



## REPUBLIC OF KENYA

**REMARKS BY REBECCA MIANO, MBS, CABINET SECRETARY, MINISTRY OF EAST AFRICAN COMMUNITY (EAC), ARID AND SEMI-ARID LANDS (ASALS) AND REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT AT THE CLIMATE CHANGE CONFERENCE HOSTED BY THE GLOBAL CENTRE FOR POLICY AND STRATEGY (GLOCEPS), HELD AT VILA ROSA KEMPINSKI HOTEL NAIROBI, KENYA ON THE 22<sup>ND</sup> OF AUGUST 2023.**

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**Chief Guest and National Security Advisor to the President of the Republic of Kenya, (Amb.) Dr Monica Juma, Executive Director-GLOCEPS, Brig. Dr. Robert Kabage, Mayor of Ramat Negev Region, Israel, Hon. Eran Doron The GLOCEPs Fraternity, Climate Change Experts present Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

**Good Morning!**

**Not so long ago**, climate change to a good majority seemed merely an obsession of restless scholars out to explore and test the horizons of science. But not anymore!

**That reality** brings me to a curious assertion made by former US President, Barack Obama during the first session of COP21, the UN Climate Change Summit on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of September 2014 in New York—and I quote—***“We are the first generation to feel the impact of climate change and the last generation that can do something about it.”*** If this still holds true for the experts present in this room this morning then I consider myself to be in the right place.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

**I note** with gratitude that the theme of this conference is **“Shaping the Future of Climate Change Action Plans for Sustainable Development in Eastern Africa.”** The role of the Ministry of East African Community, Arid and Semi-Arid Lands and Regional Development in this quest is clear.

**Let me illustrate.** ASALs occupy upwards of 85 percent of Kenya’s landmass. On the other hand, Regional Development—spurred by Authorities created along or around rivers and large water-body basins—cover every inch of Kenya. In the meantime, my Ministry is in charge of the State Department of the East African Community, an abode of more than 280 million residents occupying a large part of eastern Africa, the geographical arena captured in the theme of this conference.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

**The most readily** available space to plant the 15 billion trees the Kenya Kwanza Government intends to grow by 2032 is obviously in the ASALs. This is especially critical given that according to a recent United Nation’s Climate Action report, *“deforestation, together with agriculture and other land use changes, is responsible for roughly a quarter of global greenhouse gas emissions.”* While the need to cut down trees may be forced by existential logic, failure to undertake rigorous reforestation as an antidote to maintaining a healthy environmental balance in our universe is outright unacceptable.

**Our six** regional bodies have already distinguished themselves as dependable greening agents. Regarding action beyond our borders, the East African Community’s seven Partner States offer an excellent platform of engagement on matters climate change for the larger eastern Africa region.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

**The world of research** has over time embraced co-production of knowledge that brings scientific inquiry to the same table with the wisdom, experience and practices associated with indigenous knowledge more willingly. Our own ASAL folk have a lot to offer on climate change and we should glean the wisdom and experience they have for this sector.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

**The perils** portended by human inaction on matters climate change are potentially catastrophic, as we now know. We should, therefore, take urgent action to avoid experiencing hotter times, severer storms, increased drought, warming and rising oceans, loss of species, inadequate food, more health risks as well as runaway poverty and displacement.

**With such** alarming yet foreseeable eventualities confronting humanity, the question is *how much have we communicated the grimness of unmitigated upshots of climate change and sensitized our young people right from pre-primary school to our tertiary institutions about the same?*

**In conclusion**, I am reminded of Albert Einstein, who once famously said that, *“those who have the privilege to know have a duty to act.”* This room teems with people in the know. What we now need is action. **And the time is now!**

**Thank you.**