

SPEECH BY GUEST OF HONOUR
ON THE OCCASION OF
10TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS BY THE AFRICAN FOREST FORUM
May 22, 2019, Karura Forest Amani Gardens

The Representative of the African Union Commission,
The Representative of the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF),
The Representative of the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO),
The Representative of the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida),
The Representative of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC),
The Representative of the World Agroforestry Centre (ICRAF)
The Representatives of the Regional Economic Communities of ECOWAS, EAC, ECCAS and SADC,
The Chair of the Governing Council of the African Forest Forum (AFF)
Heads and representatives of other institutions,
Representative of various media,
All invited guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen.

It gives me great pleasure to welcome all of you to Kenya, those of you who are coming from outside our country. We hope you will enjoy your stay in our beautiful country.

Let me take this opportunity to congratulate the African Forest Forum (AFF) for a decade of service to African forestry, and for inviting all of us to come and share its joy. We are all here to celebrate with the African forestry fraternity and friends of African forestry from outside the continent for the very good achievements this institution has made in a very short period. For us in Kenya, we are also very happy that the institution we have hosted in Nairobi is doing very well.

While I know that the institution has done much, let me take this opportunity to underline a few that caught our attention. When AFF was in its formative years, the world was debating on whether to have a legally or not legally binding instrument to guide management of forest resources globally. These debates were taking place at the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF). African countries were divided, between those for a legally binding instrument on one

hand, and those for a non-legally binding instrument on the other. This was because each African country was negotiating from its country position. AFF moved with speed to facilitate the continent to come together as the “African Group” that negotiated with one voice, and eventually made considerable inputs into the final resolution of a global non-legally binding instrument for all forest types. Since then Africa has been approaching these and similar debates at UNFF with one voice.

Ladies and gentlemen:

Deforestation and forest degradation in our continent remain the challenges that impact on the ability of African countries to address poverty. To this end we also take note of the considerable work AFF has done in providing very useful information from its continent-wide studies. These include studies on the status of forest certification, our capacity to supply tree seeds and seedlings for various afforestation and reforestation programmes, the continent’s ability to provide adequate surveillance on pests and diseases on forests and trees outside forests, the state of the private sector in African forestry, among others. The development of such information has also facilitated the identification of task forces the continent can rely on in addressing such issues, as well as modalities for building requisite capacities in these areas. This information is being used by many on the continent to support evidence-based decision making that could improve the way we manage and use our forest resources sustainably.

Further, AFF has undertaken commendable work on climate change as it relates to African forest resources. We now understand better the interactions of climate change with our forests, and how the forests can enable us to withstand some of adverse effects of climate change. AFF moved with speed to train a critical mass of 574 experts in 16 African countries, Kenya included, to lead and train others on how to assess forest carbon and how to market forest carbon. Further, due to paucity of pedagogically developed information to guide education and training on climate change in forestry, AFF has developed training modules that continue to guide development of relevant curricula and courses. I am informed that AFF has gone a step further to develop, in a pedagogical manner, eight teaching compendiums that will be of invaluable value to lecturers and students at both professional and technical training levels, as well as for guiding implementation of short courses. These will be launched here shortly.

And another important milestone is a book titled “The State of Forestry in Africa: Opportunities and Challenges”. AFF has embarked on a book series titled “The State of Forestry in Africa”, and this is the first issue of such a series. This book will be launched here today.

Ladies and gentlemen:

Let me point out that all the compendiums and the book are the first of their kind globally. I am really pleased that AFF has attracted very wide readership of its published work, and further, many people and institutions already work with such information to shape policies, teaching

curricula, various approaches to teaching, forest management practices, as well as many activities on climate change in forestry. For example, last year there were over 1.5 million visits made to the website of AFF from 141 countries that resulted into downloading 22,608 documents, in addition to opening some 24 million pages. The reach of AFF is therefore beyond the African continent. In the same year of the top ten countries from which people visited the website of AFF, five were from outside the continent, namely USA, China, India, Germany and France.

I therefore wish to congratulate AFF for these and many other achievements and wish to thank all those who have supported the institution during this period like Sida and SDC.

As a parent ministry to AFF in Kenya, let me pledge our continued support to AFF as it looks forward to its next decade.

With these remarks I wish to declare that the 10th Anniversary Celebrations for AFF officially opened.

Thank you.