



# WORLD DAY TO COMBAT DESERTIFICATION AND DROUGHT



Theme: 'United for Land. Our Legacy. Our Future'

**We can make a difference by promoting sustainable land management systems**

STATEMENT BY H. E. THE GOVERNOR OF LAIKIPIA COUNTY



Hon. Joshua Irungu, EGH

I take this opportunity to invite you to Laikipia County for the World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought, being nationally marked in Laikipia County. I also take this opportunity to acknowledge and welcome the Cabinet Secretary, Ministry of Environment, Climate Change and Forestry, Hon Soipan Tuyu, for coming to grace this national event in Laikipia. This day reminds us of the urgent need to address desertification and drought that threaten the sustainability of our planet and our lives.

The increasing frequency and severity of droughts, coupled with desertification, are exacerbating poverty, food insecurity, and environmental degradation. But amidst these challenges, there is hope. We can make a difference by promoting sustainable land management practices such as protecting and restoring ecosystems, promoting reforestation, and adopting agricultural approaches that preserve the health of our soils. We must prioritise and invest in efficient water management technologies such as rain water harvesting, irrigation systems and recycling of wastewater. We must make every drop of water count.

Local communities are the first to suffer the consequences of desertification and drought. By empowering them with knowledge, resources, and technologies, we can help them adapt to changing conditions and improve their resilience against future challenges.

As a county, Laikipia has a target of 372 million trees to plant in the next 10 years, being part of the National 15 Billion Tree Planting Initiative. The County Government continues to partner with national government, non-state actors and communities in planting trees and establishing tree nurseries. With support from the UN Food and Agriculture Organization, Laikipia County has established a Forest and Land Rehabilitation Plan, which is instrumental in guiding the rehabilitation of our rangelands, crops lands and forests. With support from CIFOR-ICRAF, the County Government of Laikipia is establishing an agro-forestry resource centre that shall be used as a demo and learning centre for the communities and tree nursery operators. Consequently, the County Government shall provide certified seedlings suitable for different ecological zones. My government, through FLOCCA is also investing in landscape rehabilitation and eradication of invasive plant species such as *opuntia*, *acacia reficiens*, and *ipomea*.

Today, I call upon all of us to renew our commitment to protecting our planet. Let us strive for a world where land degradation is halted, where water is used sustainably, and where communities can thrive in harmony with nature. The challenges we face are immense, but so too is our capacity for innovation, resilience, and co-operation. By working together, we can turn the tide against desertification and drought. Let us act now, for the sake of our planet and future generations.

STATEMENT BY THE CHAIRMAN, NEMA BOARD OF MANAGEMENT

It is a great honour for me to join fellow Kenyans and the rest of the world in commemorating this year's World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought in Dol-Dol, Laikipia County.

I recall that on November 17, 2023, the Director General of NEMA and I visited the Maiyanat Community land degradation site and we were amazed at the level in which the community had integrated science, research and innovation towards achieving land degradation neutrality (LDN) as espoused in the UNCCD strategy. It is after this site visit that the NEMA Board Management proposed to have this year's WDDD be held here in Dol-Dol. I am glad that this dream has come to pass.

The future of our land is becoming uncertain largely due to patterns of desertification, land degradation, and drought, among other pressing environmental challenges. With up to 40 percent of all land areas worldwide already considered degraded and one third of the world surface area getting threatened by desertification, the global environmental outlook certainly is a matter of major concern. Here in Kenya, the situation is getting most critical and pronounced in the 23 counties in Kenya that are largely arid and semi-arid lands (ASALs). Today, a number of our ASALs appear as what we could refer to as waste lands, yet they could be our most precious treasures for supporting our food security programmes and socio-economic developments for enhancing our communities and country wellbeing.

The theme for this year's World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought – 'United for Land. Our Legacy. Our Future' – emphasises the importance

STATEMENT BY THE DIRECTOR GENERAL OF NEMA

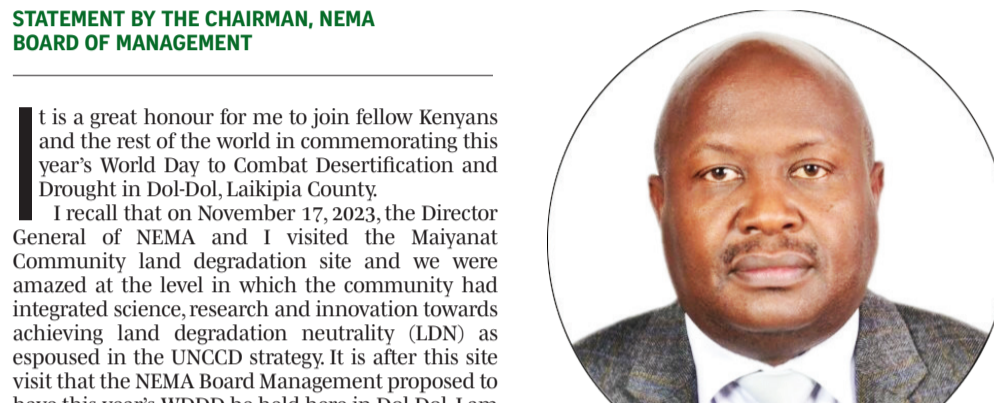
Environmental stakeholders gather in Dol-Dol, Laikipia County, to join the rest of the world in marking the World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought, 2024. This annual occasion is largely celebrated to remind humanity of the challenges their environment continues to face and the need for intensifying efforts in transiting from unsustainable environment practices to adopting sustainable conservation of our environment.

This is a divine duty for all of us. When God created the earth and people, it was expected that humans and nature would live in harmony, with humans safeguarding the precious earthly treasures. Unfortunately, human populations have continued to grow, introducing a range of unsustainable exploitation and consumption patterns that have stretched Mother Nature.

United under common environmental agenda, the global community have fronted several multilateral agreements, with the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) created in 1994 being one of them. The convention was specifically formulated to fight the spread of desertification, land degradation and drought manifestations, particularly in most vulnerable areas. Kenya signed the convention in 1994 and ratified it in 1997, opening the windows for domesticating the convention. Since then, we have undertaken many initiatives under the convention to combat desertification, land degradation and drought.

The national celebrations being held in Dol-Dol is a clear demonstration of Kenya's commitment in the fight against one of the most critical environmental challenges.

In moving the global agenda for combating desertification, land degradation and drought, the National Environment Management Authority (NEMA), in collaboration with stakeholders, has successfully spearheaded several transformative environment



Emilio Mugo

of championing environment stewardship for the future. This theme was specially derived to also highlight land as a critical foundation for driving environment conservation through stewardship initiatives.

NEMA has been actively involved in environmental conservation activities in Laikipia County. For instance, NEMA has previously had initiatives at Ewaso Narok swamp, which plays a critical role in providing ecosystem services such as a source of water, flood control, and water purification. The swamp is an important ecosystem that provides for the livelihood of both farmers and pastoralists. It is also a wildlife sanctuary and a migration corridor to the Aberdares and ranches within Laikipia and Samburu Counties.

NEMA is a member of the Laikipia Wildlife Forum, where it gives policy interventions for sustainable environmental conservation and management.



Mamo B. Mamo, EBS

conservation initiatives.

The Authority has been instrumental in driving development of various environmental statutes that provide for enhancing conservation aligned to desertification, land degradation and drought. Notable are the Environmental Impact Assessment and Audit Regulations of 2003, which are under review to align with emerging issues. These regulations control wanton land degradation, and thereby address developmental issues that may contribute in fuelling desertification, land degradation and drought manifestation. The Wetlands, Riverbanks, Lakeshores and Seashores Management Regulations of 2009, which also are under review, similarly provide for a resounding management of wetlands ecosystems.

In addition to the legal and regulatory frameworks, the Authority's strategic plan prioritises ecosystems restoration and monitoring, which are instrumental initiatives towards combating the spread of desertification, land degradation and drought manifestation. More so, the Authority is aligned to the government agenda on the 15 billion tree growing programme.

Our County Director of Environment, Laikipia, has continuously worked with the stakeholders to address key environmental concerns of the county, such as sand harvesting, illegal sandalwood harvesting, development of wetland development plans and economic evaluation of wetlands resources, to inform county and national policy interventions. The Authority will continue to create awareness and enforce Environmental Impact Assessment/Audit (EIA/A) regulations to ensure projects comply with environmental management measures as well as social livelihood support systems.

It is a great honour to the Authority to have been delegated by the Ministry of Environment, Climate Change and Forestry as the technical backstopping focal point in the implementation of the United Nations Conventions to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), land degradation and droughts. As a Board, we commit to undertake oversight to ensure the convention domestication and operationalisation is prioritised in addressing land degradation across the country, with particular emphasis on the ASALs.

NEMA will endeavour to build the capacity of communities on Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) target setting and capacity to monitor and report to the UNCCD. Kenya's implementation of the LDN targets here in Laikipia North is being actualised at the grassroots level through collaboration of various stakeholders and the Maiyanat Community and establishment of community demo sites (250 acres). I thank the Maiyanat Community for availing the 250 acres to build capacity for local communities, livelihood support, employment, and ecosystem sustainability.

All these efforts have indeed demonstrated that we are "United for Land. Our Legacy. Our Future"

During this year's environmental day, the Authority oversaw growing of thousands of tree seedling at various parts of the country. Today, the Authority, in collaboration with partners, is targeting to plant over 40,000 tree seedlings, which have been distributed to schools and other institutions. The Authority will continue to work closely with the institutions to ensure the seedlings continue to grow.

This year's World Day to Combat Desertification theme is 'United for land. Our legacy. Our future'. It calls upon all players to focus on upscaling efforts towards environmental stewardship, largely through ecosystems restoration activities.

Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 15 – Life on Land – calls for the protection, restoration and sustainable management of land-based ecosystems. Target 15.3 specifically calls for collective action for us to achieve a land degradation-neutral world by the year 2030. Therefore, joining efforts to upscale tree growing for ecosystems restoration will not only drive national goals but also the popular SDGs and put Kenya on the world map in driving the global sustainable goals.

The Authority is introducing resilience initiatives for the local communities. Together with partners, NEMA has distributed improved goat breeds for improving local one. Also, a sand dam sponsored by one of our partners will be built in this area to provide water during times of harsh conditions. Our partners have also come to provide support with rainwater harvesting in schools and also supply water tanks to learning institutions. Therefore, this commemoration is not just a day of celebrations with statements, but initiation of practical solutions to increasing community resilience to emerging environmental challenges that affect their livelihoods and welfare. NEMA will continue monitoring the impact of these initiatives with a view of forging further partnerships with stakeholders to increase efforts to combat desertification, land degradation and drought, as well as to boost community resilience to these environmental issues.

