

## **KWS ACQUIRES A NEW FLEET OF VEHICLES TO AID CONSERVATION**

Kenya wildlife Service has acquired a fleet of 26 vehicles to be used for rapid response to human-wildlife conflicts and parks management. Twenty one of these will be used to facilitate officers address human wildlife conflict, four for security operations, while one will be used by researchers.

The vehicles form part of KWS force modernization programme which is in tandem with the organization's strategic plan 2017-2022. The vehicles will also complement other measures in conservation activities, including the recently launched 43 kilometers wildlife fence in Rumuruti, Laikipia County, the ongoing Mount Kenya fencing, Meru Park, and the proposed Alia Kasigau fence in TaitaTaveta County.

It is anticipated that the motor vehicles will significantly aid in reducing human-wildlife conflicts, improve security and research around the country. The new fleet of vehicles was procured from internal savings from revenue generated by the organization. Earlier this year KWS acquired another 26 vehicles through assistance from USAID.

Tourism and Wildlife Cabinet Secretary, Najib Balala officially handed over the vehicles to field stations across the country at a brief ceremony at KWS headquarters in Nairobi. He said his ministry in consultation with the national Treasury will explore ways of enhancing financial allocation to KWS to purchase necessary equipment for conservation activities and to facilitate pending compensation claims.

The Cabinet Secretary added his ministry will work with other stakeholders in the wildlife conservation and tourism industry through structured

engagement in seeking solutions to mitigate human-wildlife conflicts, which remains one of the biggest challenges in wildlife conservation in Kenya.

“My ministry takes a keen interest in wildlife conservation, protection and management because it is an important pillar that supports the “Big four” government agenda”, he said. He added “control of human-wildlife conflicts through crop protection and predation from wild carnivores cushions farmers from crop and livestock losses, ensuring food security in the country”.

The Cabinet secretary challenged KWS to deploy all resources at her disposal to address human-wildlife conflicts as it was giving the organization a bad name. He also urged the management to strive to re-engineer the organization’s parks and reserves in terms of products and services offered to stave off stiff competition from private conservancies for tourists.

Mr. Balala reiterated that conservation, protection and research of wildlife are important for promoting tourism, which is a critical sector in generating foreign exchange and employment that the country dearly needs.