Kenya Commits to Restore 5.1 Million Hectares of Land Based on New National Opportunity Maps

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Commitment represents 9 percent of the country's total land, shows opportunity to restore rangelands and increase quality of life for country's poorest

NAIROBI, KENYA (September 8, 2016)– The African continent has the largest landscape restoration opportunity of any in the world – but each country has to lead the way and drive action on the ground. Today, Kenya announced a significant commitment to restore 5.1 million hectares of land, nearly 9 percent of its total landmass. The amount of land Kenya committed today represents an area roughly the size of Costa Rica.

Through global initiatives like the Bonn Challenge and regional initiatives like the African Forest Landscape Restoration Initiative (AFR100), Kenya is now the 13th African country to commit to bringing over 46 million hectares of land into restoration by 2030.

Kenya's national restoration commitment was announced by Cabinet Secretary **Judi Wangalwa Wakhungu**, Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources, and at an event in Nairobi co-hosted by Kenya's Forest Service.

Kenya's commitment was determined through the analysis of national restoration opportunity maps created by the Kenyan Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources and the Kenya Forest Service (KFS), with technical support from World Resources Institute (WRI), Clinton Climate Initiative (CCI), International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and the Greenbelt Movement.

Kenya is the first African country to complete a national restoration opportunity assessment that informed their commitment to the Bonn Challenge and AFR100. This assessment maps all landscape restoration opportunities for Kenya, with maps detailing the best areas for different types of restoration to better enable on the ground efforts at scale.

The Kenyan Government and partners identified the most pressing land use challenges currently affecting Kenya, as well as a list of restoration options that could help address these challenges and restore the ecosystem services that are currently lacking. The various landscape restoration options identified include:

• Reforestation and rehabilitation of degraded natural forests

• Agroforestry and woodlots on cropland

• Commercial tree and bamboo plantations

• Tree-based buffers along waterways, wetlands and roads

• Silvo-pastoral and rangeland restoration

These restoration options can potentially help restore ecosystem services associated with trees, such as erosion control, regulation of water flows and soil quality, as well as forest habitat for wildlife.

Also released today, the National Forest and Landscape Restoration Opportunity Assessment seeks to provide a roadmap to implement Kenya's 5.1 million hectare commitment, as well as assist with national restoration targets laid out in the Kenyan constitution (ex. achieving minimum 10 percent tree cover). If Kenya achieves its ambitious new global restoration target, it will have:

• increased total tree cover by 9 percent, helping to surpass the constitutional mandate of 10% in addition to increased tree cover over the past few years; • sequestered 130 mtCO2 by 2063;

• made tremendous progress in managing droughts in the country;

• met its National Adaptation Plan and National Climate Change Action Plan restoration targets;

• met Kenya's INDC inclusion of having 10% tree cover; and

• reduced CO2 emissions by 3.7 percent.

The national restoration commitment is also an opportunity to improve quality of life for the Kenyan people, especially its poorest citizens. For Kenya, the most direct benefits would be to improve soil fertility and food security, boost access to clean water, increase natural forest cover for ecosystem services, combat desertification, create green jobs, and bolster economic growth

and livelihoods, while at the same time making a substantial contribution to climate change mitigation.

For example, restoring degraded land to mosaic landscapes by integrating trees on farms (agroforestry) and ranchlands (silvopasture) can increase soil nutrients and groundwater retention, thus improving both food and water security.

Through previous national initiatives, Kenya has been working hard to improve its tree cover and restore landscapes and their associated ecosystem services for people and the planet. Created in September 2014, the Landscape Restoration Technical Working Group (LRTWG) identified the most pressing land use challenges currently affecting Kenya, as well as a list of restoration options that could help address these challenges. The group then mapped and quantified where these different restoration options could potentially be implemented in order to help form this global restoration target. Over the course of a year, the group produced seven maps and associated area statistics now showcased on the website.

To learn more, visit ken.restoration-atlas.org/map