

Kenyan President William Ruto has lifted a six-year ban on logging over the concerns of environmentalists.

The President said on July 2 it was “foolish” to have mature trees rotting in forests while local industries lacked timber.

“This is why we have decided to open up the forest and harvest timber so that we can create jobs for our youth,” he said.

Mr. Ruto became Kenya’s President in September. In 2018, while serving as Deputy President, he announced a government ban on logging to protect water catchment areas and avert a looming drought. His administration’s first budget imposed a tax on all imported timber products, a move aimed at encouraging local manufacturing.

Last year, he launched a plan to plant 15 billion trees in Kenya over 10 years as a way to combat climate change.

During an address last month at the Global Citizen Festival in Paris, Mr. Ruto said his country was leading the way in taking action to prevent global warming. Green Africa Foundation Executive Director John Kioli told AP that lifting the logging ban would undermine all efforts to put Kenya on a low-carbon trajectory through forest rehabilitation.

While stakeholders have not yet received full details of the government’s methodology for deciding which trees are ready to harvest, Mr. Kioli said a nationwide lifting of the ban would make it difficult to monitor the movement’s environmental impacts. “I wish we could have done it in phases,” he said.

Mr. Kioli said he also was not optimistic the President’s tree-planting goal would be achieved.

“On one hand we are planting, on the other hand we are cutting, and I can assure you, the cutting will be more,” he warned.