First International Day of Forests observed in Kenya

Kenya marked the first International Day of Forests on Thursday, 21 March, 2013 at the Ngong’ Road Forest Conservancy under the theme: "Towards 10% National Tree Cover: Ni Wajibu wa Kila Mkenya" (meaning: It is a responsibility for every Kenyan). This theme is in line with the Constitution of Kenya, which has set 10% as the benchmarked target for national tree and forest cover.

The event was hosted at the Ngong Road Forest Primary School and honored by the presence of the outgoing Minister for Forests and Wildlife, Hon. Dr. Noah Wekesa. Amongst senior Government officials in attendance were the Ministry’s Permanent Secretary, Mr. Hyslop Ipu; Director of Administration, Mr. Lawrence Mwadime; Director of Kenya Forests Service, Mr. David K. Mbugua; Conservation Secretary, Mr. Gideon Gathaara, and the Officer-in-Charge of the Nairobi Conservancies, Ms. Charity Munyasia.

The civil society was represented by Ambassador Nehemiah Rotich, (Chairman, Taskforce on Illegal Trade and Trafficking in Wildlife Products); Dr. Isaack Kalua (Chairman, Kenya Water Towers Authority). Mr. Simon Woods, Chairman of the Ngong

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2
Road Community Forest Association represented stakeholders, who included members from the local community.

The United Nations General Assembly, on 28 November, 2012, by Resolution 67/200, declared 21 March of every year as the International Day of Forests with the aim of celebrating and raising awareness on the importance of all types of forests and trees outside forests.

Speaking at the event on behalf of all the UN agencies, the FAO Representative in Kenya, Dr. Dan Rugabira, reminded the gathering that during the International Year of Forests in 2011, the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF) provided key messages for outreach initiatives. FAO has been at the forefront in supporting sustainable forest management in Kenya since 1977. The organization has pioneered the Farmers Field Schools which have played a critical role in building capacity of farmers in forest management. It has also recently developed climate change guidelines for forest managers.

On his part, Hon. Dr. Noah Wekesa, the outgoing Minister for Forests and Wildlife, acknowledged that this was the first time the International Day of Forests (IDF) was being celebrated following the General Assembly Resolution of 2012. He thanked UNEP and FAO for their support and co-organizing the event in conjunction with his Ministry, Kenya Forest Services and other partners.

Dr. Wekesa encouraged Kenyans to continue with the spirit of planting and taking care of trees. From a low figure of 1.7% forest cover in recent decades, a comprehensive forest cover mapping across the country has been carried out which confirms that Kenya is now at 6.9% forest and tree cover. This is a small margin of shortfall from the constitutional benchmark target of 10%. Therefore, with the current enthusiasm in tree planting, this constitutional threshold should be achievable within the Vision 2030.

Hon. Wekesa underscored the fact that it is common knowledge that sustainable conservation and management of forests promotes biodiversity, climate change mitigation and adaptation. It also enhances livelihoods and alleviates impacts of poverty. The converse is true: degradation of forest cover (as the Mau Forest Complex attests) adversely affects agriculture, tourism and energy sectors.

In order to achieve these targets, the Ministry of Forests and Wildlife has embarked on continuous institutional reforms, including: formulation of the National Forest Program (NFP), which is intended to provide a clear strategy for the implementation of the forest policy over the coming 10-years. The NFP process will provide a framework for the Government and development partners to work closely together on forests issues. It will also generate innovative problem-solving and knowledge-sharing mechanisms amongst forest partners in line with policy and legislative reforms.

Other supporting mechanisms that have evolved over time include: Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation (REDD Plus) process. REDD Plus holds great potential in catalyzing national efforts to address the current levels of deforestation and forest degradation, and supports conservation and sustainable management of forest resources.

Henry Ndede, Coordinator of the Ministry of Forestry & Wildlife

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**Key Messages from United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF)**

- Over 40 percent of the world’s oxygen is produced from the rainforests.
- A tree releases 8-10 times more moisture into the atmosphere than the equivalent area of the ocean.
- Forests are home to over 80% of terrestrial biodiversity.
- The carbon in forests exceeds the amount of carbon currently in the atmosphere.
- 17.4% of global greenhouse gas emission resulted from deforestation and forest degradation.
- More than a quarter of modern medicines originate from tropical forest plants.
- 1.6 billion people around the world depend on forests for their livelihoods and daily subsistence needs.
Looking up to Mount Kenya – naturally!

More than half a million residents of the Mount Kenya region have seen farm productivity and food security improve, with increased incomes and better access to domestic and irrigation water as a direct result of the Mount Kenya East Pilot Project (MKEPP) for Natural Resources Management.

“We can see in the Mount Kenya region how more than half a million people have benefited from a more productive, equitable and sustainable use of natural resources through managing development with nature in mind,” says Elwyn Grainger Jones, Director of IFAD’s Environment and Climate Change Division.

The project encouraged Government staff and the local community to better manage natural resources, empowered women through local institutions, promoted high levels of participation in decision making processes and also improved on the sustainable management of natural resources.

The project was financed by an IFAD loan and a Global Environment Facility grant. Its focus was the upper catchment of the river Tana. This river contributes 50% of Kenya’s hydropower generation as well as enables irrigated agriculture, fisheries and livestock production. The river is also a key source of biodiversity in the country. Its tributaries begin in Mount Kenya. Over the years, the ability of the Tana River to support human livelihoods has been threatened by destruction of forest cover upstream, inappropriate land use practices and uncontrolled water use.

“School children, youth, women and men have all been empowered to better manage their natural resources for a more secure economic future, while at the same time restoring the natural treasures of the Mount Kenya east region,” says Faith Muthoni Livingstone, MKEPP Project Manager. “Everyone has been touched and participates in natural resource management, thanks to MKEPP, which is being up-scaled and rolled out further afield.”

“We are proud to share the economic and environmental returns we have seen through improved biodiversity conservation, more equitable and sustainable use of natural resources and enhanced overall management capacity with the involvement of stakeholders in the National Park and Reserve,” says Perin Saint-Ange IFAD’s Regional Director for East and Southern Africa.

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<thead>
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<th>A total of 558,145 people have benefited from the MKEPP.</th>
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<td><strong>Water Resource Management</strong></td>
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<td>56.7% time reduction for local community to fetch water</td>
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<td>49.2% reduction in the distance walked to fetch water</td>
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<td>39% reported improvement in water quality</td>
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<td>32% reported decline in water related diseases</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Environmental Conservation</strong></td>
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<td>2,692 ha of forest rehabilitated</td>
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<td>64 km wildlife fence to reduce human-wildlife conflict</td>
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<td><strong>Rural Livelihoods</strong></td>
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<td>71% increase in household income from sale of crops</td>
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<td>55% increase in income from sale of livestock products</td>
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<tr>
<td>65% increase in food production for farmers who adopted soil and water conservation practices</td>
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UNESCO Regional Office for Eastern Africa has been supporting Information and Communication Technology for Education initiatives to bridge the digital divide in the development of multilingualism and local content application in cyberspace.

As one of the initiatives, UNESCO has been working with Internet Society (ISOC) Kenya and Tanzania Chapters in developing a Kiswahili ICT terminology and glossary portal (Kiswahili ICT portal).

Internet Society is comprised of individuals and organizations encompassing a wide array of actors from different fields such as Government and non-governmental organizations, foundations and academic institutions, private sector, and civil society that are dedicated to an open and accessible internet.

In this project, linguistic experts from the Universities of Nairobi, Bondo and Dar es Salaam led the English to Kiswahili translation process using the UNESCO Media Information Literacy Curriculum for Teachers and the UNESCO ICT Competency Framework for Teachers. Student volunteers were also mobilized at the universities in compiling translated information.

The Kiswahili ICT portal was launched in March and can be viewed online (www.ictglossary.wikia.com/wiki). UNESCO is currently undertaking a consultative process with Kenya Institute of Education (KIE) to determine how this resource could be incorporated into Kiswahili teaching and learning curricula for secondary schools across Kenya. The portal aims to promote and sensitize Swahili speakers with the use of ICTs while celebrating the rich Swahili culture and language tradition. Charles Oloo, a web master for the project, explains: “the glossary provides Swahili speakers with the ICT terminology in a context that is easily understandable. Swahili is a language that is spoken in many countries across Africa that is evolving, especially in the sphere of new media landscape”.

Charles also reminds everyone that this is a collaborative project that is open to society in sharing knowledge and creativity with the rest of the world and adds: “anyone interested in the project can participate and contribute to the evolution of Kiswahili ICT portal. Individual contributions can make a difference in bringing social benefit”.

According to Martin Obuya, an ICT consultant who is a member of the Kenya ISOC Chapter, the initiative such as the Kiswahili ICT portal provides: “the space and opportunity for development and engagement for Swahili speaking nations, where language and technology help to improve the quality of education and foster unity and togetherness in the region”.

As countries in the region are embarking on extensive deployment of ICTs, content in languages such as Kiswahili becomes essential for access to information and self-expression that reflect the celebration of cultural diversity. UNESCO is working to provide technical expertise and knowledge needed to deliver content in local languages that contribute towards the development of the society, incorporating socio-cultural and ethical dimensions.
The 12th session of the Model United Nations saw over 450 delegates from Kenya, Ghana, South Africa and India converge at the United Nations Office at Nairobi (UNON) under the theme “Sustainable Development: Averting Conflict by promoting a culture of peace and security through dialogue”.

The Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator, Mr. Modibo Toure, who was the chief guest called on the delegates to assume leadership roles as key stakeholders in shaping the peace and reconciliation agenda.

In his speech during the opening ceremony, Mr. Toure encouraged the participants to be creative together during the session, in order to strive for new and innovative approaches to the common global problems of poverty alleviation, hunger, environmental degradation and democratic and prosperous country.

The Secretary-General of the Kenya Red Cross Society, Dr. Abbas Gullet, who is also the 2007 United Nations Person of the Year received a standing ovation from delegates of the Conference when he lauded KMUN for being a model to emulate by many African countries, for bringing together young minds from different countries, united for a common and worthy cause.

Dr. Gullet said that the Kenya Red Cross Society has long recognized that the imagination, ideals and energies of young women and men are vital for the continuing development of the societies in which they live. He called on the delegates to embrace their differences in order to seize common opportunities and defend against shared threats.

In his closing remarks, Dr. Gullet noted: “the Red Cross Society has been at the forefront of promoting peace to avert conflict over the years as was witnessed recently in its Kumbukumbu 2008 Chagua Peace Campaign that was purposefully designed to preach peace before, during and after the recent elections”.

Meanwhile, the KMUN General Assembly, under the Economic and Financial Committee adopted a resolution to encourage debtor countries to reduce on borrowing through creation of policies and projects that discourage dependence on loans but concentrate on trade relations and entrepreneurship.

In addition, the students were urged to adopt measures to address issues of drug abuse to prevent social anomalies such as sexual abuse.

The conference, organized with the assistance of the UN Information Centre, (UNIC) Nairobi, was timely as it came immediately after the Kenya General elections under a new constitution.
ICAO Regional Office participates in the National Consultative meeting on the development of the East Africa Community Five-Year Meteorological Development Plan and Investment Strategy for the period 2013 to 2018

ICAO participated in the National Consultative meeting on the development of the East Africa Community (EAC) Five-Year Meteorological Development Plan and Investment Strategy for the period 2013 to 2018. The meeting was held in Nairobi, Kenya, on 18 March 2013.

Thirty-three participants from various meteorology stakeholders including: the Department of Meteorology of the University of Nairobi, the East African Community (EAC), the International Livestock Research Institute, the Kenya Agricultural Research Institute, Kenya Civil Aviation Authority, the Kenya Meteorological Department and United Nations Environmental Programme, attended the meeting.

Stakeholders were appraised on the progress made on the development of the EAC Meteorological Development Plan and Investment Strategy; and on the need to prepare for the future Air Traffic Management (ATM) systems, which will require exchange of aeronautical meteorological information in digital format.

Recommendations were made on how to further improve the draft plan, with the inclusion of ICAO programmes. These include: the establishment, implementation and maintenance of QMS for aeronautical meteorological services; and implementation of the Satellite Distribution System for information relating to Air Navigation (SADIS) and internet based Secure SADIS File Transfer Protocol for reception of global en-route forecasts in digital format and operational meteorology information in alphanumeric format from the World Area Forecast Centre, London.

ICAO would make follow-up with individual EAC partner States in the implementation of aeronautical meteorological issues included in the plan.

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