU