

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 AFRICAN ELEPHANT LAW ENFORCEMENT DAY AND IVORY DISPOSAL CEREMONY AT KENYA WILDLIFE SERVICE, MANYANI FIELD TRAINING SCHOOL ON 20TH JULY, 2011

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am pleased to preside over the launch of the first-ever African Elephant Law Enforcement Day on our continent. On this important occasion, we also celebrate the role played by law enforcement officers in the conservation of elephant populations in Africa.

I take this opportunity to warmly welcome to Kenya honourable ministers and other representatives of Governments from various countries. Your presence signifies the importance that African governments attach to the conservation of our rich and diverse wild fauna and flora.

On this occasion, I also wish to pay tribute to the wildlife law enforcement fraternity for the enormous contribution they have made in the protection of our natural heritage in general and of our elephant populations in particular.

As part of today's celebrations, we shall be recognizing the outstanding achievements of some of our law enforcement officers from the Lusaka Agreement countries. The awards will be given to the gallant men and women who have played a sterling role in the conservation of our natural heritage. We appreciate their role in the protection of our natural heritage.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

On this occasion, we will also be witnessing the burning of contraband ivory comprising 335 tusks and 41,553 ivory hankos that were seized in Singapore in 2002. Through the disposal of contraband ivory, we seek to firmly demonstrate to the world our determination to eliminate all forms of illegal trade in ivory.

We must all appreciate the negative effects of illegal trade to our national economies. We cannot afford to sit back and allow criminal networks to destroy our common future.

Through the burning of contraband ivory, therefore, we are sending a clear message to poachers and illegal traders in wildlife about our collective resolve to fight this crime in our region and beyond. Poachers and illegal traders in ivory must know that their days are numbered and severe punishment will be meted to those engaging in wildlife crime.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Wildlife resources in Africa continue to play a significant role in socio-economic development. It is, therefore, imperative that we step up measures to protect and develop our wild life resources.

In this regard, I appreciate that a number of member countries of the Lusaka Agreement have launched the African Elephant Law Enforcement Special Account and established the African Wildlife Enforcement Monitoring System.

The Special Account represents the efforts of countries under the Lusaka Agreement to raise the financial resources for enhancing our capacity in fighting poaching and especially illegal trade in elephant ivory.

On the other hand, the Wildlife Enforcement Monitoring System will provide the platform for our enforcement agencies to collect and share information on the trends and patterns of wildlife crimes.

Moreover, the cross-border nature of wild life crime underscores the need to enhance cooperation among our governments and to pool financial and human resources. I am confident that these measures will go a long way in enhancing our capacity to protect our wildlife resources.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As we seek to mobilize necessary resources and share information, I wish to affirm Kenya's commitment to the war against wildlife crime. Kenya is an active member of both the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species and the Lusaka Agreement and fully supports the African Elephant Action Plan.

On this day therefore, Kenya would like to stand counted as a country at the forefront in wildlife conservation. We do this in the full realization that we are the custodians of a rich and varied world heritage. We must conserve this heritage for the enjoyment of present and future generations of Kenyans and the global community.

With these remarks, it is now my pleasure to officially declare the first-ever African Elephant Law Enforcement Day launched.

Thank you and God bless you all.