



INTERNATIONAL DIALOGUE ON LAND AND SECURITY

Enhancing land and water governance for resilient communities in
the dry lands of the North Rift

12-15 APRIL 2016

Rift Valley Hills Resort, Kabarnet, Baringo County

This Dialogue is organised and supported by



OPENING REMARKS BY THE H.E GOVERNOR ALEX TOLGOS OF ELGEIYO MARAKWET COUNTY ON LAND AND SECURITY, BARINGO 2016.

‘We do not inherit the land from our ancestors, we borrow it from our children.’

(Native American Proverb).

The Deputy Governor Baringo, Deputy Governor Elgeiyo Marakwet County, the County Commissioner, Resource persons from ICRAF and the other non-state actors, IOFC International and local, Dr. Kobia and Dr. Ogle from the office of the President, Professor Swazuri and his team, all protocols observed, ladies and gentlemen.

It is my pleasure to attend this inaugural international conference on Land and Security. On behalf of NOREB, and specifically Elgeiyo Marakwet County and my friend Governor Cheboi, I welcome everybody to this Region and indeed honoured to co-host of this important conference.

When my deputy Governor who has been part of the organising Committee briefed me about the concept, we agreed as a government, that the conference is vital and affects us as a County directly and so we should not hesitate but grab the opportunity to support it in the best we could.

I know that this International Dialogue is very timely in the region and shall offer a road map to interventions that will result to sustainable developments devoid of conflicts.

Conflicts around land are part and parcel of the world we live in today, be it Continents, Nations, territories or in our case Counties and even communities to name a few. One good example would be the very well documented historic ‘Scramble for Africa’, where deaths and displacements were recorded because of the land factor. In Kenya, we have had more than enough of infamous events because of this emotive issue.

Elgeiyo Marakwet County is one of the unique Counties with three ecological topographies; meaning we have three different weather experiences at any given time. The County is made up of 49% of Highlands, which is arable and densely populated, 11% escarpment and 40% Valley which is a semi-arid area and mostly not arable land. Land therefore is a rare

resource in the County. The future trends also indicate that such semi-arid areas will be dryer in a few years and such is a worrying trend.

Elgeiyo Marakwet County has experienced land-related conflicts for some time. Some of them within the borders of West Pokot and Baringo Counties, whilst others have been between clans especially on communal land. About two weeks ago at the border of Elgeiyo Marakwet and Baringo County three people lost their lives over land conflict. Due to lack of pasture, a pastoralist let his livestock graze on his neighbour's crops, a conflict ensued and deaths occurred. It is quite an unfortunate event but I really want to thank the leadership of Baringo and Elgeiyo Marakwet Counties who joined efforts to resolve the matter.

Recent prospect of oil by Tullow Company Limited in the Valley has indeed raised the stakes and probable conflicts on the land equation in this County.

The poverty rates at the escarpment and the valley standing at a staggering 67% people have resorted to bad farming practices, poor land management and cutting trees which acts as cover to the soil and water catchment areas to make their ends meet. The results are devastating, less rains in some parts, raging rains that have caused landslides in other parts and big and deep gully erosions among others are evident within the County. The end results are disturbing and worrying.

However all is not lost, Elgeiyo Marakwet has documentation of good land practice and management from time immemorial where people within the community take time in sharing water as a resource for irrigation and so there is no record of any land/ resource – based conflict.

We are also cognisant that for us to truly remain the “Home of Champions” we in government need to lead the way by implementing sound policies for good land practice and management, since this will in part help us protect and save the environment for the future generation. Land rehabilitation will and bring peaceful co-existence within the communities; when peace is attained, sustainable development will be inevitable.

It's my considered opinion that the county governments through the County Land Management Boards present a fresh approach to dealing with land matters at the grassroots which will then be built into a national process of resolving land conflicts. One practical solution is Elgeiyo Marakwet is the use of Alternative Dispute Resolution Mechanisms in

resolving land disputes. This is why my county has drafted a policy an Alternative Dispute Resolution which awaits to be adapted and further forwarded to the County Assembly for purpose of law making.

At the NOREB Zone, we are leaders beyond our county borders and take pride in agreeing to find sustainable solutions for our cross-County issues that will make difference in the lives of our people and the Country in the Long run. Land and security is one such area.

I have faith that these two days of discussions from top researchers, Government Officials; (County and National), law-makers, experts, academicians, farmers, pastoralists and people from all walks of lives will go a long way in creating that change that we are all looking for. This is possible only through synergies, partnerships and models that have shown positive results.

We encouraged by the words from the National Land Commission to support community dialogues on land and welcome other partners to walk with us in this crucial journey. This will indeed ensure that the Land we borrow from our Children is indeed better than we found it.

A big thank you to my friend Governor Cheboi, all the organisers, speakers and participants and let us all have a fruitful discussion. Thank you and God bless you.