



**SPEECH FOR H E SUSAN KIIHIKA, NAKURU
COUNTY GOVERNOR, DURING THE LAUNCH OF
THE MAU FOREST COMPLEX INTEGRATED
CONSERVATION AND LIVELIHOOD
IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM AT GACHARAGE IN
KURESOI NORTH ON 27TH OCTOBER, 2025**

**Your Excellency, Hon Dr William Samoei Ruto, the
President of the Republic of Kenya,
Dr Debora Barasa, Cabinet Secretary for Environment,
Climate Change and Forestry,
Eng Festus Ngéno, Principal Secretary for Environment
and Climate Change,
Members of Parliament Present
Distinguished Guests,
Fellow Leaders,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

It is distinct honour and pleasure, on behalf of the great people of Nakuru County, to warmly welcome you, Your Excellency, to this historic occasion — the launch of the Mau Forest Complex Integrated Conservation and Livelihood Improvement Program.

Indeed, today marks a significant milestone in our collective journey to protect the ecological integrity of the Mau Forest—Kenya's largest water tower and a life-sustaining

resource for millions of our citizens. Today, we gather not only to plant trees but to restore hope. Not only to protect land, but to safeguard life itself. Today, we reclaim the soul of our environment — the heartbeat of our rivers, the lungs of our nation, and the promise of a sustainable future for generations yet unborn.

Your Excellency, the Mau Forest is the fountain of life that nourishes rivers such as the Sondu, Mara, Njoro, Molo, and Ewaso Nyiro. These rivers sustain millions — from the farmers of Bomet and Nakuru, to the wildlife that grace the plains of the Maasai Mara, and communities that rely on Lake Victoria's bounty. To conserve Mau is to secure food, to stabilize climate, to protect energy sources, and to preserve the very essence of our people's survival.

Yet over the years, this great ecosystem has been under immense threat — from deforestation, encroachment, and unsustainable land use. We have witnessed rivers that once roared turn into whispers, and rainfall patterns that once sustained our farms become unpredictable. But today, Your Excellency, we say: Enough is enough. Today, we mark a turning point — a renewal of our collective responsibility to heal and protect this invaluable heritage.

Ladies and gentlemen

We as Nakuru County Government, Your Excellency, have declared forest conservation and environmental stewardship are central pillars of our development agenda. At the county level, we have already begun to take bold, data-driven action. We have installed real-time air quality monitoring sensors across Nakuru County. These tools allow us to track pollution levels, make informed decisions, and safeguard both public health and our environment. But this is just the beginning. Our broader environmental protection strategy rests on three core objectives:

- **Restoration of Degraded Forests:** We are committed to restoring 60,000 hectares of degraded forest land by the year 2030. This ambitious goal will be achieved through strong partnerships with local communities, conservation organizations, and the private sector—blending traditional knowledge with modern conservation science.
- **Promotion of Sustainable Livelihoods:** We believe conservation must go hand-in-hand with economic empowerment. By engaging communities in eco-tourism, agroforestry, and other sustainable enterprises, we aim to reduce dependence on harmful practices while enhancing incomes and building resilience.
- **Enhancing Community Engagement:** True conservation starts at the grassroots. We are working

to ensure that communities are not only informed but fully involved in conservation decisions. This fosters a culture of ownership, responsibility, and long-term stewardship.

Your Excellency, we understand that protecting the Mau cannot be done by government alone. It demands the unity of all — national and county governments, communities, and partners. Nakuru County stands ready as a partner — a model of how local action can drive national transformation. From clean energy to wetland restoration, solid waste management, and innovative green enterprises, we are determined to build a county that leads by example.

Your Excellency, through the Lake Nakuru Catchment Restoration Program, we are reviving the Njoro, Makalia, and Nderit rivers, complementing Mau restoration efforts to ensure that the waters flowing into Lake Nakuru National Park remain pure and abundant.

We are also investing in alternative livelihoods to reduce dependence on forest resources — through climate-smart agriculture, agroforestry, energy-saving cookstoves, and biogas adoption. Through the Youth in Green Economy Initiative, hundreds of young people have been engaged in seedling production, tree planting, and waste recycling — restoring the environment while earning a living.

Ladies and gentlemen

Beyond conservation, our administration continues to invest in our most precious resource — our people. In education, we have disbursed Sh29,037,885 to 6,397 bright but needy students at various levels in Kuresoi North. We have constructed 13 new ECDE classrooms, and under the Uji Program, which has significantly boosted school enrolment, 9,795 ECDE learners are benefitting from daily nutritious porridge. We also continue to provide Sh30 capitation per learner in our Vocational Training Centres (VTCs), equipping our young people with practical skills to participate in the growing green economy.

In healthcare, we are transforming access and quality of service. We are constructing the first-ever Level 4 Hospital in Kuresoi North at Kiptororo Centre, which is now 35 percent complete. After ten years of closure, we have reopened the Githima Dispensary, bringing healthcare closer to the people. We are also proud to have 239 Community Health Promoters in this area, working tirelessly at the grassroots to promote preventive health and community wellness.

To support local enterprise, we have provided Sh2.1 million in low-interest loans to 14 groups through our Wezesha Fund, empowering small businesses and cooperatives. We have installed a 3,000-litre milk cooler at Mukasu

Cooperative, ensuring farmers get better returns. Under the Economic Stimulus Program, the construction of ultra-modern markets is ongoing at Total Area in Kamara and Seguton Centre in Nyota.

In infrastructure, we are carrying out cabro paving at Kuresoi Trade Centre, and constructing roads such as Amani–Sundu River, Kongoi–Chebuyet–Kiplongony, alongside extensive piping and drainage works to improve connectivity and resilience. We have completed 15 water projects serving over 10,000 families, ensuring clean and reliable water access.

To strengthen agricultural value chains, we have constructed 5 tea buying centres, distributed 19,947 avocado seedlings, and 2,180,075 pyrethrum seedlings. We have vaccinated more than 28,000 animals, distributed over 8,000 fertilizer bags, and provided Artificial Insemination kits to 7 cooperative societies to enhance livestock productivity.

Further, land ownership and tenure security are progressing, with 180 families at Lagwenda Settlement Scheme and 100 plot owners at Sitoito Trading Centre in Nyota currently undergoing title deed processing.

In Conclusion, this integrated conservation and livelihood program that you are launching today breathes new life into this shared vision. It ensures that conservation is not

exclusion, but inclusion; not punishment, but opportunity. As we restore forests, let us also restore dignity. As we rebuild ecosystems, let us also rebuild livelihoods. As we plant trees, let us plant hope.

Thank you

H E SUSAN KIIHIKA, EGH

GOVERNOR, NAKURU COUNTY

