

**Department of Geography & Environmental Studies (UoN) and NEMA organizes a scientific and policy-oriented conference for Tana River County**



***H.E. Amb. Hussein Dado, Governor, Tana River County makes his opening remarks. With him are Amb. Julius Kandie (left) and Prof. William Ogara from the University of Nairobi***

Tana River County is set to benefit from outcomes of various research findings which are to inform its policy planning processes in eco-tourism management, conflict resolution, education, agriculture, fisheries, livestock management, strategic environmental assessment, climate change adaptation and mitigation, among others. The research findings were presented and discussed at a national scientific conference whose theme was ‘The impacts of human activities and climate change in Tana River County, Kenya’.

The conference organized by the National Environment Management Authority (NEMA) and the University of Nairobi, Department of Geography and Environmental Studies with support from Wetlands International, brought together stakeholders from academia, public and private sector and civil society from various parts of the country and internationally, actively engaged in research, innovation, production, packaging and application of environmental and climate change management.

Information, knowledge and scientific findings play a critical role in the development of policies, plans and strategies of all counties in Kenya. Sentiments that climate change impacts on

sustainable development were echoed at the conference by Prof. Judi Wakhungu, Cabinet Secretary for Environment, Water and Natural Resources. Prof. Wakhungu, in a speech read on her behalf by Amb. Julius Kandie, Senior Director of Administration at the Ministry of Environment, Water and Natural Resources (MEWNR), stated that “in relation to climate change, measures aimed at building resilience of people, improving their coping strategies amidst a changing climate while at the same time improving their livelihoods are vital and this conference serves as a building block towards this goal”.

H.E. Amb. Hussein Dado, the Governor of Tana River County, asserted that in order to plan effectively, research data was crucial as a basis of making informed decisions. According to the Governor, Tana River County had in the past few years come face to face with unprecedented challenge of climate change impacts and corresponding socio-economic losses to communities. “Climate change is a threat to the achievement of sustainable development and poverty reduction goals and priorities”, Amb. Dado stated.

Prof. Geoffrey Wahungu, Director General NEMA, said the conference would serve as a good opportunity for socio-economic development of Tana River County. The county will benefit and tap into the wealth of knowledge and sound scientific information presented in the conference. The information will contribute towards identifying clear policy measures needed in the development of county plans, policies and strategies.

Prof. Lucy Irungu, Deputy Vice-Chancellor – Research, Production and Extension, University of Nairobi, noted that “there is need to link research to policy formulation in order to transform the livelihoods of people, in line with Kenya Vision 2030”. In her opening remarks presented by Prof. William Ogara, Director, Center for International Programmes and Links, University of Nairobi, Prof. Irungu stressed that there is underutilization of research for development, which is hampering progress towards promoting development. Prof. Irungu expressed commitment of the University of Nairobi working with Tana River County and other development agencies in addressing various societal needs and challenges experienced in the county.

Tana River County has rich biodiversity which includes wildlife, birds and mangroves, among others. The county has a population of over 240,000 people with 76.9% of the people living in poverty. The main socio-economic activities undertaken in the county include farming, livestock rearing, mining of sand in Bura, tourism at Kora National reserve, Arawale National Reserve and Tana Primate National reserve. The county has three major fishing landing sites. Tana River is the largest river in the country and supports communities in the area. Some of the challenges that the county faces include land degradation, destruction of forests, human and wildlife conflict, overgrazing, uncoordinated development and overexploitation of resources.



***Prof. Richard Odingo from the Department of Geography and Environmental studies, University of Nairobi makes his presentation***