

SPEECH BY HER EXCELLENCY MARGARET KENYATTA, THE FIRST LADY OF THE REPUBLIC OF KENYA DURING THE AWARENESS TRAINING ON COMBATING WILDLIFE TRAFFICKING AT KENYA AIRWAYS PRIDE CENTRE ON THURSDAY, MARCH 1, 2018.

Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good afternoon,

It gives me great pleasure to join you here this afternoon to preside over the workshop on Awareness Training on Combating Wildlife Trafficking.

I am delighted to be part of this important initiative, which is part of a wider global effort, to combat wildlife crime, and help break the illegal chains of unlawful transportation of endangered species. We are all here today because we believe in this cause. We all understand the urgency in keeping our wildlife protected.

I congratulate Kenya Airways for being among the airlines that have signed the United for Wildlife International Transportation Taskforce, a Declaration committing to zero tolerance against wildlife trade.

And I applaud the United States Aid Agency (USAID), for the huge investments you have made in addressing the poaching crises, and for brokering this cross sectoral partnership to help countries around the world conserve their wildlife heritage. Through this capacity building initiative, you have recognised the important role international transportation can play in combating wildlife crime, and I am convinced that we will see constructive action and positive progress.

This morning, we have heard how there has been a global decline in wildlife populations. Protecting our natural heritage is becoming an increasingly prominent global issue. Here in Kenya, the leadership, political will, policies and imposition of bans have helped advance our significant progress in the combating wildlife trade. Our efforts have been supported by major campaigns locally and around the world - we have seen active participation by local communities, lobbying groups, non-governmental agencies and the media in spreading awareness.

But we need a synergistic approach, one that harnesses the complimentary capabilities of diverse sectors and groups. We must apply better intelligence, and new methods because pressure is building and countries continue to suffer huge losses.

One of the greatest challenges that we face in wildlife conservation is the sophistication of systems and intelligence that is in the hands of wildlife syndicates around the world. These have impeded the gains we have made in breaking through this illegal industry. We can no longer consider traditional or conservative solutions, we must look at new ways -in this new age of technology and innovation.

We must accelerate our efforts and increase our investments, because our wildlife heritage and invaluable resource is under threat. We must build better and stronger networks that consider all possibilities and close out the loopholes that have allowed the growth of illegal trade.

And so I applaud this initiative that stands out as an innovative measure that includes the global transportation systems to help break these illegal chains of unlawful transportation of endangered species.

The world offers many unique experiences, but none compare to our Kenyan safari, so rich and so diverse. From my work in Hands of Our Elephants, I have learnt that wildlife populations of elephant, rhino, buffalo, giraffe and zebra have been decreasing over the years due to illegal wildlife trafficking and trade. We must ensure that we secure our heritage for our future. For our children's future

There is no doubt that with the concerted efforts of all stakeholders, we can win this war. And so I appeal to other organisations and agencies to join this conservation effort, and to sign up with the United for Wildlife Transport Taskforce Declaration to halt Illegal wildlife trading in our country, in the world.

As we mark the World Wildlife Day on 3rd March, I pledge my ongoing commitment to supporting all those who strive to secure the future of our wildlife heritage.

I wish our participants a successful two days of training in this noble cause.

Thank You