

## **LATF/LAGC.9/3.3**

### **OPENING REMARKS BY THE DIRECTOR OF THE TASK FORCE AT THE 9TH MEETING OF THE GOVERNING COUNCIL IMPERIAL HOTEL, KAMPALA, 3TH OCTOBER 2008**

Hon. Dr. Noah Wekesa (MP), Minister for Forestry and Wildlife of the Republic of Kenya and the President of the 8th Governing Council of the Lusaka Agreement,

Hon. Serapio Rukundo (MP), Minister of State for Tourism, Wildlife and Antiquities of the Republic of Uganda and our host,

Hon. Henri Djombo (MP), Minister for Forest Economy of the Republic of Congo and the Rapporteur of the 8th Governing Council,

Hon. Ezekiel Maige (MP), representing Minister for Natural Resources and Tourism of the United Republic of Tanzania and Vice President of the 8th Governing Council,

His Excellency Prof. Royson Mukwena, High Commissioner of the Republic of Zambia to Tanzania representing the Minister for Environment, Natural Resources and Tourism of the Republic of Zambia,

Madam Elizabeth Maruma Mrema, Representative of the Executive Director of UNEP,

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Members of Diplomatic Corps,  
Technical Officers from Party States,  
Invited Guests,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,  
All protocols observed.

First of all, allow me on behalf of the Secretariat and indeed on my own behalf to express our sincere gratitude to the Government of the Republic of Uganda for hosting this important session of the Governing Council. The Secretariat is exceedingly humbled by the hospitality of the people of Uganda and indeed the splendid contribution made by the Government of Uganda in the organisation and convening of this meeting. We say thank you very much.

I also avail myself at this opportunity to welcome you all to this 9th Governing Council Meeting of the Parties to the Lusaka Agreement. I welcome in particular Honourable Ministers who are attending this meeting of the Governing Council for the first time.

**Distinguished Honourable Ministers,**

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Your participation in this meeting demonstrates your commitment and resolve to protect our wild fauna and flora against illegal trade in the region and indeed support for the implementation of the Lusaka Agreement.

This Governing Council meeting is being held in conformity with the Final Act of our Agreement and Rules of Procedure for the Meetings of the

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Council. During the last Governing Council Meeting which was held in Nairobi, Kenya, it was agreed that all subsequent Governing Council sessions shall be held biennially or after two years in accordance with the rules of procedure.

#### **Honourable Ministers,**

The Governing Council through its decision 8/I.1 and 2 approved the Strategic Plan of the Task Force and its corresponding budgets for the ten year period (2005-2015) and directed the Director of the Task Force to continue drawing up annual work programmes and budgets based on the approved Strategic Plan. Since then, the activities and programmes of work of the Task Force have been derived from this plan.

#### **Honourable Ministers,**

Decisions 7/1/B/i of the 7<sup>th</sup> Governing Council directed the Bureau of the Governing Council to also serve as the Implementation Committee of the Council and to undertake regular reviews and monitor the implementation of the Agreement and the institutions established under it. The Bureau was also mandated by Decision 8/II.5 of the 8<sup>th</sup> Governing Council to continue exercising decision making powers on substantive issues related to the implementation of the Agreement and the Programmes of Work and Budgets for the Task Force.

I am happy to inform this meeting that the Bureau of the 8th Governing Council has successfully steered our Secretariat. A lot of progress has been made since last Governing Council Meeting mainly owing to the dedication and personal commitment of the officials of the Bureau.

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### **Honourable Ministers,**

Under the guidance of the Programmes of Work derived from the Strategic Plan, the Task Force achieved a number of successes and aims to achieve even more. These successes are attributed to the support and commitment of the Parties, our National Bureaus, and co-operating partners. We greatly appreciate this support and look forward to their continued cooperation in our endeavour to protect our wildlife now and for posterity.

### **Mr. President**

#### **Honourable Minister,**

Since the last Council Meeting, a number of activities were carried out by the Task Force in collaboration with the National Bureaus and co-operating partners. I am pleased to inform you that over this period the Task Force concluded and signed cooperative Agreements/Memoranda of Understanding with ICPO-Interpol and World Customs Organization Secretariats. The Task Force continued to work closely with these organizations and CITES Secretariat as well as national law enforcement agencies such as Police and Customs.

### **Mr. President,**

During the Financial Years 2006/07 and 2007/08, the Task Force in collaboration with National Bureaus of the Agreement facilitated and conducted 22 major field joint law enforcement operations and 7 international investigations, which resulted into the recovery of wildlife specimens and arrest of 59 suspects. In addition, vital intelligence information was gathered which will be used in planning future operations.

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**Mr. President,**

In promoting collaborative capacity-building for improved law enforcement in our Party States, the Task Force was involved in organizing and conducting 6 collaborative training sessions on Basic Wildlife Intelligence and Investigations in which 77 wildlife enforcement officers from the Party States attended.

**Mr President,**

One of the key objectives of the Task Force is to promote awareness programmes for Law Enforcement Agencies. The Task Force was involved in sensitizing various law enforcement agencies on threats caused by the illegal trade in wild fauna and flora in an attempt to enhance cooperation and collaboration among these agencies in fighting wildlife crime. In collaboration with the National Bureaus the Task Force in organized and conducted 9 inter-agency workshops in Kenya, Uganda, Congo, Tanzania and Zambia where Police, Customs, Army, Border posts, Anti-corruption Bureaus, Judiciary, Airport and Ports Authorities and Immigration among others actively participated. These workshops have greatly enhanced networking and collaboration among the agencies.

**Mr. President,**

Apart from these training and workshop programs, the Task Force continued to collect and share information with the National Bureaus and other law enforcement institutions both locally and internationally. It has also

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continued to organize and facilitate cross-border wildlife security meetings between the Party States.

**Mr. President,**

In strengthening partnerships with relevant authorities, LATF continued to work in conjunction with non-Party States, the Secretariats of other Multilateral Environmental Agreements and law enforcement partners such as Interpol, CITES, WCO, UN (UNEP) and regional bodies like POLICE CHIEFS COOPERATIONS ORGANIZATIONS.

The Task Force will continue working with the National enforcement authorities including the National Bureaus in the fight against wildlife crime and in implementing programmes and activities as stipulated in our Strategic Plan.

In the spirit of co-operation and collaboration, I would like to recognize the presence of other partners who are here with us today:

We recognize the presence:

- Madam Pamela Ahago and Susan Onyancha from RILO East and Southern Africa WCO Office,
- Representatives from Republic of South Africa Madam Motsepe Lineo and Inspector Louw
- Dr. Shefiraw from Ethiopia (Signatories),
- Mr. Mbota from Malawi,
- Representatives from High Commissions of our Parties

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**Mr. President, Honourable Minister,**

I wish to inform this meeting that the Strategic Plan which is our road map has indeed enabled the Task Force to have more focus in discharging its mandate. However, the Task Force has faced a number of challenges one of which is inadequacy of financial resources to effectively implement the programmes outlined in the plan.

The Task Force wishes to take this opportunity to acknowledge Parties' commitment in supporting our programmes. We also wish to express our gratitude for the support and cooperation received from our partners who supported us for the period under review. Most profoundly, we thank the United Nations Environment Programme, which continues and continues to support a number of activities in the implementation of Agreement and the work of the Task Force. The presence of Representatives of the Executive Director of UNEP demonstrates this commitment.

We also wish to sincerely thank the Government of the Republic of Kenya for continuing to provide a conducive environment for the work of the Task Force at her Seat in Nairobi.

**Honourable Ministers,**

I would like to inform you that for the last two days, the technical officers were very busy deliberating technical matters related to the implementation of the Agreement and the work of the Task Force. The outcome of this meeting will be presented to this Council as indicated in the Agenda.

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**Mr. President,**

Distinguished Honourable Ministers,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

With these few remarks, I wish to inform you that this meeting has realized a quorum by the presence of 5 Party States and two signatories. The Kingdom of Lesotho has sent apologies for not being able to be with us. I therefore move that we proceed with the meeting.

**Mr. President,**

As per Rule 21 of the Rules of Procedure of the meetings of the Governing Council and in accordance with the Proposed Agenda already before us, it is my great pleasure to welcome you now to give your opening remarks and officially preside over the meeting.

**Mheshimiwa Daktari Karibu Sana.**