**REPUBLIC OF KENYA**

**MINISTRY OF TOURISM, WILDLIFE AND HERITAGE**

**OFFICE OF THE CABINET SECRETARY**

**SPEECH FOR THE CABINET SECRETARY, MINISTRY OF TOURISM, WILDLIFE AND HERITAGE, HON. PENINAH MALONZA, OGW, DURING THE LAUNCH OF CHEPALUNGU FOREST CONSERVATION ON 19TH APRIL 2023 IN BOMET**

**H.E The Governor of Bomet, Hon. (Prof.) Hillary Barchok**

**H.E the Deputy Governor, Hon Shadrack Rotich**

**CECM Trade, Energy, Tourism, Industry and Investment Ms. Julia Chepkuto,**

**Senior Government Officials,**

**Senior County Officials,**

**World Wide Fund (Kenya) Representative**

**Area MP Hon. Victor Koech**

**Area MCAs Hon. Kibet Ngeno and Hon Dennis Ngeno**

**Distinguished Guests,**

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

**Good morning**

* I am glad to join you today to mark this noble initiative of launching the Chepalungu Forest conservation that will improve the socio-economic and cultural development of the people of Bomet. Let me take this opportunity to thank H.E the Governor, Prof. Hillary Barchok for the invitation.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

* Kenya undoubtedly has beautiful savannah grasslands, rolling plains and aquatic life as well as rich cultural heritage. Bomet forms part of this beautiful ecosystem and is strategically positioned in the South Rift Valley in Western Kenya corridor that is a gateway to the Famous Maasai Mara National Reserve and the Nakuru National Park.
* Bomet County is endowed with unique and diverse combination of tourist attractions comprising of abundant wildlife in their natural habitat. This therefore means we must consolidate our efforts to protect our scenic ecosystem if we are to reap its full benefit.
* Bomet County, a gem in Kenya’s tourism industry has a stunning scenery, vibrant culture and exciting adventures such as majestic waterfalls along the major rivers and the lush tea plantations.
* I laud Bomet County for its efforts to conserve its chepalungu and mara mara forests. I am delighted that we have planted over 50,000 seedlings today which adds to the over 5 million trees that you have planted so far. This is commendable because it puts Bomet as a county that has surpassed the national target of 10% tree cover. To ensure the protection of this forest, today we have launched a 15km electric fence around this ecosystem to enhance a green destination.
* To spur eco-tourism development in the county, I urge you to take advantage of your proximity to the world-famous Maasai Mara – that is just next to you where tourists get a glimpse to experience the largest migration of wildebeest to Kenya from the Serengeti in Tanzania.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

* There is need for stronger collaboration between the national and county governments in promoting tourism and conservation efforts. We therefore must join hands to provide an advocacy platform among the international partners, the inter-county partners and general public across the county on the importance of conservation efforts.
* As you are aware nature-based tourism comprises the Kenyan Forest ecosystem which is a critical component that forms the national tourism circuit. Bomet forests is part of this great circuit. The government is however concerned that our ecosystems including Chepalungu forest are under pressure from human activities that threaten to deplete the forest cover.
* Therefore, as government we call on every citizen, agencies and local communities to take up responsibility and save the forest and wildlife in an effort to reduce the effects of climate change through adoption of good practices for sustainable conservation and utilization of the resource.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

* I want to assure you that the government is committed to the promotion of tourism in the country and as such, we will work hand in hand with Bomet and other stakeholders to boost tourism efforts and make this County a tourism destination in the south rift region.

With those remarks.

**Ladies and gentlemen,**

I want to thank you once again for consolidating your efforts to promote tourism and conservation at the grassroot level.

Thank you