



SPEECH BY PROF. JUDI WAKHUNGU, CABINET SECRETARY MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT NATURAL RESOURCES AND REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITIES, DURING THE FIRST MONITORING FOR ENVIRONMENT AND SECURITY IN AFRICA FORUM, 31ST AUGUST 2015 AT CROWNE PLAZA HOTEL, NAIROBI.

H.E. Ambassador (Eng.) Mahboub Maalim, Executive Secretary, Inter-Government Authority on Development (IGAD) Who is also my co-host,

H.E. Mrs Rhoda Peace Tumusiime, Commissioner for Rural Economy and Agriculture – African Union Commission (AUC),

Mrs. Anna BURYLO, Head of Cooperation – European Union (EU) Delegation to the African Union.

H.E. Jean-Claude de I Estrac, Secretary General of the Indian Ocean Commission (IOC), Current Chairperson of the MESA Programme Steering Committee,

Distinguished Guests, Members of the Press,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good Morning,

I would like to first and foremost thank the AUC for inviting me and by extension the Kenya Government to this first international forum on Monitoring for Environment and Security in Africa (MESA). We are delighted to host this great event because it gives us an opportunity to showcase our beloved country Kenya. On behalf of the Government of Kenya, I welcome you all and invite you to interact with the Kenyans, to have a taste of our rich culture and visit the beautiful heritage and tourism attractions we take such pride in. It is my hope that your stay here will be memorable **“Karibu Kenya”**.

Borrowing from the theme of the Forum **“Streamlining MESA products and services towards the decision – making cycle in support of sustainable environmental management”**.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to applaud all the stakeholders in this room from across Africa and the world for the gains they have made towards ensuring our environment is kept clean, health and safe not only for this generation but for many to come.

Your dedication to using earth observation data through the MESA project has not only supported policy but allowed us as Government through various arms to make decisions that impact on our country at a local, county and national level.

From Ghana thorough to Mauritius, the MES Projects continues to provide relevant information to public and private organizations in industries such as Fishing, Agriculture and also Wildlife conservation which for us is much closer to home. As you are aware, Kenya has faced an increase in poaching and deforestation we alongside development partners have worked hard to turn around. With the help of MESA IGAD, the relevant government agencies have implemented the use of open source land mapping tools that enable better use of freely available satellite information for natural habitat conservation assessment.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Before this, my office and team members had to travel physically to protected areas which took several days and incurred huge costs. Thanks to the MESA projects, KWS can now get a snapshot of satellite images of the protected areas on a single page.

That is a clear example of how these technologies and the ones to be discussed here over the next five days impact our everyday lives. The funds saved from such initiatives can be now channeled by Government to further research and innovation towards safeguarding our environment.

It is without a doubt that MESA products and services such as these supports and helps curb widespread illegal, unregulated and unreported activities. Our vision as a Ministry is to provide a clean, healthy, and safe and sustainably managed Environment and Natural Resources which can only be done through partnerships such as these with MESA, AU, and all other development partners present today.

I look forward to hearing more on the systems that have been put in place locally and across the continent to enhance environment governance and security. I humbly encourage you to keep going the extra mile as your projects and ideas are not in vain. It is my belief that from today going forward, the MESA Project will contribute further to the increase of information management, decision-making and planning capacity of African institutions and Governments mandated for Agriculture, Environment, Climate, Fisheries, Food Security and related

responsibilities thereby bringing about long term social and economic impact on our country, continent and the entire world.

As I conclude I want reiterate my Ministry's support towards the MESA project. I also wish to quote Kenya's First Lady of Kenya H.E. MARGARET Kenyatta who said that **'The fragility of the planet is easy to forget in Kenya and Africa as we look at our grand scenery and wildlife, Yet our natural bases, mainly forests, wetlands, dry – lands, aquatic and marine resources are under stress from rapid population growth'**. It is through such initiatives like **MESA** that we will help us not to forget or neglect our environment.

I take this opportunity to wish the participants good deliberations during the forum and to express our deep and profound gratitude to all the organizers of this

form for your efforts. It is my pleasure to declare the “1st MESA Forum” officially open.

Thank you.