



**SPEECH BY H E SUSAN KIHIA, NAKURU COUNTY GOVERNOR,
DURING THE LAUNCH OF TREE PLANTING INITIATIVE IN
NYOTA, KURESOI NORTH ON 23RD OCTOBER, 2025**

Hon Felix Koskei, Head of Public Service

Dr Deborah Barasa, Cabinet Secretary for Environment, Climate Change and Forestry

Dr Festus Ngéno, Principal Secretary, State Department of Environment and Climate Change

Our esteemed partners in conservation,

Fellow leaders from government and civil society,

Residents of Kuresoi,

Ladies and Gentlemen

It is with immense honour and privilege that I stand here today, in the heart of Nyota Ward, not simply to plant trees, but to take part in a transformative and strategic investment in the future of Nakuru County. Today is not just about seedlings going into the ground — it is about planting hope, resilience, and prosperity for generations to come.

This tree planting exercise is part of a larger, national mission — His Excellency the President's bold National Tree Growing and Restoration Campaign, which aims to plant 15 billion trees by the year 2032. This initiative is more than a climate agenda; it is a national renewal strategy that places Kenya at the forefront of global environmental leadership. Here in Nakuru County, we are fully committed to not just meeting our target — but exceeding it.

Why? Because we understand the direct link between the health of our environment and the wellbeing of our people. For us, the equation is simple: More trees mean more water. More water strengthens agriculture. And stronger agriculture translates into greater economic prosperity — especially for a county like ours that stands as both a breadbasket and an industrial hub in Kenya.

Ladies and gentlemen

Kuresoi North and South are uniquely positioned. Nestled along the critical boundary of the Mau Forest Complex — East Africa's largest and most vital water tower — this region plays a key role in sustaining life across multiple ecosystems. The Mau Forest feeds twelve major rivers, nourishing areas as far-reaching as Lake Nakuru and the Maasai Mara–Serengeti ecosystem. We therefore carry a sacred

responsibility to protect this treasure, not just for ourselves, but for the entire region.

Yet, we face undeniable threats to the Mau's survival:

- Unsustainable resource extraction — including deforestation, illegal logging, and charcoal burning.
- Riparian degradation caused by uncontrolled livestock grazing that hinders natural regeneration and erodes soils.
- Water insecurity resulting from environmental degradation, leading to soil erosion, silted rivers, and frequent droughts — threatening the water supply of over 800,000 residents who depend on the Mau.

In response, the County Government of Nakuru has adopted a multi-stakeholder, inclusive approach to conservation. We know that no one can protect our forests alone — partnerships are essential.

We are proud to work with:

- Kenya Forest Service (KFS) – Our lead technical and enforcement partner.
- Rhino Ark Charitable Trust – Supporting conservation fencing and community boundary management.
- SNV Netherlands Development Organisation – Promoting zero-grazing and sustainable livelihoods.
- WWF, Unilever Tea Kenya, James Finlay Kenya, and others through the IDH Initiative for Sustainable Landscapes (ISLA) – driving large-scale, landscape-level interventions.

Our conservation efforts are not abstract ideals. They are tied directly to tangible improvements in people's lives. In both Kuresoi North and South, we have made major investments in the water sector to reduce community reliance on forest resources:

In Kuresoi North:

- 9 boreholes drilled
- 4 boreholes equipped and solarized
- 7 storage tanks installed
- Over 60 km of pipeline laid
- 2 springs protected
- Over 23,100 residents benefiting from improved access to clean water

In Kuresoi South:

- 3 boreholes drilled
- 5 boreholes equipped and solarized
- 4 storage tanks installed
- Nearly 35 km of pipeline completed
- 7 springs protected
- Over 18,400 residents served

Through the Financing Locally Led Climate Action (FLLoCA) program, we are also empowering local communities to lead the charge in climate action. Let me highlight a few examples:

Kuresoi North:

- Chesirikwa Water Project (Nyota) – Water supply and catchment afforestation serving 3,000 residents
- Agricultural Aggregation Centre (Sirikwa) – 95 percent complete, supporting 1,000 farmers
- Kiboko Spring Restoration (Kamara) – Water tank, spring rehabilitation and tree planting for 5,000 beneficiaries
- Potato Eco-Cool Hub (Kiptororo) – A 50-tonne cold storage facility to reduce post-harvest losses for 1,000 farmers

Kuresoi South:

- Kapselele Spring (Kiptagich) – Protected and fenced, with a water kiosk for public access
- Kapkembu Water Project (Tinet) – Phase one complete, phase two to equip and expand
- Kitoben Borehole (Amalo) – Solarized and equipped to serve over 2,000 people
- Chebara Water Project (Keringet) – Providing sustainable water to 2,500 residents through solarization and reforestation

Ladies and gentlemen

Looking ahead, we will crown our commitment through the upcoming Mau Conservation Marathon, which will be launched right here in Kuresoi North by His Excellency the President. This will mark the beginning of the Mau Forest Complex Integrated Conservation and Livelihood Improvement Programme (MCF-ICLIP)

— a Sh 21.5 billion, 10-year flagship program aiming to restore 33,000 hectares of degraded forest. The results will include:

- Large-scale ecological restoration
- Creation of thousands of green jobs
- Promotion of clean energy alternatives
- Enhanced national water, food, and energy security

Conservation is not a one-time event or a one-generation mission. It is a legacy — a relay baton passed from one generation to the next. This is why we are embedding environmental education into our schools. Every school in Nakuru County is being transformed into a living nursery — a space where young minds not only learn but also grow trees, cultivating both knowledge and sustainability.

At the same time, we are equipping Generation Z — our tech-savvy, innovative youth — to become champions of green entrepreneurship. From nature-based enterprises to renewable energy and recycling innovations, we are turning environmental protection into a source of opportunity and employment.

In conclusion, every tree we plant today is a living promise — a promise of clean water, food security, climate resilience, and shared prosperity. This is not just about planting trees — it is about planting a future. Let us move conservation out of boardrooms and into our farms, our homes, our schools, and our daily lives. I thank you, Hon Felix Koskei, for standing with us in this noble endeavour. Your presence is a true testament to the national priority that is environmental conservation.

Thank you

H E SUSAN KIIHIKA, EGH

GOVERNOR, NAKURU COUNTY