

## Letter from the Director of the National Museums of Kenya

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## Letter from the Director of the National Museums of Kenya

The emphasis on sustainable utilisation of the natural resources of East Africa has been welcomed by all, professional and amateur biologists alike. For decades the scientific community has been painstakingly documenting and analysing the diversity of life forms throughout this part of the African continent. The vast collections of plants and animals held at institutions such as the National Museums of Kenya bear witness to these efforts. Historically, the National Museums of Kenya has played a major role in co-ordinating this activity both within our own country and frequently at a regional level, collaborating with institutions such as Makerere University in Kampala and the National Herbarium in Arusha. Since the signing of the Convention on Biological Diversity by the three East African countries, and its ratification by Kenya, the need for improved communications with all research institutions in East Africa is pivotal to maintain research links, develop regional collaborative programmes and move forward towards a better understanding of our regional biological diversity.

To this end the National Museums of Kenya has committed considerable funds into the formation of the Centre for Biodiversity able to disseminate information to a whole variety of land users and government agencies responsible for the monitoring of our natural resources. It is envisaged that this represents an opportunity for the scientific community here in East Africa to pool its information, identify gaps in our knowledge of biodiversity and continue to plan programmes of field work and laboratory based research. In essence, the mechanisms of communication of scientific investigation is a key issue to get right in the Region if we are to make significant progress in the conservation of our natural heritage.

We have not only developed an electronic database capable of managing and analysing information from a whole variety of sources but also ensured that results of the variety of scientific work currently being carried out in East Africa has a suitable vehicle for publication. On our part *Utafiti* has in the past made a significant contribution to the dissemination of information whilst the *Journal of the East African Natural History Society and National Museums of Kenya* has maintained a long tradition of publication of articles from its members.

Despite its wealth of biological diversity, the numbers of researchers, and therefore potential readers of these publications in the region remain limited. I am delighted therefore that these two important publications are to continue as a partnership publication the *Journal of East African Natural History*. I have been following the progress of the merger with interest and whilst I have been aware of the inevitable teething problems associated with all collaborative ventures of this kind I have every confidence in the combined abilities of National Museum staff and members of the East Africa Natural History Society represented on the editorial committee. With the resident expertise and pooled resources from both institutions I am delighted to be able to welcome this first issue of the new "*Journal*" with the confidence that it will quickly develop into an important tool in our combined regional efforts towards a better understanding of our natural heritage.

**Mohamed Isahakia**  
*Director/Chief Executive, National Museums of Kenya*