



REPUBLIC OF KENYA

**STATEMENT BY HIS EXCELLENCY WILLIAM
RUTO, C.G.H.; PhD; PRESIDENT AND
COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF OF THE KENYA DEFENCE
FORCES, DURING THE HIGH-LEVEL SEGMENT OF
THE 6TH SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS
ENVIRONMENT ASSEMBLY (UNEA-6)**

FEBRUARY 29TH, 2024

GIGIRI, NAIROBI

Your Excellency Madam Leila Benali, President of UNEA6,

Your Excellency Dennis Francis, President of the United Nations General Assembly,

Your Excellency Paula Narvaez, President of the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations,

Excellencies Heads of State and Government,

Your Excellency Inger Andersen, Executive Director UNEP,

Honourable Ministers, Distinguished delegates,

Ladies and gentlemen,

1. During the Third Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC-3), which was held here in Nairobi last November to develop a global plastic treaty, I promised, in this very hall, to abolish visa requirements for anyone coming to Kenya. We have done exactly that, and it is my delightful honour, on behalf of the people and Government of Kenya, to make this important announcement to you: Welcome home!



2. The sixth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly, UNEA-6, convenes under the theme that aptly captures the essence of what we need to achieve: Given the magnitude and urgency of the existential crisis that humanity and life on our planet is grappling with, only collective action at the multilateral level that is effective, inclusive and sustainable will enable the international community to tackle climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution.
3. Fortunately, we are now aligned in terms of the need to move together rapidly in order to catch up with and overtake this crisis. We are propelled by the momentum of the 2023 COP 28, which took place in Dubai last November and concluded on a hopeful note, with a number of historical decisions.
4. First of all, COP28 emphasised that simultaneous transitioning away from fossil fuels, while tripling renewables and doubling efficiency, is a collective priority. Second, it positioned resilience and adaptation at the centre of climate action, clearly defining the links connecting nature, health, agriculture and food systems chain as well as peace and security. If there was ever any doubt, COP28 confirmed that climate change is no longer to be seen as an abstract concern residing in the distant future, but a real and present danger that requires urgent collective action from all of us.
5. This distinguished assembly, UNEA6, is the first intergovernmental global meeting after COP28. This places upon this Assembly a tremendous responsibility to expeditiously deliver on its agenda in full, and thereby demonstrate the power of international cooperation and effective multilateralism.



This is a challenging task, which is complicated by the fact that nations of the world are all grappling with a dynamic complex of interconnected and multifaceted threats, risks, uncertainties and shocks, ranging from sluggish economic growth, conflict and wars, and geopolitical fragmentation.

6. This situation is exacerbated by an alarming climate change trend whose implications are now impossible to ignore: Record-breaking temperatures, catastrophic droughts and floods, escalating sea levels, landslides, rampant wildfires and severe cyclones which have become frequent and familiar in many regions worldwide.
7. Science is unequivocal that human activities are the primary catalysts for these phenomena. Consequently, as humankind, we are faced with a critical decision: To radically alter our course, or persist on the current path, endangering our very existence.
8. Undoubtedly, we collectively appreciate this predicament, yet our track record on coursecorrecting is mixed.
9. On one hand, undeniable progress has been made on several fronts. At COP28, we operationalized the Loss and Damage Fund to support economic and non-economic losses and damages associated with the adverse effects of climate change in climate-vulnerable developing nations.
10. At the same time, the adoption of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework was pivotal in defining the actions that must be undertaken within this decade in order to curb biodiversity loss by 2030 and set the planet on a path of restoration and recovery.



11. I welcome the progress being made in the ongoing negotiations for a legally binding global agreement aimed at ending plastic pollution, including its detrimental impacts on the marine environment because it brings us closer to mitigating humanity's collective vulnerability to a monumental crisis.
12. These highlights outline the various positive developments and are an eloquent testament to the collective determination and strategic foresight which now inspire our multilateral endeavours.
13. On the other hand, it is important to point out that incremental steps are no longer sufficient in the face of a rapidly escalating threat. We are off-track and off-target when it comes to fulfilling critical parameters on many indicators of action and delivery. Despite increased awareness and efforts, global greenhouse gas emissions are still on the rise. Pollution patterns are veering in an alarming direction, and biodiversity is confronted with multifaceted and escalating threats, along with the risk of an accelerating rate of loss.
14. No economy, community or nation can tackle these challenges single-handedly with any hope of success. Nevertheless, for all of us, all the work must begin at home, with effective domestic measures. In Kenya, the government has instituted a comprehensive institutional framework to anchor decisive interventions across numerous sectors, including energy and pollution, forest conservation and critical landscape restoration, agriculture and food systems, as well as nature and biodiversity. The aim is to proactively reverse the impact of climate change and promote the resilience of our people and economy.



15. I invite you to find time and visit some of the projects in Kenya to witness the passion, commitment, determination and ingenuity our people bring to these endeavours. The understanding that the people are invested in our climate action agenda and that our policies and strategies must make space for their effective participation has inspired the emergence of a bottom-up climate action paradigm in Kenya to complement our BottomUp Economic Transformation Agenda.

16. I take this opportunity to express gratitude and appreciation to all our partners, led by the leadership of the UN system, for supporting us in driving this agenda. I also invite you to mobilise your national leadership as well as the leadership of various institutions in your countries to partner with us in order to develop a broad coalition for effective action. Partnerships are the keys to our collective success.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen;

17. Our present highly challenging circumstances demand transformative global cooperation as a matter of great urgency. From experience, we know that the existing multilateral system is not up to the task. It is imperative for us to confront this truth with honesty, and rectify glaring deficiencies which impede effective multilateralism. Our reform agenda must begin by attending to fundamental structural dimensions to re-align multilateral institutions with core values of the international community, including sovereign equality and effective democratic representation as the basis of enhanced effectiveness and inclusivity. If we fail in this critical endeavour, multilateralism in its present state might falter, struggle and collapse in the face of dire global crises, overwhelmed by pervasive distrust, scepticism and disengagement.



18. The time has come for us to find and apply the levers of transformational change in order to address multiple priorities simultaneously. Last September, Kenya and the African Union Commission (AUC) convened the first Africa Climate Summit here in Nairobi.

The summit culminated in the Nairobi Declaration on Climate Change and Call to Action, which set out our vision for climate-positive economic growth and development on this continent.

19. The summit recognised that our continent has the fundamentals to spearhead progress along a pathway compatible with effective climate action by serving as a cost-competitive industrial hub with the capacity to support other regions in achieving their net-zero ambitions.

20. It also called for the urgent reform of the global financial architecture to rectify its current deficiencies and modernise the entire system to meet the development needs of the majority in the 21st century.

21. African countries, and many other developing countries, pay significantly higher costs - up to 5 times more than others - for our debt. Those seeking investments in private projects face high costs of capital driven by real and imaginary risks. This arbitrary, unjust, discriminatory and unequal state of affairs is untenable given the pressure of time, limited resources and the imperative to actualise a fairer and more inclusive development and responsive global governance.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen;



22. International collaboration is crucial in promoting the adoption of the "reduce, reuse, and recycle" life cycle approaches to waste

that are vital for sustaining the blue economy and its ecosystems. Kenya's response to ban single-use plastics has proved effective. To build on this progress, we are implementing the Green Economy Strategy and Implementation Plan to shift waste management to a circular economy.

23. I urge the global community to advance towards a climate-neutral, resource-efficient, and circular economy. We commend the United Nations Environment Programme, UNEP, for its role in the intergovernmental negotiations for the global plastic treaty. Building on this achievement and in line with promoting efficiency and effectiveness, I urge the global community to support Africa's position that the Secretariat of the treaty be headquartered at UNEP.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen;

24. The current global environmental governance remains fragmented despite the historic agreement at the Rio+20 conference, which calls for the consolidation of UNEP headquarters functions in Nairobi.

25. This governance fragmentation leads to policy inconsistencies, overlaps, inefficiency and wastage in the administration and implementation of Multilateral Environmental Agreements. Addressing environmental issues in this manner diminishes efficiency and effectiveness, undermining our ability to make meaningful change.

26. Therefore, UNEP, as the global body with the mandate to set the environmental agenda, must enhance policy coordination,



integration and coherent implementation of the agreements while honouring each mandate.

27. Likewise, UNEP should provide regular and robust platforms for the exchange of information, knowledge, best practices and lessons learnt among Multilateral Environmental Agreements and stakeholders, fostering consensus and enhancing the science-policy connection.
28. With these important mandates in mind, I note with concern that financing from the UN's regular budget and voluntary funds remain insufficient for UNEP to effectively deliver.
29. I therefore urge the UN General Assembly to secure new, substantial, and reliable funding from its regular budget to provide consistent and sustainable support for UNEP's crucial work. Additionally, I appeal to donors to increase their voluntary contributions, recognizing the urgent and vast scope of current environmental challenges.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen;

30. We have six years left to deliver on the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Unless we collectively undertake radical positive action, we are on course to fail. The obligation falls on each one of us to clearly identify our role in order to define our contribution to the collective endeavour. Each of us must challenge ourselves and one another to unleash and harness our collective creativity and solidarity. May the discussions and engagements in this session mark a significant leap towards this vital goal. I wish you fruitful deliberations.

I thank you.

