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OF STATE FOR NATIONAL HERITAGE AND NTIMAMA, E.G.H., MP, ON THE OCCASION OF THE LAUNCH OF LAMU FOUNDATION.

15TH APRIL 2010.

PROTOCOLS

DISTINGUISHED LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

I AM DELIGHTED TO BE PART OF THIS DISTINGUISHED GATHERING THIS AFTERNOON TO LAUNCH THE LAMU FOUNDATION. LAMU SYMBOLIZES THE EPITOME OF KENYAN HERITAGE. IT HAS OVER ONE THOUSAND YEARS OF CONTINOUS LIVING CIVILIZATION. IT IS THE CRADLE OF SWAHILI LANGUAGE AND IT IS WELL RENOWNED FOR ITS NEAR PRESTINE LANDSCAPE AS WELL AS ELEGANT SWAHILI ARCHITECTURE, ORAL TRADITIONS, CUISINE AND CRAFTS. MOREOVER, THE NARROW ALLEYS AND STREETS OF LAMU, THE DONKEYS, THE SERENE LIFESTYLE AND THE UNMATCHED HOSPITALITY OF THE PEOPLE MAKES LAMU THE HAVEN FOR VISITORS FROM ALL WALKS OF LIFE. BECAUSE OF THESE OUTSTANDING UNIVERSAL VALUES, LAMU REACHED ITS PINNACLE IN 2001 WHEN IT WAS INSCRIBED IN THE PRESTIGIOUS UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE LIST.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, DESPITE THESE SUPERLATIVE QUALITIES, THE LAMU WORLD HERITAGE SITE FACES MAJOR CHALLENGES AND SERIOUS THREATS TO ITS CONTINUED SURVIVAL AS A LIVING

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ST AND FOREMOST THREAT IS THE ENCROACHMENT INTO SHELLA SAND DUNES BY PRIVATE DEVELOPERS AND THE POLITICALLY INFLUENTIAL ELITE. THESE SAND DUNES ARE THE ONLY SOURCE OF FRESH WATER FOR THE ENTIRE LAMU ISLAND AND ANY ENCROACHMENT MEANS DIRE CONSEQUENCES FOR THE CONTINUED SURVIVAL OF LAMU PEOPLE. AS A MATTER OF FACT, IF NOTHING IS URGENTLY DONE TO REMEDY THIS SITUATION, LAMU WILL END UP BEING A RUIN LIKE TAKWA, MANDA AND GEDE. THIS WOULD INDEED BY A TRAGEDY OF GIGANTIC PROPORTION WHICH I AM SURE NO ONE WOULD WANT TO HAPPEN DURING OUR LIFETIME.

SECONDLY, THE ISSUE OF CONSERVATION OF THE OLD BUILDINGS SOME WHICH ARE COLLAPSING IS A MAJOR CHALLENGE. CONSERVATION OF THESE BUILDINGS IS VERY EXPENSIVE AND OFTEN BEYOND THE REACH OF THE LOCAL COMMUNITY OWNERS. THIRDLY, SANITATION, WASTE DISPOSAL AND DRAINAGE ARE SERIOUS AND SEEMINGLY INTRACTABLE CONSTRAINTS THAT NEED TO BE ADDRESSED, AS THE POPULATION OF LAMU CONTINUES TO INCREASE. FOURTHLY, THE RAPID ACQUISITION OF PROPERTY AND BUILDINGS BY FOREIGNERS IS AN IMMINENT DANGER TO THE CONTINUED SURVIVAL OF LAMU AS A SWAHILI HERITAGE SITE. FIFTHLY, DISASTER PREPAREDNESS SUCH AS THE FIRE THAT RECENTLY RAZED DOWN A BIG PROPORTION OF FAZA VILLAGE IS A REAL THREAT. FINALLY, LIKE ALL THE OTHER PARTS OF THE

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LOW SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS OF THE LOCAL COMMUNITY REQUIRES URGENT REDRESS.

THESE THREATS AND CHALLENGES THAT FACE LAMU TODAY, REQUIRE A CONCERTED EFFORT OF ALL THE STAKEHOLDERS INCLUDING GOVERNMENT, PRIVATE SECTOR, INTERNATIONAL PARTNERS AND MOST IMPORTANTLY THE LOCAL COMMUNITY. NO ONE SINGLE INSTITUTION CAN RESOLVE ALL THESE CHALLENGES. THAT IS WHY I AM SO VERY PLEASED TODAY TO LAUNCH THE LAMU FOUNDATION. LOOKING AT YOUR AIMS AND OBJECTIVES, THEY CLEARLY DOVE-TAIL INTO THE MANDATE OF MY MINISTRY AS THE CUSTODIAN OF NATIONAL HERITAGE SITES AND THAT YOU WILL FORM A KEY PLANK IN ADDRESSING THE SERIOUS PROBLEMS FACING LAMU. YOU INTEND TO WORK IN THE AREAS THAT ADDRESS HUMAN RIGHTS, UPLIFTING THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS OF THE LOCAL LAMU PEOPLE, CAPACITY BUILDING AND CONSERVATION OF BOTH THE TANGIBLE AND INTANGIBLE HERITAGE OF LAMU. YOU ARE THEREFORE SUCH A WELCOME PARTNER.

AS THEY SAY, CHARITY BEGINS AT HOME, THE PROBLEMS OF LAMU WILL THEREFORE HAVE TO BE ADDRESSED BY LOCAL LAMU RESIDENTS FIRST AND THEN THE REST OF THE COUNTRY AND INTERNATIONAL PARTNERS CAN JOIN IN. LADIES AND GENTLEMEN JOIN ME IN OFFICIALLY LAUNCHING LAMU FOUNDATION.

THANK YOU AND GOD BLESS YOU ALL.