

## ***KENYA MARITIME AUTHORITY TAKES THE LEAD IN MANGROVE CONSERVATION***

The Kenya Maritime Authority (KMA) led a mangrove planting project at Mkupe Creek in Port reitz area by planting over 3000 seedlings together with local communities and its stakeholders on 22<sup>nd</sup> February , 2019. The Authority partnered with the Mombasa Kilindini Community Forest Association (MOKICFA). The exercise was aimed at conserving the endangered mangrove forest along the Coast and restoring degraded mangrove forests along the Mombasa creek. The project was in line with the Presidential Tree Planting Project directive intended to increase the country's forest cover from the current 7 per cent to 15 per cent by the year 2022 by planting 1.8 billion trees all over the country.

In a speech read on his behalf by John Omingo, the Head of Commercial Shipping Department, Maj (rtd) George Okong'o, KMA's Director General, highlighted that mangrove trees provide spawning grounds, nurseries, nutrients and shelter for a variety of marine species, including commercially important fish, shrimps and crabs, reptiles, amphibians, mammals and birds, provide a variety of benefits to human populations, including provision of firewood, timber, fisheries, other forest products, coastal protection, carbon sequestration, buffering seagrass beds from terrestrial sediment/nutrient loads, and cultural services such as recreation, ecotourism, spiritual and are an important breeding ground for artisanal fishers.”



“Unfortunately, the statistics on mangrove forest cover for Kenya point a bleak future. Studies show that total mangrove area has decreased gradually over about 25 years (1985-2010) and that Kenya has lost about 18 per cent of its mangroves at an average rate of 0.7 per cent per year.” He said, “This is attributed to overharvesting for fuelwood, timber and fish traps which has resulted in fragmentation of many mangrove forests, mangrove clearance for other land uses such as

agriculture, solar salt production and coastal development and pollution from industries, agriculture and domestic run-off, and incidences of oil spills, are other important causes of mangrove loss in Kenya.”

“As a result of destruction of these forests, we have lost important value attached with having healthy forests such as reduced rainfall, reduced fish catches, soil erosion among others,” He added.

Key guests who participated in the mangrove planting initiative included Col. Andre Cisse, the Secretary General from the Port Management Association of Eastern and Southern Africa (PMAESA) who lauded the Authority's initiative. The representative of Jomvu Constituency legislator, Badi Twalib, Moffat Murage was also present and urged the community to support efforts to conserve mangrove forests. Dr. June Mwajuma, the Mombasa County Chief Officer for Environment, Waste Management and Energy, and Rebecca Mungori from the Kenya Forest Services also encouraged the community and stakeholders to participate in mangrove conservation efforts.