

SPEECH BY HIS EXCELLENCY HON. MWAI KIBAKI, C.G.H., M.P., PRESIDENT AND COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF OF THE DEFENCE FORCES OF THE REPUBLIC OF KENYA DURING THE OFFICIAL OPENING OF THE 26TH SESSION OF THE UNEP GOVERNING COUNCIL/GLOBAL MINISTERIAL ENVIRONMENT FORUM, UNITED NATIONS COMPLEX, GIGIRI, 21ST FEBRUARY, 2011

Mr. President,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am delighted to join you all for the 26th Session of the UNEP Governing Council and Global Ministerial Forum. On behalf of the Government and People of Kenya, I warmly welcome you all to our country and to this Conference.

This gathering is no doubt one of the strongest voices on environmental sustainability and beacon of hope to the peoples of the world, who look up to UNEP and the Global Ministerial Environment Forum. Indeed the people look up to this forum, to provide the necessary leadership and guidance in the ever increasing challenges of the global environment.

Since the last meeting of the UNEP Governing Council, the world has faced numerous catastrophes linked to environmental degradation. These include unprecedented floods, widespread wildfires and devastating droughts. These challenges continue to negatively impact on our development goals. It is however encouraging that during the past year, both in Nagoya and Cancun, the hopes of the world were rekindled by agreements that underlined commitments towards collective action.

It is my hope that this Conference will renew political commitments to a sustainable environmental agenda. Furthermore, I trust that as you undertake deliberations, the spirit of Nagoya and Cancun will be carried forward as the world prepares for the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development next year.

Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

The environmental challenges the world is currently facing underscore the continued importance and relevance of UNEP. My Government fully supports the outcomes from the Helsinki meeting. We urge all parties to support the strengthening of environmental governance through reforms that will elevate UNEP in Nairobi to the status of other U.N. agencies on social and economic pillars. The political momentum should be sustained in order to conclude the debate.

The government of Kenya fully supports the international environmental governance process and the incremental steps already being undertaken by UNEP. Kenya remains fully committed to continue playing its role as host to UNEP and the entire U.N. fraternity.

My Government has made significant strides to ensure excellent infrastructure in terms of roads and other physical facilities as well as security in the country, and specifically in and around the premises of the United Nations Office in Nairobi. Moreover, we have significantly improved and will further develop the road linking

Gigiri to the Jomo Kenyatta International Airport. The improvements will ensure ease of access to the U.N. Offices for U.N. staff, delegations and other stakeholders.

Indeed, the Kenyan Government is encouraged by the United Nations overall assurance in strengthening its presence in Nairobi. The construction of a multipurpose, ultra-modern and eco-friendly building on these grounds is a clear testimony to this commitment. We commend the U.N. fraternity for this investment.

Further, I am pleased that the 65th Session of the General Assembly approved the establishment of the International Platform on Scientific and Ecosystem Services with UNEP as the interim host. This is a positive development that will no doubt contribute to the scientific base of UNEP. My Government has already indicated its desire to host this Platform permanently in UNEP, Nairobi.

Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am informed that this conference will discuss the Green Economy and the growing challenges of electronic waste. Kenya believes that the concept of a Green Economy is not a substitute for sustainable development, but a shift to a future that places emphasis on the natural capital base and ecosystem services.

The smart innovations of the world have enormous potential to deliver win-win outcomes and help nations to become more climate-resilient. Consequently, my Government is tapping into the abundance of renewable energy sources to secure a future of low-carbon growth. Large scale investments in geothermal and wind energy production programmes are already underway in the country, as are forestry restoration programmes.

The Green Climate Fund that was recently agreed to in Cancun and the Global Environment Facility should support developing countries in transitioning towards green growth. I trust this Conference will help in providing further impetus towards the Green Economy Agenda.

My Government has also supported a draft decision on electronic waste. We believe a harmonized approach to addressing the electronic waste problem beginning with a clear assessment of the challenge, would be a good starting point towards finding viable solutions.

In conclusion, I note that the issues before the conference are very important, and that no single nation has all the solutions. It is only through sustained global partnership that we can succeed in addressing the challenges facing our environment.

With these remarks, it is my pleasure to declare the 26th Session of the Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme and the Global Environment Ministerial Forum officially open.

Thank you and God bless you all.