



Ministry of Environment, Water and  
Natural Resources

## **PRESS STATEMENT**

**PRINCIPAL SECRETARY MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT,  
WATER AND NATURAL RESOURCES, STATE  
DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL  
RESOURCES DR RICHARD LESIYAMPE, DURING THE  
CLOSING SESSION OF THE COLLOQUIUM ON  
DEEPENING DIALOGUE WITH STAKEHOLDERS IN  
THE FOREST SECTOR IN KENYA HELD ON 6TH  
MARCH 2015 AT BOMA INN, ELDORET**

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Ladies and Gentlemen, dating back to the period when forest reservation began way-back in the Year 1932, Forest -dependent communities have been marginalized.

On record, successive Kenya Governments have evicted the communities from the forests on several occasions. Some of those evicted have now been settled but quite a number of them are still landless.

To solve the plight of the forest dependent communities, my Ministry hosted several delegations from the forest dependent communities. During this forum and it emerged that the forest dependent communities lacked elected leaders to represent their interest. My Ministry then facilitated elections of the leaders from ten (10) counties where marginalized forest dependent communities reside. The output of these elections was the formation of a structured leadership for the two communities which is a commendable milestone in this process of engagement. Since then, I have engaged the elected leaders with a view of understanding the issues that affect them in their respective counties resolved.

To get a better understanding of the issues raised by the communities, my Ministry organized a national forum on dialogue to address the various communities concerns.

During the national workshop, held in Nakuru in January 2015 a structure of engagement between the Government and the Ogiek and Sengwer communities was formalized. Other forest -dependent communities were invited and they were represented during the Nakuru workshop.

During the workshop, the leaders elected by the forest dependent communities were tasked to prepare memorandums per county which were presented and used to draw-up an implementation matrix. The matrix is now being applied to inform the development of the National Forest Programme. The key issues raised during the Nakuru workshop also formed the agenda for this International Colloquium. In summary, the main issues raised during Nakuru workshop include matters touching on; historical injustices, land tenure rights, compensation, recognition of forest dwellers, protection of traditional livelihoods, ensuring robust consultations, engagement in forest management, equitable access and benefit sharing of natural resources, and access to basic government services. Subsequent to these findings, the Ministry undertook to engage all forest -dependent communities

and other stakeholders by hosting this International Colloquium.

I wish to inform all stakeholders that the main objectives of this International Colloquium were to:-

- Facilitate constructive dialogue and foster cooperation between key stakeholders in the forest sector in Kenya
- Share national and global experiences and best practices on the management of forest resources.

The outcomes from the colloquium will contribute towards sustainable forest development within the framework of the National Forest Programme, a process that my Ministry initiated late last year and which is scheduled to be concluded soon.

I now take cognizance of the participants and experts including: Legislators, Scientists, Governors, County Government Representatives, Members of Parliament; members of Independent Commissions namely , National Land Commission (NLC), Commission for Implementation of the Constitution (CIC), Commission for Revenue Allocation (CRA), National Human Rights Commission

(NHRC); various International Partners, State Agencies, Development Partners, Civil Societies and Members of the Communities all of whom have participated effectively in the three day international colloquium held in this beautiful town of Eldoret.

The Government of Kenya through the Ministry of Environment, Water and Natural Resources takes credit in hosting this colloquium, with facilitation from the World Bank. We highly appreciate, the involvement of other development partners including Government of Finland, United States Agency for International Development (USAID), United Nations Development Program (UNDP), Japan International Corporation Agency (JICA), Center for International Forest Research (CIFOR), African Center for Technology (ACT), and Law Society of Kenya (LSK) in participating in the colloquium.

In addition, the colloquium benefited from the contribution of international experts through case studies and experiences from Tanzania, Ghana, Indonesia, China, Mexico among other countries. My observation is that all stakeholders have constructively engaged in an open and

transparent dialogue resulting into key outputs that include:

- Exchange of knowledge and discussions that focused on conservation of forests as important natural resources vis a vis rights of forest -dependent communities.
- Review of tenure rights of communities to access forest goods and resources as well as importance of forest goods and services to the entire country.
- Deepened understanding and exchange of knowledge on forestry resources including roles and responsibilities of relevant agencies.
- Unbundled the devolved forestry services to County Governments.
- Discussed benefit sharing as envisaged in the natural resource benefit sharing bill which is currently in the 3rd reading in the Senate. Here I would like to appreciate Hon. Senator Agnes Zani for sparing her time to attend the colloquium and lead the discussion on the bill.

Let us all take cognizance that in the last two years, the Government and forest -dependent communities have regularly engaged in fruitful forums. This engagement has led to better understanding between the parties. However, it is unfortunate, that some people purporting to represent the communities are posting falsehoods using old images in social media platforms that houses belonging to the forest dependent communities were burned when the colloquium is in session. This is criminal and action will be taken on those who will be found responsible for propagating falsehoods.

Nevertheless, achievements have been made, and the Government commits itself to continue meaningful engagement with the Forest -dependent communities and other stakeholders for conservation of Kenya's natural resources including the water towers.

Moving forward, the positive spirit and good will which have emerged will be continued with more determination and trust that promote open and constructive dialogue. However, issues raised in the colloquium are complex and some may require amendment of laws. Meanwhile, we shall continue to work within the existing policy, legal and

institutional frameworks while contributing to the amendments of relevant policies and laws.

It is important that we manage community expectations because some of the issues raised here may take some time to be resolved. In addition, natural resource management should take consideration of the needs of the stakeholders who reside upstream, as well as downstream.

In-order for the communities to engage in the management of forest resources, it is expected that they work within the framework of existing legal structures, namely the Community Forest Associations (CFAs).

However, the issues which affect forest dwelling communities are beyond the forest sector, and therefore a wider engagement with other sectors and government agencies is very important.

Again, it is important for all to appreciate that forest resources spread across counties and that they shall be managed through ecosystem management approach by the National Government jointly with communities and stakeholders. In addition, the resources shall be managed



to promote equity and prosperity for all communities. To ensure that equity is achieved, all gazetted forest resources within the water towers shall be managed by the State. This position is taken on the realization that water is a basic commodity that supports human security.

I would now wish to call upon all participants to support this process in moving forward.