



**SPEECH BY PROF. JUDI WAKHUNGU, THE CABINET SECRETARY,
MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES,
DURING THE COMMEMORATION OF THE WORLD DAY TO
COMBAT DESERTIFICATION HELD AT HULAHULA, MARSABIT
COUNTY ON THE 17TH JUNE 2017**

- ❖ *H.E. Amb. Ukur Yattani, The Governor, Marsabit County,*
- ❖ *Mr. Charles T. Sunkuli, Principal Secretary*
- ❖ *Mr. John Konchellah, Chairman, NEMA Board of Management*
- ❖ *NEMA Board of Management*
- ❖ *Prof. Geoffrey Wahungu, Director General, NEMA*
- ❖ *UN Representatives,*
- ❖ *Distinguished guests,*

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am delighted to join all Kenyans and the global community during this auspicious occasion of commemorating the World Day to Combat Desertification (WDCD) here at Hulahula grounds of Marsabit County. The Day is marked on 17th June each year to fulfill national obligation under the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) with a view to raising awareness about Combating Desertification and mitigating the effects of drought through integrated approaches to enhance community resilience. Kenya signed United Nations Convention

to Combat Desertification in 1994 and ratified in 1997 and country has observed this day since 1995 at various parts of the country.

The theme for this year's commemoration is "*Conserving Our Land for Sustainable Livelihoods*" and the slogan is "*Our Land - Our Home - Our Future*" draw global attention to 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. It is a reality that owing to trends in desertification, land degradation and drought manifestation, vast lands once productive lands are rapidly turning to unproductive lands barely capable for providing ecological services that support community livelihoods sustainably. This situation is plunging many communities to poverty, state of despair and suffering. Faced with limited choices, communities therefore abandoning land that they once called as our home and future to new settlements in search of better opportunities.

Ladies and Gentlemen

As we observe this World Day to Combat Desertification, Land Degradation and Drought, I would like reiterate that the trends in community migration in search of better productive lands due to impacts of desertification are worrying. Our memories are still fresh on the recent episodes of massive livestock deaths and community despair in many parts of Marsabit, Isiolo and Wajir counties among others owing to one of the most long lasting and severe drought in the history on this country. This scenario triggered massive community migrations across counties and landscapes. Indeed situations like this present one of the

greatest challenge to sustainable development. This is mainly because the migrations are bound to create a wave community tensions and conflicts that will divert communities and governments productive efforts to conflict management potentially slowing economic development. This scenario signals the needs for investment in innovative strategies, projects, programmes and policies at both national and county levels for combating desertification and maintaining the productive capacity of vast landscapes to tame the emerging tide of community migrations.

Ladies and Gentlemen

My Ministry is aware of the threats posed by desertification, land degradation and drought to environmental sustainability and appreciates value of policy, projects and programs interventions in combating desertification, land degradation and drought. In this regard, my Ministry has developed several policy frameworks, projects programs that guide sound environmental management for combating desertification, land degradation and drought. Among the policies is the Environmental Policy of 2014 which gives guidance on the management of all natural resources and conservation of the environment. This year, my Ministry started the process of setting Voluntary Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) targets as required by the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification through the decision of the 12th Session of the Conference of Parties, held in Ankara, Turkey in 2015. Further, my Ministry in collaboration with stakeholders has been fast-tracking the implementation Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) aligned to environment conservation. In particular, major milestone have been

made in the implementation of Goal 15 which urges countries to protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss. It is expected that implementation of actions towards meeting this target will ensure that as a country we shall move closer to zero net land degradation by 2030 and this will result to combating desertification and promoting sustainable development.

Lastly I would like to I would like to bring to you the news of Gazette notice number 2356 on the ban on use, manufacture and importation of plastic bags. Fellow Kenyans, this development is principally meant to rescue our mother nature from the devastating plastic bags menace and allow Kenyan to enjoy a clean and healthy environment. Reports indicate that plastic bags are a cause livestock and wildlife deaths mainly ingested during indiscriminate grazing creating a major economic setback to pastoralist communities like the pastoralist in Marsabit County. In addition plastic bags cause major environmental and human health consequences. I would like to thank many of our stakeholders who have so far been working closely with the Ministry in driving this noble course and once again call upon all Kenyans to support the provisions of this Gazette notice for the benefit of our beloved country Kenya. My Ministry and NEMA will be more than ready to address any concerns that may require clarification on this issue.

Thank you and god bless you all