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INSTITUTE FOR CULTURE AND ECOLOGY(ICE) CONDEMNS THE PROPOSED ERASURE OF SECTION 34(2) OF THE KENYA FOREST CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT ACT 2016

The proposed deletion of the section 34(2) of the Kenya Forest Conservation and Management Act, 2016, is not only outrageous but also undermines the conservation efforts by stakeholders to protect Kenya's forests and should be condemned with the strongest terms. By intending to strike off this section, the National Assembly's Procedure and House Rules Committee has showcased their insensitivity to the protection of public forests, an act that is not only selfish but risks exposing the forests to wanton destruction and encroachment as witnessed in the 1990s and 2000. hence threatening the existence of biodiversity and other critical resources harbored there.

Section 34(2) clearly spells out the need to protect public forests from boundary variations and any other undertakings that are a risk to the forests. Why then would the same section that safeguards our public forests be subjected to deletion? It beats any human understanding that Kenya has taken so many years to try and recover from the wanton destruction of her forests yet the same people who are bestowed with the authority to develop measures to strengthen the existing policies and strategies are the same ones who are frustrating forests protection efforts.

Kenya being a signatory to international treaties among them the PARIS Agreement and also being a member of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), has been keen on combating dangerous human interference with the climate system by increasing the country's forest cover as means of stabilizing greenhouse gases. Hence, any alteration to the Act will undermine these efforts that the country has worked tirelessly to implement. Is this what conservation is all about? Exposing what has taken years to protect to unscrupulous individuals with their own selfish interests?

It is an open secret that the current Forest Conservation and Management Act 2016 has played a significant role in strengthening measures on countering further destruction of forests as witnessed 1990s. Through this act, the government and communities neighboring the forests have been partnering to protect and conserve forests through various activities that have proven to be of mutual benefit to all. By striking off section 34(2) from the act will not only destroy the symbiotic relationship that has been developed with the forests and various stakeholders among them hundred thousands of community members but also expose water catchment areas and biodiversity to destruction.

The Institute for Culture and Ecology(ICE) therefore supports the Kenya Forest Service (KFS) in calling for urgent cessation of any activities aimed at deletion of section 34(2) of the Forest Conservation and Management Act 2016. To the National Assembly's Procedure and House Rules Committee, instead of seeking to erase section 34(2), you should be working towards strengthening policies and strategies that are aimed at complimenting what is contained in the act.

In the words of 2004 Nobel Laureate and environmental activists the late Professor Wangari Maathai, who tirelessly fought for the environment more so forests, "It's a matter of life and death for this country. Kenya forests are facing extinction and it is a man-made problem."

Martin Mwenda Muriuki

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Martin Mwenda Muriuki', with a stylized flourish at the end.

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