



STATEMENT ON THE AFRICA CLIMATE SUMMIT 23

From PEN international Writers for Peace Committee, PEN Kenya Centre

Treat the Earth well. It is not inherited from your parents; it is borrowed from your children. This Kenyan proverb affirms that matters of environmental protection and conservation are an issue of utmost concern for Africans, for they have a symbiotic relationship and a profoundly spiritual and ethical connection with nature. It is therefore with much joy that the PEN International Writers for Peace Committee welcomes the African Climate Summit 23 that will be held in Nairobi, 4th to 6th September 2023, set to address the global and African-specific impacts of climate change. We congratulate the African Union for taking up this noble initiative.

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Sadly though, the region continues to be faced with the adverse effects of the environment not having been cared for. This is partly due to our human negligence, but majorly because of the plunder and wanton destruction that is influenced by the West and some multinational organisations that have vested economic interests. From deforestation where timber finds an eager market in Europe and USA, the scramble for oil and gas exploration, to water pollution caused by waste dumped into Africa's water bodies, and poaching and transportation of wildlife and wildlife products out of the continent.

This is not hearsay. In August 2023, loads of mature baobab trees – one of Africa's iconic tree species – were uprooted from their indigenous habitat along Kenya's coastland and trafficked outside the country by a private USA company. Is it coincidental that this is happening on the heels of the government having lifted the ban on logging which risks reversing the gains that Kenya has made in recent years to improve her tree cover?

Even then, this statement does not purport to offer solutions, but, instead, it is an invitation to the global roundtable where policies are formulated and key decisions made. It is an invitation to think of our children and our children's children together with those who will



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come after them. We believe that Kenya, just like other countries in the world, is alive to the greatest obligation of our time in fostering a world that is both inhabitable and safe for the generations to come. The political class need social action in order to wake up to the reality of the impending death for they have a concerted responsibility to wake up the masses towards a reclamation of the common future that is being killed on the altar of greed for business and financial stabilities.

We trust therefore, that the Africa Climate Summit 23 will not simply be another high-end gathering, but that His Excellency Dr. William Samoei Ruto, the President of the Republic of Kenya, will lead the African Union and other global leaders in walking the talk by ensuring that matters of climate change and environmental conservation will promptly be moved from being idealized in boardrooms, conferences and workshops, to action. That they will not let the words of writers in the world who continue to decry the state of Mother Earth to hit the political wall that determines what crosses over into action and what returns to us as a meaningless echo.

With this invitation, Kenya along with the global society, has the ability to think through developing comprehensive solutions and causing action towards a sustainable future of our common home.

2nd September 2023

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