

Closing Address by the Minister for Natural Resources & Tourism Honourable Mrs Zakia Hamdani Meghji (Mp)

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**CLOSING ADDRESS BY THE MINISTER
FOR NATURAL RESOURCES & TOURISM
HONOURABLE MRS ZAKIA HAMDANI MEGHJI (MP)**

I wish to congratulate you all for the successful completion of this first International Conference on the Eastern Arc Mountains. The conference is a successful beginning of the long journey towards enhanced conservation of the biodiversity of the Eastern Arc held in trust by Tanzania.

Mr Chairman, I have taken stock of session and poster themes, which ranged from historical perspectives, human-nature interactions, research and management of the Eastern Arc Mountains. It is abundantly clear that as a starting point of projected interventions, you have striven to understand contending stakes in the Eastern Arc Mountains. **“To understand is to forgive?”** Towards understanding (the Eastern Arc) facilitates **management**.

Mr Chairman, I hasten to insist that the time spent to forge such understanding is not time wasted. As observed in one of the Key Note Addresses of this conference, we need to know our problems in the Biodiversity conservation battle. Ignorance of the main facets of the biodiversity conservation crusade is as equally harmful as the pretence of knowledge.

In this conference you have come-up with commendable recommendations. These recommendations crystallise into one thing. There is no doubt that options for managing forest resources let alone biodiversity conservation involve difficult trade-offs and hard choices—often suggesting that sectoral approaches are no longer tenable.

Mr Chairman, our problems do not end there. It has taken close to 19 years to have this (first) International Conference on the Biodiversity of Eastern Arc Mountains. Going by the richness of these mountain blocks, and taking into consideration a high degree of ecological isolation, it is advisable not to view, in operational terms, these mountains *en bloc*. This calls for another series of workshops focusing exclusively on the future management of broadly similar groups of these mountain blocks, for this is in line with the saying: think globally act locally.

Mr Chairman, this is the challenge to the scientific community. Show the way on how best this could be done as further refinement of biodiversity conservation strategies in these mountains, including a proposal to add the Eastern Arc Mountains to the list of World Heritage Sites.