

Acceptance Speech Sample

ACCEPTANCE SPEECH BY AMBASSADOR MACHARIA KAMAU DURING THE CONFERRAL OF THE ELIZABETH HAUB AWARD FOR ENVIRONMENTAL DIPLOMACY - TUESDAY JULY 28 2015 AT THE UNIVERSITY CLUB OF NEW YORK

I would like to thank the Elizabeth Haub Award for Environmental Diplomacy and the Jury of the Award from the International Council of Environmental Law (ICEL) and the Pace Law School for selecting me and honoring me with the Elizabeth Haub Award, Gold Medal.

I would like to recognize the Secretary General of the United Nations and other Senior UN officials present here and also my peers, Ambassadors, Permanent Representatives colleagues and friends. Thank you all for being here.

Let me also recognize my co-chair Ambassador Csaba Körösi, who is not here tonight for his exceptional work and for supporting and working with me on the SDG project. I could not have asked for a better partner.

It is not every day that one gets to hear of diplomats getting recognition of their work and effort; at least not where I come from. Diplomacy can sometimes feel like a long lonely slog especially if one is working on areas not popular or not of a high profile political nature.

I have been working in diplomatic situations over 30 years now with the United Nations mostly but also in the past 7 years with the Government of Kenya as Ambassador.

I acquired my diplomatic and negotiations skills working on a wide range of causes, but for the most part, most people who know of my history would point at my work for children both in development and conflict situations particularly with UNICEF but not exclusively so. I have also worked for years on economic and social development mostly with UNDP, as well as environmental matters mostly throughout my career and of course over the past 3 years my work has focused on the formulation and adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals although I have also led intergovernmental processes on forests, people living with disability and even as President of the UNICEF Board and South South Co-operation.

I would also like to recognize the great thinkers and diplomats before me who not only introduced the term and concept of Sustainable Development, but who through difficult political and social trenches of resistance and denial managed to get sustainable development on the global agenda and universally accepted. I hope the SDGs are a worthy milestone of this historical effort to promote sustainable development and in turn save and protect our planet for us and future generations.

It is my sincere and fervent hope, that the Sustainable Development Goals that the world will soon adopt in September fulfil their promise for all people, for our beleaguered planet and for building great prosperity and greater peace in our world.

Being a Permanent Representative in New York can be tricky, it is very easy to be consumed by the high profile political, peace and security issues especially when you come from a difficult region as I do. I can tell you I spent many vexed and anguishing days on political matters, including at the United Nations Security Council, over the past years, but development is my true calling.

But I also remember something that my 20 year old son said to me when I began my work as an Ambassador and he was afraid I would be consumed by political matters. He said “Dad do not go to the Dark side”. I know what he meant by that, I have tried to keep my integrity and values intact in all my political and security negotiations including speaking truth to the powers that be when I had to, but more importantly I have kept myself immersed in the great social, economic and environmental issues that are the true harbinger of a better world for all of us and that the United Nations provides the greatest platform for their exploitation and advancement.

Diplomacy and environment, children and development as I said are my passion. They are rooted in my being and my past, as a middle child in a larger combative and argumentative family and having grown-up on a farm where nature, plants, animals, wildlife, forest and rivers were part of my daily life, my skills or debate and negotiations are almost second nature, and my love for environment runs very deep.

Indeed love for a good rigorous debate and my passion for all things environment and natural is in my DNA I therefore feel immensely grateful for this opportunity that I have been given to serve as Ambassador/Permanent

Representative in a post where my passions and my skills can be deployed and exploited and put into constructive use.

So, if indeed I have contributed in a manner as recognized by this award, then I am doubly grateful and humbled and I feel that the good Lord has chosen to smile upon me in a special and unique way.

I am most grateful.

Thank you.