



MINISTRY OF TOURISM AND WILDLIFE
OFFICE OF THE CABINET SECRETARY

PRESS STATEMENT BY REBECCA MIANO, EGH, CABINET SECRETARY FOR TOURISM AND WILDLIFE ON THE NEW MODEL FOR COMPENSATING HUMAN-WILDLIFE CONFLICT (HWC) VICTIMS AND THE MAY 2025 HWC COMPENSATION DRIVE ACROSS KENYA

Nairobi, Wednesday, 7th May 2025

For years, Kenya—a country endowed with a rich biodiversity heritage—is renowned for her steadfast efforts in wildlife conservation. As a country, we have endeavoured to strike a balance between the protection of our natural heritage and the needs of communities who call landscapes where wildlife and human beings coexist home. Naturally, we have had numerous cases of human-wildlife conflict (HWC) in the course of balancing competing needs. Kenya's wildlife is a national treasure and a key pillar of tourism. It contributes significantly to our economy. However, the truth is that the communities that coexist with this heritage have paid a high price we cannot possibly wish away.

Kenya's journey of dealing with human-wildlife conflict is rooted in the sensibility that has informed our communities of the need to coexist with wildlife since time immemorial. From the legal point of view, Kenya formalised her approach to human-wildlife conflict compensation upon the enactment of the Wildlife Conservation and Management Act of 1976. Before then, no such consideration existed.

Evidently, over that period we have had a fair share of trials and triumphs in the bid to compensate victims of human-wildlife conflict. Today, we announce a transformative step in confronting the challenge of human-wildlife conflict.

The new era of compensation for affected communities is a model anchored on transparency and built on technology, equity, and prospects for enduring partnerships. This new approach will prosper more if information around it is disseminated clearly and in a timely manner. That is precisely the reason why we have invited targeted media representatives to partner with us in this journey.

Meanwhile, the Government appreciates the patience and sacrifice of the communities that have borne the brunt of human-wildlife conflict over the years. Going forward, I, on behalf of the Government, reassure Kenyans of the commitment to address issues of human-wildlife conflict as a matter of priority.

At the heart of this transformative and digitally enabled compensation scheme launched in 2024 to replace out-dated manual systems, is a model that aims at enhancing transparency first and foremost. Already piloted in six counties, this new method aims at accelerating claim processing through real-time data collection, verification, and direct payments and where possible via mobile services like M-Pesa for claims under Ksh 100,000. So far, Ksh. 10 million has been wired to beneficiaries swiftly and transparently, with 804 pending claims set to follow soon. This system is both about efficiency and the restoration of dignity to those impacted by human-wildlife conflict. It is also about rebuilding trust in a shared conservation vision.

We at the Ministry believe that true progress lies dealing with human-wildlife conflict is in empowering communities. Under the Wildlife Conservation and Management Act (2013), we have revived County-level Community Wildlife Compensation Committees (CWCCs) to ensure that affected parties are handled in a devolved system that prioritises justice and openness. This method is meant to ensure that individuals who understand the realities on the ground better get involved in verifying human-wildlife conflict-related claims locally. The model is designed to reduce delays, combat corruption, and place decision-making power where it belongs - with the people and communities that coexist with wildlife.

Kenya's commitment to fairness in human-wildlife compensation is reflected in the noteworthy evolution of compensation amounts over the years. From the Ksh. 5 million for human death in 2013, we have disbursed over Ksh. 4.8 billion since 2018, including Ksh. 2.8 billion under the current administration. Yet, with 20,000 claims pending and a Ksh. 1.36 billion backlog, we acknowledge the urgency of sustained action. Our revised compensation framework ensures that awards align with market rates, honouring both lives and livelihoods.

Herein lies our collective challenge – the need for an urgent and comprehensive awareness drive. Despite rising human-wildlife conflict incidents, peaking at 8,272 cases in 2023, funding for affected parties remains inadequate. We, therefore, invite the press to join us in a national campaign to spotlight stories on human-wildlife conflict and to create a case for the mobilisation of additional resources towards HWCF. Some of those funds should go to causes aimed at advocating for preventive solutions. We have no doubts whatsoever that well-informed and coordinated media voices can turn statistics into empathy and inspire policy measures that will, in turn, favour a fairer regimen of human-wildlife conflict victimhood in Kenya.

From the elephants of Taita Taveta, and Amboseli and Maasai Mara to the pastoralists of Laikipia, human-wildlife conflict touches many Kenyans in numerous ways that rope in communities least affected by human-wildlife conflict. Beyond policy, this new model of compensating human-wildlife conflict victims is a pledge to safeguard biodiversity even as we take care of the human needs of our citizens.

The reality, however, is that the Government cannot do this alone. We call upon the media to consider entering a structured partnership with the Ministry of Tourism and Wildlife in telling our story; a narrative that will shift our biodiversity conservation from conflict to coexistence. We also take this opportunity to announce a human-wildlife compensation drive in various spots in Kenya between now and the climax event slated for the 26th of May in Meru County.

As the Cabinet Secretary charged with overseeing the wildlife docket, I urge every journalist and broadcasters assigned to news coverage in this sector and indeed content creators as well to stand with us. Where you can, visit our pilot counties, engage with beneficiaries, and amplify the call for solidarity in making human-wildlife coexistence a rewarding venture. The future of wildlife and communities depends on our collective efforts to make coexistence feasible for the benefit of us all.

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