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KENYA OPENS THE WORLD'S LARGEST RHINO SANCTUARY IN TSAVO WEST NATIONAL PARK

Tsavo West, Kenya – 9 December 2025 - Kenya today marked a historic moment in global conservation as His Excellency President William Samoei Ruto officially opened the expanded Tsavo West Rhino Sanctuary. Now covering 3,200 square kilometres, it is the largest sanctuary for rhinos in the world and a major step forward for wildlife conservation, climate resilience, and nature based economic growth.

Speaking at Tsavo West National Park, His Excellency President Ruto described the expansion as a strategic national investment that brings together wildlife protection, national security, climate action, and sustainable development. The enlarged sanctuary, which builds on the former Ngulia Rhino Sanctuary, secures the future of one of Kenya's most critically endangered Eastern black rhino populations.

Kenya is home to approximately 2,000 rhinos, including more than 1,000 black rhinos and 1,000 southern white rhinos. This represents almost 78 percent of the global Eastern black rhino population. The expanded sanctuary brings together 150 black rhinos from the former Ngulia Sanctuary and 50 from the Tsavo West Intensive Protection Zone, creating a founder population of 200 animals, now the largest intact black rhino population in the country. For many years, the 92 square kilometre Ngulia Sanctuary exceeded its ecological carrying capacity, which limited breeding and survival. The new 3,200 square kilometre landscape restores ecological balance, supports long term population growth, and strengthens Tsavo's position as a leading conservation and tourism destination.

Reflecting on Kenya's conservation journey, President Ruto noted that the Tsavo landscape once supported more than 8,000 black rhinos before poaching reduced the population to fewer than 20 by 1989. This crisis era led to the creation of the Kenya Wildlife Service. He reaffirmed that protecting Kenya's wildlife is a national duty with worldwide importance.

The Cabinet Secretary for Tourism and Wildlife, Hon. Rebecca Miano, stated that the sanctuary is a central pillar of the Kenya Rhino Range Expansion initiative and aligns with the Black Rhino Recovery and Action Plan and the National Wildlife Strategy 2030. She

noted that the expanded habitat will support genetic diversity, reduce territorial conflict, improve breeding success, and increase community benefit sharing across the Tsavo region.

The Kenya Wildlife Service Director General, Professor Erustus Kanga, explained that the transition from a compact sanctuary to a fully connected landscape was made possible through extensive ecological planning, advanced LoRaWAN and VHF tracking systems, artificial intelligence supported surveillance, and upgraded ranger infrastructure. He emphasized that success will be measured both in rhino population recovery and in improved livelihoods created through tourism, youth employment, and community partnerships.

This transformation has been made possible through the strong technical and financial support of the Kenya Rhino Range Expansion programme, the lead partner behind Kenya's landscape scale rhino recovery efforts. KRRE's Chief Executive Officer, Jamie Gaymer, emphasised that effective conservation is nation-building, and that every rhino protected contributes to environmental and economic resilience. He added that the programme's investments in ecological assessments, monitoring technology, security, and long-term planning ensure the sanctuary meets both international standards and Kenya's national recovery goals.


With improved space, security, and genetic strength, Kenya aims to increase the annual black rhino population growth rate from 5 percent to 8 percent. This will help the country reach its targets of 1,450 rhinos by 2030 and 2,000 rhinos by 2037. By 2030, the sanctuary is expected to generate significant job opportunities and over 45 million United States dollars in tourism and conservancy related revenue.

His Excellency President Ruto formally declared the expanded Tsavo West Rhino Sanctuary open, describing it as a national legacy that restores Tsavo's historic role as a continental stronghold for Africa's rhinos and protects Kenya's natural heritage for future generations.

The ceremony was attended by Taita Taveta County Governor His Excellency Honourable Andrew Mwadime, the Principal Secretary for Wildlife, the Principal Secretary for Aviation, Principal Secretary Ambassador Doctor Monica Juma, Ambassador Meg Whitman, Members of Parliament and numerous conservation partners.

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