



## PRESS RELEASE

### Corporate leaders rally to secure Nairobi's water supply

**Nairobi, Tuesday December 7, 2021...** The private sector has been urged to take seriously the risk of a likely water crisis in Nairobi to avoid the experience of Cape Town, South Africa, whose taps almost ran dry in 2018.

A breakfast event co-hosted by the Upper Tana Nairobi Water Fund Trust (UTNWFT) - a conservation charitable trust and the Nairobi Securities Exchange (NSE) to enlighten business leaders about the risk noted that unsustainable farming practices by farmers in the Upper Tana catchment basin, coupled with climate change, population growth and increased industrial demand are threatening the sustainable supply of water to the city-drawing parallels with Cape Town. Back in 2018, in what was dubbed Day Zero, residents and industry in Cape Town faced the prospect of their taps being turned off and needing to line up to collect water at supply points after the watersheds of the Greater Cape Town region dried up. Industry and the City of Cape Town had been warned by NGOs and scientists for years that invasive trees -mostly pines and eucalyptus - were draining the catchment, but nothing was done until it was almost too late.

The event, which was presided over by Environment and Forestry Principal Secretary, Dr Chris Kiptoo, brought together business leaders of listed companies, fund managers, institutional investors, and stockbrokers.

Nairobi requires about 750,000 cubic meters of water daily but is only able to meet 80 percent of city residents water needs.

UTNWFT has been working with farmers from the expansive catchment covering the four counties of Nyandarua, Murang'a, Laikipia and Nyeri and which straddle the Aberdares to improve their farming practices to help reduce river siltation, pollution, uncontrolled abstraction, and cultivation on riparian lands. Shifting to land conservation methods using natural solutions such as water pans to harvest water runoff, planting of trees and nappier grass as hedgerows and cover cropping among other simple climate smart practices help increase water quantity and quality needed in the city and for hydropower production.

Over 90 percent of water consumed in the city and 65 percent in hydropower production comes from the Upper Tana basin.

With funds raised from Global Environment facility (GEF), to the Upper Tana-Nairobi Water Fund Project, private sector and corporate foundations, the trust has been able to engage over 40,000 farmers with subsidized water pans, fruits trees, tree seedlings, nappier grass, biogas cook stoves and drip irrigation kits among other items as part of the tool box for practicing land conservation on mostly steep farms. Its work has seen siltation level drop 30 percent while water flows increased by 55,000 cubic meters daily. Farmer incomes have increased significantly with nearly Sh400m being earned annually from various farming activities.

"Using nature-based solutions, we can secure enough water for the city in perpetuity while improving the livelihoods of the farmers through activities on their farms. To sustain the conservation work, we need corporate leaders to better understand how the water fund model connects the work of the farmers upstream and availability of water for their operations and customers downstream through payment for ecosystem services," said Mr. Njoroge who is the President of the Trust.

He said the trust has set up an endowment fund of Sh500 million which he asked the private sector to help capitalize. So far, the fund has raised Sh220million.

The water fund model was started by the Nature Conservancy, a US-based global environmental conservation non-profit in Latin America over 20 years ago. The model was first replicated on the continent in Kenya through GEF working together with IFAD and then South Africa. It requires industry to provide incentives for those whose daily activities sustain the ecosystem – a model known as payment for ecosystems.



NSE CEO, Geoffrey Odundo said the exchange recognizes the important role it plays in sustainable economic growth locally and internationally and saw engagement of business leaders and investors as key to helping the country be net water positive by 2030 as part of winning the fight against climate change.

“Climate change is responsible for severe droughts and floods thereby denying millions access to water. As a platform for harnessing capital, we feel we must align our commercial objectives and environmental, social and governance (ESG) responsibilities with those of our listed companies, members and investors to collaboratively tackle the most pressing planetary challenges of our time. We want to encourage corporate leaders to invest in nature so that we can generate enough natural capital, especially water, which must be sustained for future generations”.

Dr. Kiptoo has been engaging corporate leaders to help the country achieve 10 percent forest cover by 2022 through an ambitious afforestation program of planting 2 billion trees by the year 2020 to enhance biodiversity conservation among other benefits.

“All sectors of the economy are dependent on natural resources, water, agriculture, energy, livestock, tourism, fisheries, and industry. Business leaders have the capacity, resources, and commercial-interest to lead the way in conservation,” he said adding that catchment conservation supports businesses and consumers directly and would be a strategic threat if access to enough quantity and quality of water was to come under strain.

Conserving the Upper Tana water catchment is a prime example of how industry can play a lead role in the fight against climate change because it aligns directly with their commercial interests”.

The corporate sector is seen as having the commercial resources and political goodwill to provide impetus for environmental conservation in a way that supports sustainable business, while protecting nature and delivering impact for the people and communities. Speakers at the forum urged the business leaders to deepen their knowledge of what is needed to sustain the integrity of nature by expanding their vision beyond one-off corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives.

He urged corporates to embrace nature-based solutions as they really are a fundamental part of any action for climate and biodiversity, and are an essential component of the overall global effort to achieve the goals of the [Paris Agreement](#) on climate change.

**Ends.../**

For more information please contact:

**Ministry of Environment and Forestry**

Michael Ruthuku  
Head, Public Communications  
Mobile: 0721588897  
Email: [ruthuku@yahoo.com](mailto:ruthuku@yahoo.com)

**Upper Tana Nairobi Water Fund Trust (UTNWFT)**

Julie Otieno, Communications Advisor  
Mobile: 0722775394  
Email: [julieotieno@icloud.com](mailto:julieotieno@icloud.com)

**Nairobi Securities Exchange (NSE)**

Waithera Mwai-Ireri  
Senior Manager, Corporate Affairs & Sustainability  
Email: [wmwai@nse.co.ke](mailto:wmwai@nse.co.ke)