

REMARKS DELIVERED BY AMB (DR.) AMINA MOHAMED, EGH, CAV, CABINET SECRETARY FOR EDUCATION, DURING THE OPENING CREMONY OF THE 27TH INTERNATIONAL PRIMATOLOGICAL SOCIETY CONGRESS, 20TH AUGUST 2018

**Joyce Msuya, Deputy Executive Director, United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP),
Dr. Karen Strier, President of the International Primatological Society,
Excellencies,
Country Representatives,
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

It gives me great pleasure to join you at this **“XXVII (27th) International Primatological Society Congress.”** This event comes at the right time, a time when Kenya is implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, with special emphasis on **Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 15** which aims to protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, halt and reverse land degradation and put an end to biodiversity loss, components which have a direct impact on the survival of primates.

It has been said, "**that even if mankind can go on without them, a piece of our vibrantly diverse world dies with each species.**" That's why ladies and gentlemen the work you all do on conservation is so critically important and urgent.

Today here with us is a gentleman who has worked diligently throughout his life on our behalf on conservation. Dr. Richard Leakey was instrumental in the establishment and development of the **Institute of Primate Research (IPR)** in Kenya. Daktari, your role and that of others who helped create the **IPR** is of great value to our country and beyond, and for our children who now have occasion to learn, see and understand primates. We owe you a debt of gratitude.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Primate research and conservation is spread in habitats across our country. In western Kenya, the tropical Kakamega rainforest which is a UNESCO World Heritage Centre is home to the Black-and-white Colobus (*Colobus guereza*) monkey, the Red-tailed Monkey (*Cercopithecus ascanius schmidti*), and a small number of de brazza monkey (*Cercopithecus neglectus*). Amboseli hosts the yellow baboon, Ol Pejeta Conservancy has a Chimpanzees Centre, in the Northern Region, we have the Mathews Mountain Range primate project and along the coast, the

Tana River red Colubus and Diani primate projects, among others.

It is encouraging to note that there is active community participation in all these projects and local communal ownership and support. Because as you well know the greatest threats to the survival of primates is climate change and human behavior. 370 out of 500 species are changing behavior in response to climate change (UNEP, 2015). Primates are no exception. We are witnessing unprecedented destruction of primate habitat, fragmentation of their populations, illegal trade and trade in their byproducts. According to IUCN, one in every four primates is threatened or endangered while some species are on the brink of extinction. That's where local ownership comes in.

As aptly stated by Wayne Trotman **“societies that lack respect for animals eventually lose respect for human beings”** We are getting very close to that tipping point, given the manner in which we interact and relate to each other.

Like in most other areas, education, science, research, technology and innovation will be instrumental in addressing the challenges that we face. Introducing and/or enhancing conservation education at institutions of basic and tertiary education is fundamental in increasing

awareness, change attitude and in encouraging and inspiring sustainable behavior.

Kenya's Science, Technology and Innovation (ST&I) framework emphasizes the need for a functional innovation system to create knowledge in all fields including environment and ecological research. It also establishes the National Research Fund (NRF) to mobilise and manage resources for research and development.

We will immediately commence discussions on investing some of our resources in primate conservation and to supporting the existing centres of primate research in the country. We will and must continue. Let's all be the humming birds of Wangari Mathai **"let's do the best that we can do."** After all that's all that is asked of us. Let's place education at the heart of Global, regional and national primate conservation strategies. It's been said that Education after all is the difference between progress and catastrophe.

I wish you fruitful deliberations let's continue moving the bar.

Thank you very much