

**SPEECH BY HON. DR. NOAH WEKESA, EGH, MP, MINISTER FOR FORESTRY AND WILDLIFE ON THE BRANDING OCCASION OF HELL'S GATE/LONGONOT NATIONAL PARKS ON 25<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER, 2009 AT THE HELL'S GATE NATIONAL PARK STARTING 10.00 A.M.**

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**Hon. Joshat Nanok, MP**, Assistant Minister,  
Ministry of Forestry and Wildlife,

**Mr. M.A.M Wa-Mwachai**, Permanent Secretary,  
Ministry of Forestry and Wildlife,

**Hon. David Mwiraria**, Chairman,  
Kenya Wildlife Service Board of Trustees

**Representative Provincial Administration,  
Rift valley Province**

**Dr. Julius Kipngetch**, Director, Kenya Wildlife Service

**Management Committee Representative**

**Distinguished Guests**

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

It is with great pleasure to preside over the branding of Hell's Gate and Longonot National parks. In line with Vision 2030, KWS has set objectives to increase the number of tourists into the Parks, and the branding exercise is one such strategy. By giving the parks a face lift, the aim is to ensure that visitor experience is unforgettable. This has been done through rehabilitation of visitor infrastructure, including the gates, roads, signage and other campsite facilities. These have been done with the visitor in mind. I wish to congratulate KWS for the excellent efforts in this regard.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,** Hell's Gate and Longonot National Parks are ideally positioned as fun parks, with their numerous tourist activities. These include horse riding, mountain and rock climbing, cycling, game viewing and bird watching. Recently, we participated in the *'To Hell's Gate on a Wheelbarrow'* race, which turned out to be quite a fulfilling experience.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,** Hell's Gate is also famous for hot natural geysers (after which the park gets its name), spectacular geographic scenery from towering cliffs that give an awesome view of the Rift Valley, volcanic gorges, belching plumes of geothermal steam and the Olkaria geothermal power station among other magnificent geographic sceneries that leave our visitors well satisfied. Several community projects have also been carried out in this area. They include:-

- 1) Construction of an administration block at Eleri Primary School in an effort of promoting peace.
- 2) Rehabilitation of Narasha Cattle Dip in order to improve livelihoods of the surrounding Community.
- 3) Purchase of 60 Bee Hives for communities in the dispersal area to provide alternative livelihoods and to curb bush meat and promote tolerance to PAC.

- 4) Rehabilitation of Narasha – Suswa Road in collaboration with Narok County Council to boost tourism. This road will serve as a new tourist circuit to Maasai Mara game reserve. This will surely enable visitors from Nakuru and Naivasha access the Maasai Mara within the shortest time possible.

The need to involve stakeholders cannot be over-emphasized. My Ministry wishes to acknowledge the overwhelming support provided for the branding of this park by the local communities who have accepted to harbor and live with our wildlife within their farms and neighbourhood. I urge them to increase their stake in eco-tourism to ensure they get the most out of it. Additionally, I wish to acknowledge support from the:-

1. Park Management Committee;
2. Kijani Trust that funded the water project to the Park through funds (1.7 m) raised through staging of an Opera in the Park; and
3. Friends of the Park namely: Kengen, Or-Power, 4 Inc., Homegrown, Gorge and Nini farms, among others who have continuously supported the development and improvement of infrastructure within the park.

Hell's Gate National Park which is home to over 67,000 wild animals with less than 5% of them permanently based in the protected area faces quite a number of conservation challenges mainly drought. The current drought situation has an adverse effect on the wildlife; they include reduced crop and forest productivity, reduced water levels in the park and increased wildlife death rates. With such impacts most animals move for long distances in search for food and water to save their lives.

Some end up moving out of the parks and face extinction by predators and poachers hence most species end up being wiped out. Again this creates human-wildlife conflict where both parties scramble for the available necessities.

On this note, I would like to thank The Kenya Wildlife Service for their initiative of providing water artificially to the wildlife especially during the prolonged drought period in the country. This initiative has helped curb the migration and enhanced their survival.

**Ladies and Gentlemen**, on the human-wildlife conflict my Ministry through Kenya Wildlife Service has and will continue finding ways of how humans and wildlife could harmoniously live in proximity to each other through creating awareness and educating communities adjacent to the parks.

In conclusion Ladies and Gentlemen, I urge Kenyans to step up conservation efforts, and especially rehabilitation of our forests. ***As we deplete water for the wildlife, we deny ourselves this vital commodity as well. The time to start re-habilitating our forests is Now.***

Our country is truly endowed with beauty in all its forms. The best we can do is to appreciate this natural beauty and guard it jealously for generations to come after us. I urge all of us to visit these parks and see for ourselves what we have at our doorsteps. As tourists come from far and wide to visit, let us be the ones explaining to them our heritage, with pride!

With these remarks, I wish to declare Hell's Gate/Longonot National Parks officially branded.

**Thank you!**