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H.E.M. Christopher Chika – Deputy Head of Mission, Embassy of the Republic of Kenya

- Ambassadors, Diplomats

Excellencies, distinguished honored guests, ladies and gentlemen,

On behalf of the President of the Addis Ababa University and the university community at large, I would like to thank the organizing committee for giving me the opportunity to make a remark on the 2012 African Environment Day/Wangari Maathai Celebrations Day.

It gives me great pleasure to be among you today on this occasion. The African Environment Day is a reminder to show our gratefulness to Mother Nature, which sustains all forms of life. This is the day to focus our thoughts and our energies to make collective efforts towards protecting the environment.

The African Environment Day is an opportunity for us to raise awareness on the importance of protecting and conserving our ecosystem, and in particular to encourage the preservation of our endemics most of which are found in this region.

We Africans should be proud of our Region's natural bounty, unique bio-diversity and the sustainable and environment friendly development policies we have. Africa is amongst the rare contents where major biodiversity of the world exists. It has rich traditional knowledge and wisdom in the conservation of nature and natural resources. Religious beliefs, culture and folklore have together treated

nature and environment with holiness. Conservation and protection of environment and love for nature have always been part and parcel of Africa's ethos and culture. *yet, Africa is also suffering from environmental degradation.*
Ethiopia as one of the African nations, ^{in spite of} is currently implementing the Growth and transformation development program in order to achieve better quality of life for its citizens. By the realization that mere progress in economic development alone cannot solve all our problems and ensure quality life, our Growth and Transformation Program is designed in environment friendly manner.

The Ethiopian Federal Democratic Republic Constitution provides basic and comprehensive principles and guidelines for environmental protection and management. The Constitution states that everyone has the right to live in a clean and healthy environment and the Government will make every effort to provide such an environment. The Constitution also holds the Government and the people of Ethiopia responsible for the preservation of natural resources and maintenance of ecological balances.

A number of proclamations and supporting regulations were made that contain provisions for the protection and management of the environment which reflect the principles of the Constitution. The most important step in setting up the legal framework for the Environment in Ethiopia has been the establishment of the Environmental Protection Authority (EPA). The Environmental Protection Authority has drawn many policies, programs and activities to conserve biological diversity and to combat environmental degradation. There is now a favorable atmosphere for assisting and empowering grass-root communities to initiate local environmental management including combating desertification and mitigating the effects of drought.

adies and Gentlemen

In this regard, universities, established to promote knowledge and to build a sensible society, are under obligation to disseminate the right ideas. They should teach how to manage the environment in the right way. Universities have to lead in promoting environmental equilibrium. They have a right and a duty to indicate where problems exist. They should look for, find and create tools to solve them. They ought to stimulate society to develop in the proper direction. It is the best possible place to indicate how much we have destroyed the environment already and how quickly degradation is proceeding.

Taking into account the current situation of the natural environment, the Addis Ababa University, the oldest and largest universities in Africa, has taken many initiative for protecting and sustaining development in Ethiopia in particular and in Africa as well as in the World. It has long established programs and institutions which are dedicated to producing Cadres responsible for environmental protection. Furthermore, it also integrated environmental issues in almost all of its programs.

Addis Ababa University has taken such measure by recognizing that, protecting environment apart from political will, start through education by creating a society who is well aware of the fact that his very survival is the results of the interwoven and interconnected interaction of the physical and biological world. In this regards, education will enable to create a sense of responsibility and equip people with necessary knowledge and skills, as to how they should monitor, protect and improve the condition of the environment. This is true to all human being who survive in this planet. In majority it is a result of our own workings. We have to think about future generations' fate. It is required from each of us to act responsibly.

Celebrating Wangari Maathai Day will not only help us understand her contribution to Africa and the world at large in the areas of sound environmental management and sustainable development, but it should motivate us to continue in managing our environment. Thus I call up on all us and all decision makers at national, regional and continental levels to make all efforts to sustain the efforts of Dr. Wangari Maathai of environmental management highlighting climate change as the main factor leading to land degradation and desertification, hunger, deprivation, poverty and underdevelopment in Africa.

Finally, I would like to express AAU's commitment to support Africa's efforts in building resilience to climate change and protecting biodiversity.