



REPUBLIC OF KENYA

**STATEMENT BY H.E HON. WILLIAM RUTO, CGH,  
PHD, PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF KENYA  
DURING THE AMAZON/CONGO/BORNEO-  
MEKONG SOUTH-EAST-ASIA SUMMIT**

**OCTOBER 28TH, 2023**

**BRAZZAVILLE, REPUBLIC OF CONGO**

- **H.E Denis Sassou NGUESSO, President of the Republic of Congo,**
- **His Excellency Felix Tshenedi, President of DRC.**
- **His Excellency Evariste Ndayishimiye, President of Burundi,**
- **His Excellency Brice Nguema, President of Gabon;**
- **His Excellency Umaro Sissoco Embaló, President of Guinea-Bissau,**
- **Your Excellencies,**
- **Distinguished Delegates.**

1. I am honoured by the privilege of taking part in this truly historic event that has tremendously significant global and multilateral implications.
2. Our hosts, 227 million people who share the world's second-largest river, are custodians of 268 million hectares of forest, which constitute 70 of Africa's forest cover and hosts 10% of the world's biodiversity. These nations and peoples are already making a major contribution to the vitality of our planet and the well-being of humanity.
3. The 1.3 billion indigenous peoples from the three river basins, the majority of whom are young, live in intimate proximity with 26% of the world's biodiversity, 1.4 billion hectares of forest, and 3 of the world's greatest rivers and river systems. These unique ecosystems are also our planet's lungs which capture 1.2 billion tonnes of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere every year, saving life on earth from catastrophic global warming and the build-up of greenhouse gas emissions.
4. I recognise the place, role, power and potential of the 3 basins' biodiversity ecosystems and tropical forests in defining the future of local, regional and global efforts to manage the triple planetary crisis. They also have the potential to set humanity on



a new path of economic transformation through ecologically responsible production and consumption.

5. Although this role has always been potent, never has it been as clear and urgent as it is today. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change has documented, in its most recent consecutive reports, that unless we take aggressive measures to protect our forests, the world will not be able to actualise the 1.5°C target as agreed in the Paris summit even if other efforts in transforming the economic and industrial systems of the developed countries are sustained.
6. This cautionary indication reinforces the need to urgently reverse the obvious gross injustice. Although Africa has 40% of the world's renewable energy resources, the continent only received 2% of the \$3 trillion renewable energy investment made over the past decade. The trend is consistent across the Global South, given that we host the three basins of biodiversity ecosystems and tropical forests.
7. In my view, the evident failure to fully appreciate the role of the Global South in assuring the sustainability of all economic and industrial expectations is both short-sighted and suicidal. The Amazon, BorneoMekong in South East Asia and the Congo River basins and tropical rainforests are vital and indispensable global ecological public goods which provide essential biodiversity services for humanity. Their integrity ought to be, without question, the foremost priority of all humanity.
8. In all fairness, therefore, we should not have to make persistent calls for industrialised nations to comply with the goals of the Paris Agreement by accelerating their emission reduction efforts. Neither should it be so difficult to honour the commitment to provide \$100 billion annually in climate financing, 14 years after



the Paris Summit. Certainly, the implementation of the Loss and Damage Fund, as agreed at COP27, would be a rapid, effective, foregone matter, and not the slow-moving, gradual and tentative affair that it is presently.

9. The failure to grasp the existential imperative of recognising, promoting and actualising the ecological interests of the Global South has disrupted the delicate balance between economic progress and the protection of biodiversity and reduced it to a negative debate on necessary imperatives.
10. Since 1990, the world has lost 420 million hectares of forest due to conversion of the land to other uses and, we continue to lose our forests at the rate of 10 million hectares annually.
11. The relentless destruction of forests has caused global temperature rise. The effects of the consequent climate change have led to increased frequency and intensity of extreme climatic and weather events like prolonged droughts, devastating floods and intense storms whose unprecedented destructive power keeps increasing.
12. Although the United Nations Environmental Programme estimates that forests contain 60,000 different trees, 80% of amphibians, 75% of birds and 68% of the world's mammal species, the World Wildlife Fund reports that close to 70% of the global population of land animals became extinct between 1970 and 2016. Further, the report states that more than 500 land animal species will suffer a similar fate over the next 20 years unless decisive action is undertaken.
13. The forests of the Global South, including the 3 basins, support the lives and livelihoods of indigenous people sustainably by providing timber and timber products, food and medicines as



well as ecosystem services such as air purification, carbon removal, pollination, ecotourism and cultural as well as ritual facilities.

14. Without meaningful investment in incentives to support the maintenance of this sustainable coexistence, communities embark on a zero-sum struggle for survival and economic subsistence which can lead to irreparable harm to biodiversity through deforestation, destruction of habitats and ecosystems and illegal wildlife trade. At the level of human survival, critical ecological considerations are relegated to wishful luxuries, and our planet and all life on it become net losers.
15. We, who are gathered here, understand very well that, to the extent that human survival is personal, climate action measures as well as the protection of biodiversity ecosystems and forests are equally personal to our indigenous communities. What we do with this truth therefore matters a great deal. A good starting point is to appreciate that a more responsive international financial architecture would do a lot in financing necessary incentives to mobilise different stakeholders, including indigenous communities, to align their economic strategies with climate action and the protection of biodiversity.
16. The African Union's Committee of African Heads of State on Climate Change recognises this position. This is why we find much alignment between the agenda of the Summit and the African Climate Summit, which I was privileged to host early last month in Nairobi. We know the direction we must take going forward, and the choices that must be made have never been clearer.
17. We have a momentous opportunity to galvanise effective South-to-South collaboration on a critical global agenda, given that the



fundamental objectives of this Summit broadly align with the outcome of African Leaders' Nairobi Declaration on Climate Change and Call to Action. It is possible for us to develop a clear, strong, united position to project our collective agenda at COP28.

18. Articles of the Declaration recognise that Africa's vast forests, especially the Congo Basin rainforest, are the largest carbon sinks globally, and a critical ecosystem. Nevertheless, Africa's natural capital has not been properly valued.
19. Consequently, the Africa Climate Summit Declaration calls for the re-valuation of the Gross Domestic Product of Africa by incorporating a proper computation of its abundant natural capital and ecosystem services from its vast forests that sequester carbon to unlock new sources of wealth for the continent.
20. The Declaration further emphasises that the valuation framework should entail the use of natural resource accounting in the development of national accounting standards. African leaders therefore committed to strengthening actions to halt and reverse biodiversity loss, prevent deforestation, combat desertification and restore degraded landscapes. This is expected to achieve land degradation neutrality; implement a global biodiversity framework and enhance the integrity and efficacy of carbon markets.
21. More encouragingly, there are signs that a new global coalition to transform multilateral climate action is not only feasible, it is actually an eminently practical proposition.
22. During the Paris Summit for a New Global Financing Pact, which took place between June 22-23, 2023, Colombia, Kenya and France announced a global initiative to review the relationship



between the fiscal and environmental sustainability of sovereign debt.

23. Under the initiative, an Expert Review be established “to conduct a comprehensive assessment of how the structure, volume and analysis of sovereign debt impacts the ability of low and middle-income countries to conserve nature, adapt to climate change and decarbonise their economies”, and measures on how this can be made more sustainable, both fiscally and environmentally”.
24. Reviews under the initiative, which are intended to inform the G20 process, are expected to take between 9 and 12 months. We can therefore look forward to an interim report by June 2024 and a final report ahead of the United Nations General Assembly in September 2024.
25. It is deeply inspiring to be here, at this summit in this country, because we get to witness first-hand what the pristine future of effective climate action and biodiversity protection looks like. It is beautiful, wholesome and perfectly complementary to a robust planet and thriving life on it.
26. Unlike the Congo Forest countries, which have more than 70% tree cover, 80% of Kenya's land area is arid and semi-arid with only 12.13% tree cover. This makes the Horn of Africa vulnerable to climate hazards such as droughts, floods and landslides.
27. To address these concerns, Kenya has launched the National Landscapes, Ecosystem Restoration Strategy which is aligned with the UN Decade for Ecosystem Restoration and Land Degradation Neutrality Targets under UNCCD, Global Biodiversity Framework and NDC targets.



28. The objective of the strategy is to increase the national tree cover to 30% by growing 15.7 billion trees on 10.6 million hectares by 2032 and to promote and support more resilient livelihoods. The exercise is expected to cost KSh600 billion (\$4 billion) in 10 years, translating to growing about 1.6 billion trees annually for KSh60 billion (\$400 million).
29. Our ambitious programme is also expected to contribute to climate change mitigation, adaptation and employment creation for vulnerable groups and the youth.
30. I want to pose at this juncture and invite you to ponder the following: If growing 15.7 billion trees on 10.6 million hectares, to raise our national tree cover to 30% over the next decade, is both impressive and transformational at a national level, what about the fact that the Congo Basin accounts for 70% of Africa's tree cover or the Amazon Basin's 400 billion trees and the Mekong Basin-South East Asia's 270 million hectares of forest?
31. With the full use of our best endeavour, we can achieve a percentage of tree cover that is truly impressive by our standards, yet is still less than half of our host's. I congratulate the member States participating in this summit because their present green endowment constitutes ecological and economic power that is going to appreciate dramatically in the coming years.
32. The Three Basin Summit is important to Kenya as a member of the Congo Basin Climate Commission because this basin has a major influence over the rainfall regime of the western parts of Kenya and rivers that feed into Lake Victoria, being the second largest lake in the world, constitutes the headwaters of the River Nile.





33. Further, the Lake Victoria Basin supports a multitude of ecosystem services and economies in the riparian countries of the Nile River.
34. As a result, we need to develop a common strategy and funding arrangements that take cognisance of the entire area under the influence of the basin.

**Thank you!**

