

TALKING POINTS FOR KENYA WILDLIFE SERVICE DIRECTOR GENERAL, DR ERUSTUS, KANGA EBS, HSC DURING CELEBRATIONS TO MARK SUCCESSFUL TRANSLOCATION OF 21 RHINOS TO LOISABA CONSERVANCY IN LAIKIPIA COUNTY ON 12TH FEBRUARY, 2024

The Cabinet Secretary, Ministry of Tourism and Wildlife, Dr. Alfred Mutua
Principal Secretaries Silvia Musieya, State Department for Wildlife and John Ololtuaa, State Department for Tourism

Distinguished guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

1. It is my great pleasure to be here today to celebrate a milestone in our wildlife conservation, particularly for the endangered black rhino species. We, from Kenya wildlife Service are elated to be associated with this momentous occasion whose net effect is securing more space for this cornerstone species. It took grueling 18 days to execute the delicate translocation exercise by our highly skilled and dedicated veterinary and capture team, with the support of our partners. In invite you to join me in extending warm gratitude to these great men and women.
2. Success comes with challenges which we confront through dedication, concerted efforts and strong coalition and liaison among local and international conservation stakeholders. Poaching was contained and rhino mortalities from

poaching incidents were less than 0.5% over the last 6 years. We recorded zero poaching in the year 2020 for the first time in the last 20 years. We are alive to the fact that poaching is dynamic and cyclic and we therefore remain vigilant and alert to neutralize any threats to our rhino population.

3. With this in mind, we will not relent in our efforts to secure our rhinos and their habitats through multi-agency and multi stakeholder approaches. 7. In the recent past, one of the main causes of mortality of rhinos is territorial fights due to limited space in sanctuaries which has also led to suppressed growth rates due to competition for space and resources, leading to prolonged age at first calving, prolonged inter calving intervals and more births being of male calves among other density dependent factors.

4. KWS has successfully implemented 6 editions of black rhino Action Plan and we are now implementing the 7th edition of the Recovery and Action Plan for the Black Rhino in Kenya (2022-2026). The thrust of the recovery plan is to expand the range available for rhinos so as to spur further growth in their numbers.

5. Kenya is playing a critical role in the Northern White Rhino recovery efforts as it is host to the only two remaining individuals of the species in the entire world. We continue to partner with the global community through the BioRescue project which is a consortium of local and international experts to work out modalities of bringing the northern white rhino back from the brink of extinction through in-vitro fertilisation and use of surrogate mothers. Thirty (30) embryos of the northern white rhinos are now available courtesy of the best available science and are awaiting implantation into southern white rhino surrogate females.

6. On 24th January 2024, a major announcement was made in Berlin Germany on the scientific breakthrough of the first ever successful embryo transfer undertaken on rhinos in the wild which may save the northern white rhino through

surrogacy. Kenya is proud to be hosting this project and looks forward to implantation of a northern white rhino embryo on a southern white rhino surrogate within the course of the year in a ground breaking and history in the making proud moment.

7. As I conclude, I want to thank the management of Loisaba Conservancy for graciously accepting to accommodate the 21 rhinos. As Kenya's wildlife lead agency, we shall strive to work closely with other conservationists in growing wildlife populations through collaborations as guided by best practice. Even as we secure more space for diverse wildlife species outside our protected areas, as a Service we remain focused on our broad mandate of overseeing wildlife conservation and protection in all wildlife ranges, including private sanctuaries and community areas.

I THANK YOU