OPENING STATEMENT

BY

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DURING THE OPENING CEREMONY OF THE WORLD CONFERENCE ON EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT (ESD)

10 – 12 NOVEMBER, 2014
AICHI - NAGOYA, JAPAN
His Imperial Highness the Crown Prince of Japan,
UNESCO Director General,
Fellow Ministers,
Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is with great pleasure that I take the floor today during this important event.

First and foremost, I would like to sincerely thank the Government of Japan and its people, for hosting and organizing this conference, in collaboration with UNESCO.

This conference could not be held in a better time than now, when the world is looking back at its engagements, made 15 years back and looking forward, for new objectives, new pathways for a more sustainable future.

The time has reached to look back, from World Summit on Sustainable Development in 2002, which recommended the UN Decade on Education for Sustainable Development (DESD) and the adoption of the latter in 2005 by the UN General Assembly (UNGA) and ask ourselves whether, in the words of the former Secretary General of the UN, Mr. Kofi Annan “we have managed to take this idea of sustainable development that seems abstract, and turn it to a global reality.”

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Kenya is encouraged by the renewed thrust in support of ESD. The UN Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio +20) called on Member States to “promote education for sustainable development and to integrate sustainable development more actively into education beyond the Decade of Education for Sustainable Development”.

We are also encouraged and wholly support the final proposal of the Open Working Group for Sustainable Development Goals (OWG) that
seeks “by 2030 to ensure that all learners acquire knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development” through ESD among others.

Director General, it is a fact that the UN Decade on ESD has been successful on raising awareness on the importance of changing our mindsets, making sure that our education systems are relevant to our local development, and I congratulate you on UNESCO’s leadership in this area. However, over and above the raised awareness, which we of course welcome, there is need to closely focus on what has been implemented on the ground. I will now focus on my country, Kenya.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I’m glad to inform you, that my country has not been left behind in this ESD movement. Kenya’s development blueprint, the Vision 2030, which is aimed at making Kenya a globally competitive and prosperous nation, has a key goal of ensuring “a nation living in clean, secure and sustainable environment” by the year 2030. Such an objective cannot be attained without ESD. The Kenyan economy is currently driven by its natural resources base. Important sectors that contribute the biggest percentage to Kenya’s GDP, namely Agriculture and Tourism, are directly linked to Kenya’s efforts to safeguard its environment.

The Government of Kenya is implementing the objectives of the United Nation Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (UNDESD) through the National ESD Implementation Strategy spearheaded by National Environmental Management Authority (NEMA) in cooperation with the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology. The main objective of the strategy is to guide all ESD interventions and provide an enabling environment and capacity for all sectors and stakeholders to effectively contribute towards the achievement of sustainable development.

Through the strategy, nine Regional Centers of Expertise (RCEs) in ESD have been established to increase awareness of ESD at local levels. To spearhead ESD initiatives in Kenya, a National Steering Committee drawn from the Government, civil society and the private sector has been constituted. The close working relationship between the three entities is a
perfect formula for creating public awareness on the importance of ESD. A key achievement of this multi-sectoral approach is the Kenya Green Schools Initiative Programme implemented as a partnership initiative between the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MOEST) and the Ministry of Environment, Water and Natural Resources. The initiative recognizes schools as agents of change and focal points for communities from where the latter could buy seedlings so as to increase the tree cover in their respective regions.

Another key achievement is the ESD Model Schools in cooperation with the Israel’s Agency for International Development Cooperation (MASHAV) currently focusing on two model schools. In addition, my Ministry, in collaboration with other key institutions has established 2 ESD demonstration centres aimed at spearheading reorientation of school operations and infrastructure developments to address ESD concerns. Through this initiative, teachers are also benefitting through peer training. My Ministry has also included Life Skills Education (LSE), Peace Education, Guidance and Counseling, HIV and AIDS and Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) programmes within its 5 year education strategy (NESSP, 2013-2018). This aims at developing students who can make informed decisions and contribute to their local social economic development.

However, a number of challenges exist in the implementation of ESD among them, the national coordination of different ESD actors and initiatives and their contribution to the National ESD Strategy. Another notable challenge is the lack of capacity in the area of ESD, both technical and financial capacity. ESD is still a relatively new area in education with many questions still pending regarding its integration into education systems. This calls for more research on ESD, particularly from African Universities focusing on Africa’s unique contexts. Cooperation with institutions with the technical back up such as UNESCO and other Member States with more experience is important.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Inspite of these challenges, the Kenya Government is careful not lose the momentum made during this decade on ESD. I believe the challenges
experienced by my Country are similar to challenges faced by others, hence, our need to work together and develop strategies to overcome emerging challenges as comrades in one ship, our global earth.

It is in this regard that my Ministry will collaborate with UNESCO, in line with the Global Action Programme on ESD (GAP) so as to develop a National Education ESD Policy and ESD Policy Guidelines within the next two years. Through this policy, Kenya will concretely integrate ESD into its entire education system. Teachers and teacher organizations will also be involved in the process, as they are critical agents for change for a more sustainable future.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In 2006, African Ministers of Education made a commitment to implement the Decade of Education for Sustainable Development through the Draft Strategy for ESD in Sub Saharan Africa that was adopted by Ministers of Education. The aim of the Strategy was to encourage and support Sub-Saharan States in promoting and developing education as a means for cultural, social and economic development for the benefit of Sub-Saharan peoples. Nevertheless, despite the political goodwill witnessed through the endorsement of the above strategy, ESD achievements throughout the continent have been un-even.

To this end, the Environmental Education and Training Action Plan for Africa has been developed that seeks to directly build capacity for responding to environmental issues, risks and associated sustainable development challenges in Africa, as outlined in the African Environmental Outlook Reports, and the 2012 Arusha Declaration on Africa’s Post Rio+20 Strategy for Sustainable Development by the African Ministerial Conference of the Environment (AMCEN). I am glad to note that the World Wide Fund (WWF) is currently supporting the East African Community to develop a Regional ESD Policy and to mainstream ESD in the curriculum harmonisation structures and frameworks within the Region, with an intention of covering others. To leverage on the current efforts, more attention should be given to African Youth thus increasing their interest in ESD. I thank UNESCO and the Government of Japan for having organized a Youth World Conference on ESD, preceding the
current meeting and I’m looking forward for its recommendations and their integration into the final Aichi Nagoya Declaration.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

**As I conclude,** let me reiterate Kenya’s support for the UNESCO Global Action Plan on ESD (GAP) as a follow up to the DESD. We particularly welcome the five areas of focus namely; *Policy Support, institutional support, educators, youth and local communities.* I am glad that this commitment is made as we celebrate this year 50 years of Kenya and UNESCO collaboration.

**Finally,** I wish to thank the Government of Japan for their support of ESD globally. I would like to particularly congratulate and thank the Japanese Government for the approval of the 195th UNESCO Board for the establishment of the UNESCO/Japan Prize for Education for Sustainable Development. The prize will go a long way in promoting and supporting ESD globally.

**Thank you Ladies and Gentlemen.**