



STATEMENT BY THE NEMA DIRECTOR GENERAL, PROF. GEOFFREY WAHUNGU DURING THE COMMEMORATION OF THE WORLD DAY TO COMBAT DESERTIFICATION ON 17TH JUNE 2017, HULAHULA CATHOLIC CHURCH COMPOUND SAKU SUB-COUNTY OF MARSABIT COUNTY

- ❖ *The Cabinet Secretary, Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources, Prof. Judi Wakhungu*
- ❖ *The Principal Secretary, State Department of Environment, Mr. Charles Sunkuli,*
- ❖ *The Chairman, NEMA Board of Management, Mr. John Konchellah,*
- ❖ *H.E. The Governor, Amb. Ukur Yattani, Marsabit County*
- ❖ *The County Commissioner, Marsabit County*
- ❖ *The Directors, NEMA Board of Management*
- ❖ *Head of Government Departments,*
- ❖ *Chief Executive Officers of Private Companies,*
- ❖ *UNEP Country representative,*
- ❖ *UNDP Country representative,*
- ❖ *Distinguished Guests,*

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am humbled to welcome you all to the commemoration of the World Day to Combat Desertification. The United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification defines desertification as land degradation in arid, semi-arid and sub humid areas resulting from various factors including climatic variations and human activities. Over the recent years, trends in desertification, land degradation and droughts have been proceeding at an alarming rate particularly in developing countries. In order to address the challenges posed by desertification, land degradation and drought, the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification established a 10 year strategy (2008-2018) to guide global effort in combating desertification, land degradation and drought. At the country level, the 10 year UNCCD strategy is mainstreamed to National Action Programme (NAP). Kenya developed her first National Action programme in 2002 through a national participatory process spearheaded by NEMA. In order to address the emerging issues and align to the 10 year UNCCD strategy, the National Action Programme was reviewed and published in 2015. This framework provides for the inclusion of all relevant stakeholders at national and local levels in combating desertification, land degradation and drought through policies; strategies and development initiatives aimed at integration of the development of the Arid and Semi-Arid Lands (ASALs) into the national development frameworks.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I am happy to report that NEMA in collaboration with stakeholder has been fast-tacking implementation of the provision of the National Action Programme 2015 – 2025 with success

and the authority will continue to invest in the implementation of the NAP to combat desertification, land degradation and drought for sustainable development.

In addition to the implementation of the National Action Programme (NAP), the United Nation Convention to Combat Desertification provides for the commemoration of the World Day to Combat Desertification (WDCD) celebrated globally on the 17th June every year. The Day is commemorated with view to raising awareness about combating desertification, land degradation and mitigating the effects of drought through integrated approaches to enhance community resilience. During this day, the global celebration are held at one of the state party to the convention and parallel national celebrations held by state parties at sites of their choice. In Kenya, the Day has been commemorated since 1995 and NEMA has been serving as the operation focal point for the WDCD commemoration. Some of the previous commemorations events were held at Taru in Kwale County in 2009, Sidho in Suba , Homabay County in 2011 and Cheptebo in Elgeyo Marakwet County in 2013 and recently at Sori in Migori County in 2016.

This year we come to Marsabit County to commemorate the World Day to Combat Desertification under theme; *“Conserving our land for sustainable livelihoods”* and its slogan: *“Our land - Our home - Our future.* The theme and slogan focus on the central role productive land can play in turning the growing tide of migrants abandoning unproductive land into communities and nations that are stable, secure and sustainable, into the future. As provided for by the theme, vast lands in Kenya are turning to be unproductive lands rapidly owing to desertification, land

degradation and drought. This is forcing communities to migrate to more potential landscapes leaving their homes. This is common scenario at Marsabit county as experienced in recent times during severe and prolonged droughts and therefore the perfect choice of Marsabit in commemorating the World Day to Combat Desertification under this theme and slogan.

The situation calls for collaborative efforts to tame desertification, land degradation and drought if we have to tame the emerging tide of migrations by communities in search of livelihoods as their homelands become hostile. I am happy to say that NEMA has been on the forefront in seeking solution this challenge. Currently, NEMA through the Adaptation Fund is supporting the Kenya Red Cross Society to set-up an irrigation scheme at Waldaa, Marsabit County to promote community resilience to drought. The authority will continue to work closely with Marsabit County Government and other stakeholder to promote environment conservation for increasing community resilience to desertification, land degradation and drought.

Finally, I would like to say that this event was made possible due to the generous support from many sponsors and partners who I would like to thank them. In this regard, I would like in a special way to thank the County Government of Marsabit, Kenya Forest Service, Safaricom, Kenya Wildlife Service, The Catholic Diocese of Marsabit, The Green Growth and Employment programme and the Adaptation Fund programme for their support in making this event a success. I am aware that the local committee also got support from CARITAS Marsabit,

PACIDA, FH Marsabit, GIZ, Regional Pastoral Livelihood Resilience Programme, REGAL AG, MOH Marsabi and would like also to thank them for their support. The organization of the event was steered by the National Steering Committee chaired the Dr. Charles Lange and worked closely with the Local organizing committee. I would like to thank the two committee for steering the preparation of this event diligently.

Thank you