

**Dr Augustine Njamnshi's Statement on the African Environment and Wangari Maathai Day
Convened under the theme “Circularity as a Solution to Tackling Climate Change, Biodiversity
Loss and Pollution”**

Nairobi, February 29, 2024

H.E. AMB. JOSEFA SACKO, Commissioner for Agriculture, Rural Development, Blue Economy and Sustainable Environment

HON. SOIPAN TUYA, Cabinet Secretary, Ministry of Environment, Climate Change & Forestry, Kenya

Dr. Eliane Ubalijoro, CEO, CIFOR-ICRAF and Director General, ICRAF

Mr. Harsen Nyambe, Director, Sustainable Environment and Blue Economy, Africa Union Commission

Dr. Peter Minang, Director for Africa, CIFOR-ICRAF

Dr. Cyrille-Lazare Siewe, Kenya Country Office Director, United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)

Dr. Philip Osano, Centre Director, Stockholm Environment Institute (SEI) Africa

Nyaguthii Chege, Chairperson, Board of Directors, The Green Belt Movement

Representatives from Governments, Intergovernmental Institutions, Non-state Actors, Civil Society and other Groups;

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen;

It gives me great pleasure to address you during this important stock-take moment for both Africa and in indeed the world in assessing progress made in addressing climate change and environmental issues and the road ahead.

The Africa Environment and Wangari Maathai Day, happening on the Margins of the Sixth Session of the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA-6) provides an opportunity for Africa to recalibrate its approaches in addressing the triple planetary crisis and more important examine the space of circularity in addressing these challenges. Since UNEA6 is taking place in the UN Complex, just a stone's throw from here, it is a perfect moment to reflect both on our theme and recast our conversation in the global space and shape effective, inclusive and sustainable multilateral actions to tackle climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution in line with UNEA -6 theme

With our commemorative moment being organized under the theme of ‘Circularity as a Solution to tackling Climate Change, Biodiversity Loss and Pollution’ this gives us a broad latitude to discuss and formulate transformative recommendations for addressing the triple planetary crisis.

This event aims to contribute to galvanizing a critical mass of stakeholders capable of catalyzing broad support for pro-poor, just, equitable, locally-led and science-based decisions in responding to the triple planetary crisis of pollution, climate change and biodiversity loss through circularity. The event provides a perfect opportunity for practitioners to robustly engage with experts in related disciplines, and leaders drawn from diverse backgrounds to internalize key persuasions of relevant application at the local level and in international processes.

Ladies and gentlemen,

We are holding this summit against the backdrop of a continent struggling with the burden of adverse climate change impacts, the growing challenge of waste pollution that is matched with extractive activities and the degradation of ecosystems with attendant biodiversity loss.

Further, as we converge today, we are apparently clear that foreign interests continue to dictate the agenda on biodiversity conservation and more importantly the manner in which African communities relate to land and natural resources.

Allow me to draw to your attention to the fact that we are alarmed by the pace at which natural resources, and particularly transitional minerals are being appropriated and extracted in Africa without deeper consideration of their finite nature, Africa's needs and the room for recycling these, among other natural resources used in our value chains

We are perfectly aware of the power discourse that characterizes these relationships either in bilateral or multilateralism setups.

But within these collaborations, we must be bold enough to ask *"How do we make the proposals of communities most affected by climate change, our custodians of biodiversity and communities living in informal settlements who are most impacted by pollution the North Star in our action in addressing the triple planetary crisis"*

We cannot afford to lose this moment to reaffirm the custodianship of communities over natural resources and biodiversity and in a corresponding manner the need to centre their leadership in policy decisions and programme measures.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Allow me to turn my attention to multilateralism which has enabled less developed countries and rich and developed nations to share tables and to collectively shape the decisions on the triple planetary crisis. This element of collectively shaping the decisions is appreciated, however, power asymmetry continues to define the nature and phase of decisions with poor and countries most impacted by these crises being forced to trade off their priorities to allow decisions to be adopted.

More so, over time lethargic implementation of decisions made in these spaces by global North countries continues to slow the momentum desired to achieve the much-desired impacts. With less developed

countries who are much in desire of means of implementation for these decisions, particularly climate finance lacking the means to actualize their conditional commitments.

Ladies and gentlemen,

At PACJA we are convinced of the need for urgent measures to reform multilateralism to respond to the needs of communities at the frontline and to promote actions that enhance response measures to the triple crisis.

As currently structured, multilateral arrangements have blinded visibility in reaching out to communities at the frontline of triple planetary crisis beyond consultations, yet these communities are in urgent need of all forms of funding, including climate finance to respond to matters of life and death.

A comprehensive review of the multilateral bodies, including funding arrangements under these bodies to reach these communities is urgent!

“We need a strong institutional arrangement under multilateralism that secure funding with extremely simplified access mechanisms for communities and first responders of the triple planetary crisis”

Ladies and gentlemen,

Even as we address circularity as an entry point to addressing the inherent challenges we must address the cardinal problem linked to unconstrained and unethical consumerism that continues to deplete global resources at unprecedented rates.

Today, I know brilliant ideas will be shared in this convening and I call upon the global community to scale up action.

Finally, as PACJA we applaud the growing multi-stakeholder efforts in advancing a common cause. We just closed a multi-stakeholder consultation on COP28 under the partnership with AUC, AfDB and UN- ECA. It's partnerships like these that lead transformative efforts.

We applaud the African Union Commission (AUC), the Green Belt Movement Stockholm Environment Institute (SEI), the World Agroforestry Centre (ICRAF), Ministry of Environment, Climate Change & Forestry for making this event feasible.

Thank you, Asanteni Sana, Merci,