

National World Environment Day Fete held in Haller Park

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Nairobi, 5th June 2012 The World Environment Day was celebrated today at Bamburi Cement's Haller Park and presided over by Hon. Ali Chirau Makwere, Minister for Environment and Mineral Resources among other dignitaries and representatives from the Government, NEMA, WWF, UNEP, UNDP and the private sector, led by Bamburi Cement's MD Hussein Mansi.

The event celebrated at Haller Park was marked in a colourful ceremony with the Mombasa community setting up exhibitions and stalls to showcase various environmental and agricultural projects. This year's theme "Green Economy: Does it include you?" emphasizes an economy that improves well-being and promotes social equity, while significantly reducing environmental risks and ecological scarcities. According to the UNEP, "In its simplest expression, a green economy can be thought of as one which is low carbon, resource efficient and socially inclusive". This is a call for both the public and private sectors to implement environmental conservation strategies as an integral part of their operations.

Several institutions led by those in attendance have made an effort to set policies, regulations and begin tangible steps that promote sustainability in their operations. NEMA for example is currently developing Private- Public Partnerships on waste management that will see this load shared by government and players in the Private and NGO sectors. Along with this, the Authority has also gazetted various regulations aimed at promoting a Green Economy. The Government has been keen to support these steps by implementing key policies for instance; the Economic Stimulus Programme which has thus far been significant in promoting projects in agriculture such as; fish farming, poultry keeping, bee keeping, dairy farming and tree planting among others.

The private sector has also kept in step with this initiative as seen with Bamburi Cement Limited, the leading cement manufacturing company in East Africa. Among the many environmental sustainability initiatives the company is currently running, they have established an Industrial Ecology department whose main responsibility is the development, management and seeking out alternative energy sources for the company to reduce dependency on electricity and heavy fuel oils.

Calling for the adoption of more environmental initiatives across sectors countrywide Hon. Ali Chirau Makwere stated, "My Ministry will continue to create awareness and educate the public on the appropriate green initiatives to be adopted by sectors... In addition, the National Environment Management Authority under my Ministry will enhance the enforcement of various environmental regulations to ensure compliance to set standards and procedures aimed at improving the quality of the environment."

This will go a long way to boost the already underway projects spearheaded by NEMA to promote environmental education. NEMA's Director General emphasized during this event the need to sensitize the public with regard to building a sustainable economy by stating that, "...the transition to green economy is vitally aimed at safeguarding the natural resource base in order to promote sustainable development."

Echoing this urge by the government, Mr. Mansi highlighted Bamburi Cement's vision for a green economy whilst reiterating the need for others in the private sector to follow suit. He said, "We have so far been successful with our biofuel projects in Vipingo and Diani which have provided jobs for over 400 people and providing about 5 million shillings every planting season through purchase of tree seedlings from the community. Through such green initiatives we expect to create thousands of new direct and indirect employment opportunities."

The event was commemorated at Bamburi Cement's rehabilitated limestone quarries now known as Haller Park. The former quarries are now a renowned, award-winning tourist destination which has attracted 519,344

tourists in the past three years alone, significantly impacting the country's per capita growth through the tourism sector.

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For further information kindly contact:

Emily Waita

Tel: +254 20 2893000