

**SPEECH BY PROF. EPHRAIM KAMUNTU MP, MINISTER FOR TOURISM, WILDLIFE AND HERITAGE, OF THE REPUBLIC OF UGANDA, RAPPOORTEUR AND REPRESENTATIVE OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE 9<sup>TH</sup> LUSAKA AGREEMENT GOVERNING COUNCIL, AT THE AFRICAN ELEPHANT LAW ENFORCEMENT DAY CELEBRATIONS AT THE KENYA WILDLIFE SERVICE FIELD TRAINING SCHOOL IN MANYANI ON 20<sup>TH</sup> JULY 2011**

**President of the Republic of Kenya, Your Excellency, Mwai Kibaki, CGH, MP**

**Hon. Ministers;**

**Excellencies Ambassadors and High Commissioners**

**Members of the Diplomatic Corps;**

**Distinguished Invited Guests;**

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

At the outset allow me to convey to you all warm greetings from President Yoweri Museveni and the People of the Republic of Uganda. As you are all aware the Government of the Republic of Uganda and her people attach great importance to sustainable wildlife conservation and we are proud to be associated with this event. I am pleased to see a number of delegates from African governments, Members of Diplomatic Corps, partners, the private sector and the public who have come together at this very important occasion to jointly celebrate the first ever African Elephant Law Enforcement Day. I also wish to acknowledge with appreciations the effort that each one of you has made to be here for this important day.

As a sign of commitment to the conservation of wild fauna and flora, our African governments have ratified various environmental conventions, among them, the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) and the Lusaka Agreement on Co-operative Enforcement Operations Directed at Illegal Trade in Wild Fauna and Flora whose current membership comprises seven member states of Congo, Lesotho, Liberia, Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania and Zambia.

This elephant law enforcement day we are celebrating marks the continued commitment and co-operation among Lusaka Agreement member countries on the conservation of wild fauna and flora. As you may be aware the main operational arm of the Agreement, the Lusaka Agreement Task Force (LATF), based in

Nairobi , has been instrumental in working with law enforcement authorities as well as conservation agencies in Africa and beyond in fighting illegal trade in wild fauna and flora.

The Lusaka Agreement Governing Council found it prudent to raise awareness and foster co-operation in combating elephant poaching and ivory trafficking in Africa by holding these celebrations dubbed 'African elephant law enforcement day' which your Excellency have accepted to preside over.

Indeed the celebrations started on 18<sup>th</sup> July in Nairobi by launching the African Elephant Law Enforcement Special Account (AELESA); launching of the Wildlife Enforcement Monitoring system (WEMS) for African countries and Books donation to Kenya Wildlife Service Field Training School-Manyani as recognition of the School for securing the 7.2 tonnes of contraband elephant ivory and for enhancing law enforcement capacity in the region. The Elephant Law Enforcement Day celebrations are culminating to the burning of 5 tonnes of the contraband ivory today, part of the confiscated elephant ivory as the remaining 2.2 tonnes will be returned to Malawi and Zambia for scientific, educational and prosecution purposes. This is in line with the CITES provisions (CITES Conf 9.10 Rev 15) to which we all subscribe. Your Excellency, today you will also be awarding conservation heroes who have made outstanding contributions towards wildlife law enforcement in Lusaka Agreement member states.

**Your Excellency,**  
**Honourable Ministers,**  
**Distinguished Guests,**  
**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

In Africa, we have been gifted and endowed to share a unique God-given heritage with the rest of humanity in the form of wild fauna and flora. The elephant is one of the recognized flagship species representing the magnificent and diverse wildlife resources in our continent. Sadly, Africa has had a distressing history with her elephants; plummeting from 1.3 million elephants in the early 1970s to an estimate of between 400,000 and 600,000 today. Although recent reports show some increase of elephant populations in various parts of the continent, they are yet to recover. This was, and is still mainly attributed to the effects of habitat destruction and illegal ivory trade.

The ivory you are about to torch was largely from poaching of elephants in Africa and was smuggled to South East Asia and seized in Singapore in late June 2002. We applaud the Singapore authorities for seizing the ivory and for successfully prosecuting an offender who I am made aware was fined about US\$ 3,000. After investigations, Singapore authorities handed over the ivory to the Lusaka Agreement Task Force for further investigations and final disposal.

The lessons learnt from these investigations are invaluable as the Lusaka Agreement member States and the Task Force gained insights into the complexity and dynamics of wildlife crime in the region. This ivory seizure remains a shining example of co-operation among national agencies and research institutions in Africa, Asia and the USA as well as multi-governmental organizations prominent of which is the Lusaka Agreement Task Force.

**Your Excellency,  
Honourable Ministers,  
Distinguished Guests,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Before I conclude my remarks, I would like on behalf of the Lusaka Agreement Governing Council to thank most sincerely partners particularly the Singapore Customs Authority, CITES, ICPO-INTERPOL, World Customs Organisation, University of Washington-Seattle, Sokoine University of Agriculture-Tanzania, the Zambia Wildlife Authority, Anti-Corruption Bureau and Department of National Parks of Malawi and the International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW), and all those that in one way or the other have contributed to the investigations into this contraband.

The Governing Council would also like to thank all those who provided financial, technical and material support to enable the success of these celebrations. I applaud those that have participated in the organization of this Elephant Law Enforcement Day Celebrations, and specifically the Lusaka Agreement Task Force and the Kenya Wildlife Service team.

Uganda is a founding member to Lusaka Agreement and I am happy about today's event.

In conclusion, I wish to call upon all African states who are not yet members, to accede to the Lusaka Agreement to strengthen co-operation and enhance its implementation. I also extend our call to the partners to continue supporting the Agreement.

Finally, I wish to sincerely thank your Excellency for gracing this important occasion,

Thank you

Prof. Ephraim Kamuntu MP,  
Minister for Tourism, Wildlife and Heritage of the Republic of Uganda and Rapporteur of the 9<sup>th</sup>  
Governing Council of the Lusaka Agreement