

ITS ONE-DAY FREE PARK ENTRY AS KENYANS MARCH FOR ENDANGERED SPECIES

Tourism and Wildlife Cabinet Secretary Hon Najib Balala Sunday (April 14, 2019) a free entry-day for Kenyan citizens to three Nairobi wildlife areas.

Hon Balala allowed Kenyans free access to Nairobi National Park, Nairobi Animal Orphanage and Nairobi Safari Walk as a token of appreciation for their support for wildlife conservation.

He made the announcement at the end of the 5th edition of the Global March for Elephants, Rhinos, Lions and other endangered species at the Kenya Wildlife Service headquarters in Nairobi. He called for international support for Kenya's proposals on elephants and giraffes at next month's Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES).

The 2018 Nairobi Global March for Elephants, Rhinos and Lions was postponed in order to highlight this year's CITES meeting to be held from May 23 to June 3. This is an international agreement between governments, which aims to ensure that international trade in specimens of wild animals and plants does not threaten their survival.

Hon Balala said he recently met with five European Union ministers to lobby for their support for Kenya's CITES proposals when the world will make important decisions to govern regulation of international trade in endangered species of wild animals and plants.

He called on other countries to support Kenya's proposals to strengthen efforts to ban international trade in rhinoceros horns and elephant ivory, respectively. He also urged Parties to CITES to close all domestic markets for raw and worked rhinoceros horn and elephant ivory or other rhinoceros and elephant parts and derivatives as a matter of urgency.

The demand for elephant ivory, rhino horn, pangolin scales and other wildlife products in the Asian market continues to be a growing concern and threat to the existence of wildlife. The march calls upon governments, the civil society, grassroot communities and all stakeholders to be proactive and collaborative in order to ensure the survival of elephants, rhinos and other endangered species.

The slightly over 10km march walk across Nairobi City from the National Museums of Kenya (NMK) to Kenya Wildlife Service was led by Hon Balala and other dignitaries, including the Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS) vice chairperson Betty Maitoyo, KWS Director General Brig. (Rtd) John Waweru, Kenya Tourism Board Managing Director Betty Radier, Tourism Regulatory Authority Director General Kipkorir Lagat and WildlifeDirect CEO Paula Kahumbu.

Hon Balala commended the youth for the massive conservation support and promised to include more youths in his ministry. "I am very impressed with our youths who have showed up in large numbers to show the world that there's no room for wildlife trade," he said.

He praised KWS for recent successes in the management and protection of wildlife, noting that Kenya hosts three out of four species of giraffes. Out of a global population of 90,000 giraffes, 35000 are in Kenya. Last year, only 38 elephants had been lost through poaching compared to 384 in 2012. During the same period, only four rhinos were illegally killed compared to 69 in the year 2013.