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Mau Forests Complex

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UPDATE ON REHABILITATION OF THE MAU FORESTS COMPLEX

Nairobi – 24 June 2010: Over the last few months, the Interim Coordinating Secretariat on the rehabilitation of the Mau Forests Complex has focused its activities on the following:

- a) Profiling of settlers in Maasai Mau forest towards providing a just and fair solution to the settlers residing in that forest;
- b) Supporting minority groups in the Mau, in particular the Ogiek, to ensure that they can also engage with the Government and its partners towards the rehabilitation of the Mau and the development of their livelihoods;
- c) Rehabilitating degraded forest areas in the Mau by building partnerships with stakeholders, including development partners, non-governmental organisations, the private sector and relevant government bodies;
- d) Surveying and demarcating of the forest boundaries; and,
- e) Securing additional resources to support the long term management of the Mau ecosystem and the services it provides to the entire region.

Profiling of settlers in Maasai Mau forest

The relocation of settlers in the Maasai Mau forest, as well as in the other forest blocks, will take place once the analysis of the land ownership is completed and arrangements for compensation and resettlement are in place.

The process will be undertaken within the laws of Kenya, with regard to the rights of the affected settlers and in accordance with Mau Task Force Report recommendations as approved by the Cabinet and Parliament.

To date, the Secretariat has completed the profiling of the settlers residing inside the Maasai Mau Trustland Forest. The collected data is being analysed. With the support of its Committee of Legal Experts, the Secretariat is continuing with the analysis the validity of the title deeds and the eligibility for compensation. The analysis and the establishment of the arrangements for compensation are likely to take several months.

Supporting minority groups

The Secretariat has completed the process towards assisting the Ogiek community in establishing its representative institutions. On 1st April 2010, a sixty-member Ogiek Council of Elders was officially launched.

The Ogiek Council of Elders held its first meeting on 18 June 2010. The event was marked by the adoption of the procedure to establish an Ogiek register. Such register will help strengthen the identity of the Ogiek community and assist in planning for their livelihood development. The register is expected to be published towards mid September.

New partnerships towards the rehabilitation of degraded forest areas

Two organisations have signed three-year agreements with the Kenya Forest Service to rehabilitate sections of Mau Forests Complex. They are: African Wildlife Foundation (13,500 acres) and Malaika Ecotourism & Coral Cay Conservation UK (375 acres). Others are finalising such agreements, including James Finlay (K) Ltd. (250 acres) and Save the Mau Trust Fund (21,518 acres).

The Ministry of Energy and the Ministry of State for Defence are in an advance stage in the consideration of signing an agreement with the Kenya Forest Service to rehabilitate 47,500 and 2,500 acres, respectively.

Surveying and demarcating forest boundaries

The survey of the boundaries of Eburru Forest Reserve has been completed. The Secretariat has secured funds for the survey of four forest blocks: Transmara and South Western Mau (USAID) and Maasai Mau (Narok County Council) and Ol Pusimoru (Kenya Forest Service). The survey of these four forest blocks is progressing well, although at a slower pace in order to enable the necessary sensitization of the communities living

along the boundaries. The survey of five additional forest blocks in the northern part of the Mau is likely to be funded by the European Union.

Securing additional resources

The Secretariat has continued to raise the interest of development partners in supporting the rehabilitation of the Mau forest ecosystem.

A second Strategic Partners Consultative Forum was convened jointly by the Government and UNEP on 5 May 2010 at UNEP Headquarters. The forum gathered over 100 strategic partners to towards securing their support to the rehabilitation efforts in the Mau.

To date, one project has been agreed upon and is now being implemented. It concerns the funding by USAID (Kshs 19 million) of the survey and demarcation of the forest boundaries in Transmara and South Western Mau. Three other project proposals are being developed / finalized:

- a) *European Union*. A EU project proposal for an amount of Euro 2.3 million has been developed with support UNEP. The project was approved by the European Commission in May 2010. The project is likely to be signed in July/August 2010.
- b) *USAID*. A proposal for the rehabilitation of the upper catchments of the Mara River is being developed by USAID with technical advice from ICS. A team of experts was sent in late February/early March 2010 to make the necessary pre-assessments. The findings of the team of experts were presented and discussed during a USAID workshop held on 9 March 2010. A new team has been set up by USAID to design the project document based on the pre-assessments. The new team is working closely with ICS.
- c) *Agence française pour le développement (AFD---French Development Agency)*. Following the mission of one of its expert from Paris, AFD has developed a concept document with a focus on (i) resources assessment for the entire Mau Forests Complex and (ii) rehabilitation of Eastern Mau Forest Reserve, including the forestland repossessed during Phase I. The project is intended to include a grant of Euro 2 million, as well as approx. Euro 10 million to be generated through carbon credits.

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Notes to the editors:

In mid 2008, the Government embarked into a systematic approach towards resolving the complexity of issues in the Mau, while involving the large range of concerned stakeholders. A multi-stakeholder Task Force was established to assess, build consensus and make recommendations on the rehabilitation of the Mau.

The report of the Task Force was completed and submitted to the Government in March 2009. It was approved by the Cabinet on 30 July 2009 and Parliament on 15 September 2009.

In line with the Task Force recommendations, an Interim Coordinating Secretariat was established in the Office of the Prime Minister in September 2009. The mandate of the Interim Coordinating Secretariat is primarily to coordinate the implementation of the Mau Task Force recommendations. This coordination is to ensure an orderly, systematic and timely implementation involving the relevant Government's Ministries and stakeholders. The actual implementation is carried out by the relevant Ministries and stakeholders based on their mandate and capacity.

Progress made during Phases I and II

The first two phases of the repossession of forestland in the Mau are almost complete. Phase I concerned the repossession of three forest areas that were excised from Eastern Mau Forest Reserve in 2001, but were yet to be allocated or occupied. The Government is at an advanced stage in the process of re-gazetting two of these areas. The third area, called Mariashoni, has been traditionally inhabited by Ogiek. The Interim Coordinating Secretariat is setting up a committee to work with the Ogiek in the rehabilitation of that forest area.

Phase II concerned the repossession of approx. 19,000 hectares in South Western Mau Forest Reserve of largely bamboo forest that have been encroached by illegal squatters. These squatters had no documentation to support their occupation of the forest. In

addition, the area encroached has never been set aside by the Government for settlement. It is still and remains a protected forest reserve.

The repossession of the 19,000 hectares was completed last December. The removal of the squatters took place peacefully, with the squatters leaving voluntarily the forest and the forest guards providing assistance. However, the return of the squatters to their former homes was stopped by some political leaders who demanded that the squatters be resettled or compensated. This was not provided for in the Mau Task Force report as it would create a dangerous and unsustainable precedent that would encourage people all over the country to invade government land in the hope of compensation. The Government has, however, mobilized several Ministries to assist the squatters returning to their home and to provide livelihood support to help them rebuild their lives.

To date, some 21,000 hectares of forestland in the Mau have been repossessed since the implementation of the Task Force report started some seven months ago.

In addition to the recovering of forestland, the Government has implemented a number of activities in support of the restoration of the Mau forest ecosystem, in particular with regard to: water catchment management; forest restoration including tree planting; law enforcement; Ogiek resettlement matters; and, resource mobilization.
