



**SPEECH BY H E SUSAN KIIHIKA, NAKURU COUNTY GOVERNOR,
DURING THE WOMEN'S MEETING AND SCHOOL KITCHEN GARDEN
LAUNCH UNDER THE MAU FOREST COMPLEX INTEGRATED
CONSERVATION AND LIVELIHOOD IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME
(MFC-ICLIP) AT BARINGO PRIMARY SCHOOL IN, KURESOI NORTH,
NAKURU COUNTY ON 25TH JUNE, 2026**

H E Mama Rachel Ruto, The First Lady of the Republic of Kenya,

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

Mrs Hannah Cheptumo, the Cabinet Secretary for Gender, Culture, the Arts and Heritage,

Ambassador Dr Ida Odinga, the Permanent Representative to UNON and UNEP,

Dr Eng Festus Ngéno, the Principal Secretary, State Department for Environment and Climate Change, and Patron of the Mau Forest Complex Integrated Conservation and Livelihood Improvement Programme (MFC-ICLIP),

Principal Secretaries present

Honourable Members of Parliament present ,

Distinguished Guests,

All Women Present Today,

Teachers and Pupils,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good Morning.

1. It is a great pleasure and honour to welcome you, Your Excellency Mama Rachel Ruto, to Baringo Primary School in the great County of Nakuru.
2. On behalf of the people and the County Government of Nakuru, I sincerely thank you for honouring us with your presence today. Your continued

commitment to environmental conservation, food security, and community empowerment inspires many across our nation.

3. I also take this opportunity to warmly welcome all participants gathered here. Your presence reflects our shared commitment to protecting our natural heritage, strengthening climate resilience, and improving the livelihoods of communities that depend on our forests and natural resources.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

4. As we gather today, I wish to particularly acknowledge and commend the visionary leadership of the Principal Secretary for the State Department for Environment and Climate Change, Dr Eng Festus Ng'eno, in conceptualizing the Mau Forest Complex Integrated Conservation and Livelihood Improvement Programme (MFC-ICLIP). His dedication, stewardship, and unwavering commitment demonstrate the transformative power of strategic partnerships in advancing environmental conservation while creating meaningful economic opportunities for communities living around our forest ecosystems.
5. Your Excellency, the Mau Forest Complex remains one of the most important natural resources in both Nakuru County and Kenya as a whole. As the country's largest water tower, it serves as a critical ecological asset that sustains livelihoods, biodiversity, and economic activity across vast regions. The forest plays a vital role in sustaining the Njoro, Makalia, Naishi, and Nderit rivers, all of which drain into Lake Nakuru—one of our county's most treasured natural landmarks.
6. Lake Nakuru is globally renowned for its rich biodiversity and its iconic flamingos, which have become an enduring symbol of Nakuru County and a major attraction for visitors from around the world. The health and sustainability of Lake Nakuru are directly linked to the ecological integrity of the Mau Forest Complex. Protecting and restoring the Mau is therefore not merely an environmental responsibility; it is an economic, social, and cultural necessity that will secure the wellbeing of present and future generations.
7. Your Excellency, I am greatly encouraged by the achievements realized under the first phase of MFC-ICLIP. Through the Trees Establishment and Livelihood Improvement Scheme (TELIS), the programme has transformed the conservation landscape by providing sustainable income-generating opportunities that reduce pressure on forest resources while improving household incomes among forest-adjacent communities.
8. These gains have been further strengthened through investments in complementary value chains, including potato farming, beekeeping, dairy

production, and avocado cultivation, all of which have enhanced economic opportunities for participating households.

9. The programme's circular economy component has also promoted sustainable waste management practices within our learning institutions. The provision of waste bins to schools across the Mau Forest Complex, including Baringo Primary School, has laid a strong foundation for environmental stewardship among learners and created opportunities for future sustainability initiatives.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

10. Today also offers us an opportunity to reflect on the remarkable progress made by MFC-ICLIP since its official launch by the President of the Republic of Kenya on 27th October 2025. During that historic launch, H E President Dr William Samoei Ruto personally adopted a section of forest land for restoration, underscoring the national importance of conserving and rehabilitating the Mau Forest Complex.
11. As the Governor of Nakuru County, I reaffirm our unwavering commitment to supporting both the objectives and implementation of this transformative programme. We recognize that the success of MFC-ICLIP extends far beyond environmental conservation. It is fundamental to strengthening climate resilience, enhancing water security, protecting biodiversity, and securing sustainable livelihoods for our people.
12. Nakuru County Government will continue working closely with the National Government, development partners, local communities, and all stakeholders to strengthen conservation efforts, promote community participation, and create an enabling environment for the programme to achieve its full potential.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

13. As I conclude, I urge all of us to remain steadfast in our commitment to restoring and protecting the Mau Forest Complex. Every tree planted, every hectare restored, and every livelihood improved brings us one step closer to a more prosperous, resilient, and sustainable future.
14. Together, let us continue investing in the protection of this invaluable ecosystem for the benefit of Nakuru County, our nation, and generations yet to come.

Thank you.

H E SUSAN KIIHIKA, EGH

GOVERNOR, NAKURU COUNTY