By Jejje Muhinde;

The Rwanda Minister of environment and natural resources, Jeanne d'Arc Mujawamariya has said that lack of permanent coordination mechanism to manage natural resources is still a challenge for the EAC region.

The Minister made the remarks on Tuesday, February 4 while addressing the 7th Meeting of the Sectoral Council on Environment and Natural Resources Management underway in Dodoma, Tanzania.

The objective of the five-day meeting is to review progress and provide policy guidance on the implementation of Environment and Natural Resource Management matters.

She said that as we reflect on the progress made, there remain a few areas where renewed attention is required to manage natural resources.

She stated that the regional countries have also seen unregulated use of some ecosystems and a loss of biodiversity and habitat degradation which is ultimately harming citizens and development efforts.

"Pollution, especially air pollution and plastics waste, have become a pressing health challenge, Rwanda has now banned single-use of plastics and is now phasing them out. It has been pleasing to see countries in the region take similar efforts and the benefits will be felt for the generation to come" she explained.

She added, "To achieve efficient and sustainable use of our natural resources, we also need to improve our technical capacity and strengthen linkages with international instruments as well as align our shared priorities. Doing so will require us to develop new and country appropriate financing mechanism and a pipeline of bankable projects.

"Management of natural resources is a challenge for our region. But we know that working together is a promising solution to ensure conservation benefits for all who call the EAC home" she said.

Adding, "As Rwanda works to meet the regional and international obligations, we remain committed to working with our neighbors by learning and sharing experiences with one another"

The region has had its fair share of progress in rolling sustainable development practices in a wide range of sectors. However, some challenges persist these include among others: Air pollution, negative impacts of climate change, including droughts, floods and landslides, land degradation and desertification.

During the 6th Meeting held in September last year, member countries discussed specifically to consider the implementation status of previous decision and directives on natural resource management, policy, legal, and institutional framework matters which is included in the protocol on Environment and Natural Resources Management.

Also on the agenda was the Terrestrial Ecosystems matters; Aquatic Ecosystems matters; Pollution Control matters; Climate Change matters; and Disaster Risk Reduction and Management matters.

In June this year, the Minister reminded the delegates in the meeting that Rwanda will host the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting , which will include a strong focus on the environment.

And in August, Rwanda will host second African Green Growth Forum to advance green economic development across the continent.

The objective of the five-day meeting is to review progress and provide policy guidance on the implementation of Environment and Natural Resource Management matters.

More than 1,000 investors, policymakers and financial specialists from across the continent will share experiences in green growth and climate-resilient development.