

LAUNCH OF EARTH/HEALING THE RIFT

SERENA HOTEL
THE GARDENS
24TH FEBRUARY 2007

THE GREAT RIFT VALLEY TRUST

I HAVE LIVED IN KENYA FOR 35 YEARS AND IN THIS TIME I HAVE SEEN MANY CHANGES. THERE ARE NO LONGER GIRAFFES AND GAZELLES ON THE WAY FROM THE AIRPORT TO THE TOWN, IN DEED THE TOWN SKYLINE HAS CHANGED BEYOND RECOGNITION, AND AT NIGHT IT IS THE SOUND OF CARS, NOT THE COUGH OF A LEOPARD IN THE LITTLE KARURA FOREST, THAT KEEPS ME AWAKE THE RARE TIMES I STAY IN MY HOUSE AT GIGIRI.

THESE CHANGES HAVE HAPPENED THROUGHOUT THE WORLD AND ARE AFFECTING THE LIVES AND THE HEALTH OF PEOPLE, WHILE 90% OF THE PEOPLE IN KENYA STILL RELY ON CHARCOAL AND SPACE FOR AGRICULTURE IS NEEDED. THE FORESTS HAVE MOSTLY GONE AND WITH THIS THE WEATHER PATTERNS HAVE CHANGED, AFFECTING THE LIVELIHOOD OF THE PEOPLE AND ALTHOUGH AFRICA, OF ALL CONTINENTS IS THE ONE WHICH CONTRIBUTES LEAST OF ALL THE EMISSIONS AND SO TO GLOBAL WARMING. AFRICA IS THE ONE THAT SUFFERS THE MOST CONSEQUENCES WITH EXTREMES IN THE WEATHER PATTERNS SUCH AS DROUGHT AND FLOODS, WHICH AFFECTS DIRECTLY THE LIVELIHOOD OF ITS PEOPLE.

IN ORDER TO SURVIVE AND IMPROVE OUR FUTURE, WE CAN NO LONGER BE PASSIVE AND EXPECT ACTION TO BE TAKEN BY OTHERS. I BELIEVE IN THE CAPACITY IN THE RIGHT AND IN THE DUTY OF INDIVIDUALS TO MAKE CHANGES IN GLOBAL AND VOLUNTARY ACTION TO REVERSE TRENDS.

EXTRAORDINARY AND LASTING CHANGES CAN HAPPEN WHEN THE POWER OF MEANS, BUSINESS AND IMAGINATION COME TO THE SERVICE OF AN IDEA.

WHAT WAS BORN OUT OF AN INTUITION HAS BLOOMED TO A POINT WHEN WE CAN NO LONGER GO ALONE. I AM GRATEFUL, I APPLAUD AND AM PROFOUNDLY IMPRESSED BY THE GRACIOUS AND GENEROUS WAY IN WHICH CELTEL AS THE LEADING COMPANY IN THE WORLD OF COMMUNICATION IN AFRICA ENTHUSIASTICALLY EMBRACED THIS QUEST.

CELTEL HAS SHOWN A SENSE OF RESPONSIBILITY AND IMAGINATION IN CAPTURING THE POSITIVE FAR REACHING RESULTS OF THIS COMMON QUEST.

I CAN SEE THIS IS THE FIRST STEP OF A LONG MEANINGFUL AND FULFILLING JOURNEY. I AND A NUMBER OF PEOPLE HERE TONIGHT BECAME AN ENVIRONMENTAL ACTIVIST ADVOCATING THE CO-EXISTENCE OF PEOPLE AND NATURE AND UNDERSTANDING THAT DEVELOPMENT AND CONSERVATION MUST GO HAND IN HAND, AT A TIME WHEN THE DANGER OF ENVIRONMENTAL DEGRADATION DID NOT SEEM YET QUITE SO IMMINENT NOR WAS IT YET SO VISIBLE.

NOW THERE IS NO TIME TO LOSE AND EVERY POSSIBLE MEANS AT EVERY LEVEL MUST BE USED TO DO SOMETHING ABOUT THE VERY SURVIVAL OF THE PLANET THAT WE SHARE AND OF WHICH WE ARE ONLY TEMPORARY TENANTS.

AS WE ADAPT TO DIFFERENT PATTERNS WE NEED TO MAKE SACRIFICES TO CHANGE THE WAYS THINGS ARE DONE AND USE THIS TIME, THOUGH IT IS NOT ENOUGH TO PREACH, WE NEED TO USE OUR IMAGINATION. THE MESSAGE MUST SPREAD AND THE CHALLENGE MUST BE PICKED UP BY EVERYONE.

WE BREATHE THE SAME AIR AND POLLUTION TRAVELS. WE NEED TO FIND COMMON DENOMINATORS BEYOND DIVERSITIES AND INTOLERANCE. WE NEED TO USE EVERY POSSIBLE MEANS.

THE GREAT RIFT VALLEY TRUST WAS BORN TO BRING ATTENTION TO PREVALENT ENVIRONMENTAL PROBLEMS AND TAKE ACTION, THROUGH THE MEDIUM OF ART AND CREATIVITY.

TO BRING PEOPLE TOGETHER FROM ALL CORNERS OF THE WORLD TO OVERCOME BARRIERS THROUGH THE MEDIUM OF ART AND SPIRITUALITY AND TO CREATE FUSION ART IN ALL CREATIVE FIELDS INSPIRED BY THE ENVIRONMENT OF THE GREAT RIFT VALLEY HUMANITY COMMON CRADLE.

TO BRING THE BEAUTY AND CREATIVITY OF AFRICA TO A LARGER PUBLIC, AT THE SAME TIME CHANGING THE NEGATIVE PERCEPTION OF AFRICA DEPICTED BY WORLD MEDIA NORMALLY AS A DESPERATE CONTINENT IN NEED OF HELP. ON THE CONTRARY, I BELIEVE THAT AFRICA, AND KENYA - WHERE THE UNTIED NATION ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME IS BASED CAN SEND THE WORLD A POWERFUL MESSAGE OF RESPONSIBILITY AND INITIATIVE. THEY CAN LEAD THE WAY AND GIVE A LESSON TO THE WORLD WITH ITS HUMANITY AND ITS SENSE OF RESPONSIBILITY. AFTER ALL THE PEOPLE OF AFRICA HAVE STILL MANAGED TO SURVIVE ALONGSIDE THE EXTRAORDINARY CREATURES THAT HAVE DISAPPEARED IN THE REST OF THE WORLD.

WE STILL HAVE THE DINOSAURS WE CALLED ELEPHANT, RHINO, GIRAFFE. THE CALL TO ACTION HAS TO SPREAD TO ALL.

THE GREAT RIFT VALLEY TRUST SUPPORTED BY CELTEL IS LEADING THIS INITIATIVE OF BRINGING TANGIBLE CHANGES THROUGH IMAGINATION AND BUILDING OF BRIDGES.

THIS YEAR THE TOPIC IS CLIMATE CHANGE; THE INITIATIVE OF ONE BILLION TREE IN 2007 WAS HATCHED HERE AND IT IS HERE THAT THE LIFE AND ACTION OF OUR PROFESSOR MAATHAI HAS LED TO THE RECOGNITION OF HER WORK IN TREE PLANTING THROUGH THE HIGHEST RECOGNITION OF THE NOBEL PRICE.

IT IS APPROPRIATE THAT KENYA LEADS THIS CAMPAIGN THROUGH ALL THIS BUSINESSES AND WHILE I APPLAUD CELTEL I URGE OTHERS TO JOIN IN THE MOST IMPORTANT CRUSADE THAT ONE CAN BE INVOLVED IN TODAY.

TREES ARE LIFE AND OUR EARTH BELONGS TO US ALL. I HAVE READ THAT IF EACH OF US PLANTED TWO SEEDLING FOR THE NEXT TEN YEAR WE WOULD MANAGE TO REVERSE GLOBAL WARMING. WE NEED TO CREATE INCENTIVES FOR PEOPLE TO PLANT TREES AND TO MAKE IT EASY FOR THE ONES WHO HAVE NO IDEA OF HOW TO GO ABOUT IT.

I WOULD LIKE TO THANK PARTICULARLY JEREMY BLOCK AND LONGONOT FARM FOR THE GIFT OF ONE THOUSAND INDIGENOUS TREES WHICH WILL BE DONATED TO AMREF TO PLANT IN TEN NAIROBI SLUMS OF KIBERA AND DAGORETTI TO KICK OFF THIS CAMPAIGN AND GREEN THE SLUMS.

THIS TREE IS **CROTON MEGALOCARPA**. IT'S OIL CAN BE BURNED IN LAMPS... THESE LAMPS ARE ON YOUR TABLE TONIGHT!...

KUKI GALLMANN