



REPUBLIC OF KENYA

**STATEMENT BY HIS EXCELLENCY WILLIAM
RUTO, PHD; CGH; PRESIDENT AND COMMANDER-
IN-CHIEF OF THE KENYA DEFENCE FORCES
DURING THE PASS-OUT PARADE OF FOREST
RANGERS**

OCTOBER 11TH, 2023

GILGIL, NAKURU COUNTY

Graduands;

Distinguished Guests;

1. I am delighted to join the graduates, their families and friends, as well as the Kenya Forest Service Law Enforcement Academy community, as you celebrate this important milestone in the careers of the graduates, the history of the Academy, the sustainability of the forestry sector and conservation movement as well as our country's journey towards the fulfilment of our collective determination to sustain the environment for the benefit present and future generations.
2. This occasion therefore positions the graduating class, together with the Kenya Forest Service in its entirety and the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change, as the focal point of a critical constitutional mandate with existential implications not only for us in Kenya, but for humanity in its entirety.
3. Article 42 of the Constitution recognizes every person's right to a clean and healthy environment, which includes the right to have the environment protected for the benefit of present and future generations, and to have obligations relating to the environment fulfilled under Article 70.
4. Article 69 sets out the state's obligations in respect of the environment, which include ensuring the sustainable management and conservation of the environment and natural resources, achieving and maintaining tree cover on at least 10% of the national land area and eliminating those processes and activities likely to endanger the environment.
5. Our national development blueprint, the Kenya National Vision 2030, makes a clean and secure environment a necessary component of our development agenda. Moreover, the Bottom-Up Economic Transformation Agenda commits us to implement the constitutional



tree cover mandate together with strategies to achieve mitigation, adaptation and resilience in response to the impacts of climate change, as part of a broader programme to fulfil our commitments to reduce emissions by 32% before 2030.

6. More than two-thirds of our landmass is arid and semi-arid rangeland. As a result of climate change, extreme weather, including prolonged and severe drought as well as flooding, have caused unprecedented levels of devastation through famine, loss of livelihoods, dried crops and dead animals- both livestock and wild game.

7. Our increased vulnerability to extreme weather and climate change is the consequence of negligent and dangerous human activity, such as the wanton destruction of forests, indiscriminate felling of trees and clearing of vegetation, unsustainable land use practices and the reckless encroachment of riparian and wetland ecosystems.

8. Climate change itself, caused by global warming as a result of dangerous accumulation of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere, is driven by industrial emissions and pollution, and the systematic compromising of the earth's capacity to sequester carbon from the atmosphere using its natural lungs, which are our forests.

9. Kenya is a strong champion of climate action with a track record of Pan-African and global leadership and participation in such frameworks, programmes and initiatives as the Conference of Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, COP, the Paris Summit and, most recently, the Africa Climate Summit. We are also the home of the United Nations Environmental Programme, UNEP, and have a long history of effective climate and environmental multilateral diplomacy.



10. Our commitments with regard to climate action are therefore fundamental to our development agenda and critical to the national interest. The protection of biodiversity is a constitutional obligation of the state that touches on the fundamental rights of present and future generations of our citizens. Our tree cover and forests sit at the heart of this commitment, both in terms of protection and conservation, and also with respect to enhancement and protection.

11. I find it important to share this context with you, and, especially, with the graduates. If anyone told you that your job is just a routine occupation, they are badly mistaken. You enter our national economic transformation equation as the people's trustees and guarantors of fundamental constitutional mandates and custodians of our forest value chain, which comprises critical national resources and essential community assets.

12. Our lives and livelihoods depend on the protection and sustenance of our biodiversity and the mitigation of climate change. You are therefore expected to be drivers of our National Landscape and Ecosystem Restoration Programme and lead our organisations, communities and, especially, the youth, in making sure that our ambition to grow 15 billion trees by 2032 is actualised on time.

13. As the largest class ever to graduate from this institution, you are aware of our firm commitment to develop adequate capacity to keep illegal logging, charcoal burning and other forms of unlawful encroachment and interference with the integrity of our forests at bay. This commitment extends to training and equipping of personnel, and investing in technology to improve operational capabilities in surveillance, data collection and evidence-based forestry management.

14. I encourage you, therefore, to go forth as patriotic servants of the people of Kenya, and render your professional service with discipline, dedication, diligence and unyielding integrity. I remind you to use



every opportunity to promote sustainable practices and urge you to always exercise your authority responsibly and accountably.

15. I commend you for successfully undertaking this useful and rigorous education and training programme and congratulate you on your graduation. On behalf of the people and government of Kenya, I wish you God's blessings and success as you serve your nation and help us save our planet from climate disaster.

Thank you.
God bless you.
God bless Kenya.

