



REPUBLIC OF KENYA

**STATEMENT BY HIS EXCELLENCY HON. WILLIAM
SAMOEI RUTO, PhD, C.G.H., PRESIDENT OF THE
REPUBLIC OF KENYA AND COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF OF
THE DEFENCE FORCES, DURING THE MAA CULTURAL
FESTIVAL AND TRANSFER OF MANAGEMENT OF
AMBOSELI NATIONAL PARK FROM THE NATIONAL
GOVERNMENT TO THE COUNTY GOVERNMENT OF
KAJIADO**

NOVEMBER 8, 2025

AMBOSELI NATIONAL PARK, KAJIADO COUNTY

1. We assemble here, in the sweeping heartlands of Kajiado County, to celebrate culture, exalt heritage, and restore justice.
2. We also gather to pay tribute to the Maa people, a people whose identity is inseparable from the land, the wildlife, and the rhythm of nature.
3. More than a century ago, this land, then known as the Southern Maasai Reserve, was yours, a sanctuary where your ancestors roamed freely, living in harmony with the elephants, the lions, the antelopes, and all the animals in the wild.
4. They were custodians of a landscape so magnificent, so rich in wonder that it continues to inspire awe today, just as it did then.
5. In 1974, the Amboseli was gazetted as a national park and, later in 1991, it was recognised as a UNESCO Man and Biosphere Reserve.
6. Though the intention behind this recognition was noble and well-meaning, born out of a desire to strengthen conservation, the outcome carried painful consequences, leaving wounds, rifts, and disruptions that even the passage of time could not heal.
7. The Maa community lost management and benefit, and, for decades, you carried that pain with dignity, patience, and faith that, one day, justice would prevail.



8. Among those who stood at the forefront of that long and difficult struggle were three gallant sons of this land: Francis ole Legis, Lenku ole Mpaa, and Lesinko ole Nkaitole. Though they are no longer with us, their courage, conviction, and unyielding commitment to the cause of justice for Amboseli will forever be remembered. Today, we honour them posthumously for their selfless fight to defend the rights of their people and to protect the heritage of this park.
9. In 2005, President Mwai Kibaki made an audacious and sincere effort to return the Amboseli to the community under the then Olkejuado County Council. Yet, despite his determination, the process proved too complex and too difficult to bring to completion.
10. Two years ago, in August 2023, during the Maa Cultural Festival in Narok, you came to me with your petition, asking that the Maa people be recognised once again as the rightful stewards of the Amboseli.
11. I recall making a commitment to you that I would do everything within my power to ensure that justice would no longer be delayed.
12. We subsequently established an advisory committee, engaged both levels of government, and listened to conservation experts, lawyers, and community members.



13. I also remember that when we began this journey, I was warned that it would not be easy; that there would be legal hurdles, institutional complexities, and competing interests to navigate. But with wisdom, consultation, and respect for the rule of law, we found a way.
14. Today, I stand here to fulfil that promise.
15. And therefore, Ladies and Gentlemen, as part of preserving the splendour of our heritage, advancing our national aspiration for shared prosperity, and in exercise of the authority vested in the Head of State and Government, I direct that the management of Amboseli National Park is vested in the County Government of Kajiado.
16. Fellow citizens, this transfer represents what Kenya must always stand for: Justice, inclusion, and shared prosperity. It affirms a fundamental truth - that the people who live closest to wildlife are not enemies of conservation; they are its first defenders.
17. This is what devolution means: Power, responsibility, and opportunity in the hands of the people.
18. To the Maa community, your elders have already demonstrated commitment by setting aside over one million acres for wildlife corridors and dispersal areas. That act alone tells the world that the Maasai are not asking for charity; you are asking for partnership.



19. I am fully aware that there are voices in the conservation community, both at home and abroad, who still carry doubts about this decision. To them, I say this: Nothing has been lost today; in fact, everything has been gained. This is not a weakening of conservation; it is renewal because conservation that is led by the people lasts longer, works better, and heals deeper.
20. Let me also assure every stakeholder that the government is fully committed to protecting our wildlife and fulfilling all international obligations.
21. The Kenya Wildlife Service and the Wildlife Research and Training Institute will continue to provide security, ecological monitoring, and technical oversight as they do across all protected areas.
22. The Ministry of Tourism and Wildlife will continue to provide policy guidance and technical support to the County Government of Kajiado.
23. To the leaders of Kajiado County and the Maa community, the new semi-autonomous government agency that will manage Amboseli is not a political instrument; it is a professional institution for the people, and it must remain so.



24. Let us not allow politics, division, or greed to taint this victory. This agency must operate with transparency, professionalism, and integrity for the good of conservation and community alike.
25. As President, I will take personal responsibility to ensure that the National Government provides oversight and support.
26. May the Maa people show the world what history has always known - that they are the true, faithful, and steadfast guardians of Amboseli. May this community protect this land with the same devotion with which it honours its heritage. And may Amboseli rise, stronger and prouder, its dignity renewed, and its future secured.
27. Let this moment mark not only the return of stewardship, but also the triumph of justice, the power of community, and the promise of conservation founded on ownership.

I thank you.

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