



**STATEMENT BY H.E. MOHAMED MAHARAGE JUMA,
AMBASSADOR OF THE UNITED REPUBLIC OF
TANZANIA TO THE UAE AT THE SIGNING CEREMONY
OF THE MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING ON THE
CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT OF DUGONG AND
THEIR HABITATS THROUGHOUT THEIR RANGE, ABU
DHABI, UAE ON 31ST OCTOBER 2007**

**Chairperson,
Distinguished delegates,
Representative of Development Partners,
Representatives of NGOs,
Ladies and Gentlemen.**

It is with great satisfaction that the delegation of the United Republic of Tanzania has participated in this process of concluding the development of Memorandum of Understanding on the Conservation and Management of Dugongs and their Habitats throughout their Range.

At the out set, I wish to express our gratitude to the Government of the United Arab Emirates for hosting this historic meeting. I also wish to register our appreciation for the hospitality extended to us. The impeccable accommodation and excellent working environment has contributed enormously to the success of our deliberations.

Chairperson,

Allow me to draw the attention of this august assembly to the fact that the information on the distribution and abundance of the Dugong in the United Republic of Tanzania is scanty and is mainly in the form of anecdotal reports and incidental sightings.

From year 2000, records suggest that 8-10 dugongs are killed annually for their meat and oil, but accidental entanglement and drowning in gillnets occurs often. Other threats include degradation of the sea grass bed caused by the sedimentation from rivers.

Dugongs were reported to be relatively abundant and widely distributed prior to the mid-1970s, with incidental gillnet capture of 3-5 animals per day. Sightings are now very rare, with only 32 sightings in the whole country between January 2000 and May 2003. The first nation-wide assessment was carried out in 2003. On going research on Mafia Island and the capture of an individual in a fishing net in January 2004 indicate the existence of small and threatened population in the Mafia - Rufiji-Kilwa area, which is also a Ramsar site. This is probably the largest remaining concentration in Tanzania. Other relatively recent sightings have been recorded in the northern coastal waters of Tanzania.

In the Rufiji-Kilwa area Dugongs are said to move close to the shore during the cooler months of May-August (Southeast monsoon) when sea temperatures are low, and to deeper waters during the warmer months of November-February (Northeast monsoon).

Chairperson,

Allow me to point it out that Tanzania' obligation to manage the living aquatic resources extends beyond her national waters, as the resources do not recognize geo-political boundaries. In addressing issues that relate to the management, sustainable utilization and conservation of the aquatic resources and the environment we find ourselves drawn into the International arena. Indeed Tanzania is committed both in word and deed.

Chairperson,

Many transnational issues involve shared living resources and aquatic environmental degradation. This calls for collective effort of the Global Community in developing management measures to resolve resource use conflicts, reduce or mitigate negative impact and to develop common standards and procedures for monitoring. It also calls for the mutual recognition of the impact of development activities and to implement the relevant International agreements/conventions and codes of conduct for appropriate actions.

Given this situation, Tanzania recognizes this noble obligation; and in the implementation of the policy strategies; activities are developed along these lines. Tanzania strives to foster regional and international co-operation for purposes of development, sustainable utilization and conservation of the living aquatic resources and environment for the benefit of mankind.

Chairperson,

We are just about to commence a very important journey for the conversation and development of this precious yet highly threatened marine creature in the name of Dugong. Jointly and cooperatively in the region, we have common objectives to accomplish. Let me highlight them by numerically:-

1. Reduce direct and indirect causes of dugong mortality
2. Improve our understanding of dugong and their habitat through research and monitoring
3. Protect, conserve and manage habitats for dugong
4. Raise awareness of dugong conservation
5. Enhance national, regional and international cooperation
6. Promote implementation of the MoU
7. Improve legal protection of dugongs and their habitats
8. Enhance national, regional and international cooperation on capacity building

Chairperson,

In Tanzania we have the people. We also have the Dugongs. Of late we also have other emerging creatures called Coelacanths, that are considered to be a living fossil. We would like our colleagues present here to realize that the interface between our people on one hand, and dugongs on the other, is characterized by what is known by the global anthem as poverty. One of the challenges is therefore to establish the missing link that should ultimately translate the deliberate continued existence of dugongs and coelacanths into a solution that should contribute to the peoples poverty eradication. In that way the common man should be able to appreciate the efforts of conservation experts, which are geared towards mankind.

It is my hope that on this matter, every delegation represented here is very much on the same page. The bigger challenge and this is perhaps why we are here, is that, the MoU, as well as the

Conservation Management Plan, are as good as they are implemented on the ground. It is only through their implementation or rather their operationalisation that the Global Community can be unified into the pursuit of the shared objectives. **If we were constructing a house, this is the foundation.** Chairperson, the stage we have accomplished is a very important stage. It has taken a long time to achieve, but we draw from it a lot of satisfaction. My delegation is confident that our meeting will lay a strong foundation for the Conservation and Management of Dugongs and marine mammals. We are committed to conclude our work in the best possible manner.

Chairperson,

I have talked about the historic significance of our meeting, the work ahead of us, and the shared mission of the delegations present here. Tanzania is fully committed to implementing the MoU and its conservation and management plan which we collectively developed. Further, we call upon development partners to join us in this endeavor

I thank you for kind attention.