Greetings!

“Tourism for water”

On Wednesday 22nd March 2018, Kenya joined the rest of the globe to mark the World Water Day. The theme for this year’s event was nature for water and its aim was to explore nature-based solutions to the water challenges in the 21st Century.

Water is essential for health, social and economic development. The amount and quality of water available depend on climatic conditions, hydrological factors, and resource management. Kenya is home to impressive projects that tackle water issues from a multitude of perspectives, including research and initiatives using interdisciplinary approaches. Kenya is a water-scarce country with less than 1,000m³ per capita of renewable freshwater supplies. 80% of Kenya is made up of arid and semi-arid lands. Variability of rainfall in these areas ensures that local populations have limited socio-economic opportunities. As populations soar and livelihoods are threatened by the unsustainable consumption of regional resources, productivity decreases and the potential for conflict over resources increases. This may be particularly important in the Horn of Africa where water security has real economic, social, ecological, and political value.

According to the Kenya National Bureau of statistics summary of the 2009 census report, it indicates the main sources of water in Kenya as follows in (%): 5.1% from ponds/dam/lake,
30.0% from piped water, 21.6% from streams, 35.4% from spring/well/borehole, 1.1% from rain/harvested and 6.8% of the population gets water from other sources.

According to the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) on the tourism and the sustainable development goals-journey to 2030 publications, it states that the Tourism investment requirement for providing utilities need to play a critical role in achieving water access and security, as well as hygiene and sanitation for all. The efficient use of water in tourism, pollution control can be key to safeguarding our most precious resource.

How can the hotel and tourism industry contribute to water conservation?

- **Investment in water efficient equipment and technologies**: tourism accommodation facilities should consider the use of water efficient technology such as dual cistern toilets, faucet aerators, efficient shower heads, drip irrigation systems, efficient sprinklers, water meters, etc. the facilities should establish clear water monitoring systems as a long-term water conservation practice.

- **Water recycling**: tourism facilities can consider investing in waste water recycling technology which efficiently treats waste water. After testing, the treated water can be reused for purposes such as irrigating lawn and gardens. In some instances, the water can be reused in flushing toilets. when water is recycled/reused, there is less demand for ground water use and therefore reduces dependence on limited water sources such as boreholes, wells, springs, rivers, etc.

- **Harvesting rain water**: rain water is naturally soft and therefore using rainwater instead of tap water in laundry operations can significantly reduce the consumption of detergents and other laundry chemicals. Rainwater is also the best for watering plants or irrigating the lawns within the facility grounds. Similar to recycled water above, using rain water also provides an alternative therefore reducing dependence on ground water sources.

- **Effective communication and training**: communicate to your guests, staff and even involve the local community on the importance of conserving water or using water resources sustainably. Regularly train the staff how to maintain water equipment and how to make prudent use of water. They should also be encouraged to put forward their suggestions on effective water management in the accommodation facility. Training should be done on a regular basis and it should include staff at all levels. A standard operating procedure or manual can be developed on effective water management and shared with the staff.

- **Community involvement**: the communities surrounding the protected areas should be involved in the conservation of the general environment such as the water towers by taking care of the forests, avoid illegal logging, and getting sustainable alternatives to using charcoal. In addition, the community should be discouraged from obstructing the biological patterns of those areas as well as also plant and nurture more trees. This should be a collective and collaborative effort by all stakeholders.
“The first rule of sustainability is to align with natural forces, or at least not try to defy them.” – Paul Hawken