



REPUBLIC OF UGANDA

MINISTRY OF WATER AND ENVIRONMENT

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World Forestry Day: "Forests & Climate Change"

World Water Day: "Water and Jobs"

World Meteorological Day: "Hotter, Drier, Wetter. Face the Future."



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Uganda is joining the International Community to celebrate the World Forestry Day on 21st March 2016, World Water Day on 22nd March 2016 and World Meteorology Day on 23rd March 2016. As we mark these important days this year, we are challenged to reflect on the importance of the water and environment resources; particularly freshwater. We therefore need to establish measures and lay strategies for the wise use and management of these resources for the good of our current and future generations. The celebrations are to be held in Serere district and the general public is invited.

World Forestry Day: "Forests & Climate Change"

Forests cover one third of the Earth's land mass, performing vital processes which are essential for proper functioning of the earth systems. Around 1.6 billion people depend on forests for their livelihood. Forests are the most biologically-diverse ecosystems on land which are home to more than half of the terrestrial species of animals, plants and insects. They provide shelter, jobs and security for forest-dependent populations. Forests contribute to the balance of oxygen, carbon dioxide and humidity in the air and thus play a key role in our battle against climate change. They also protect watersheds, which supply fresh water to rivers. Despite all these priceless ecological, economic, social and health benefits, we are destroying the very forests we need to survive. Global deforestation

continues at an alarming rate of 13 million hectares annually and these account for 12 to 20% of the global carbon dioxide emissions that contribute to climate change.

Uganda's forest cover is estimated to be 3.6 Million hectares, of which 17% consist of Central Forest Reserves (CFRs) managed by the National Forestry Authority (NFA), 18% consists of National Parks and Wildlife Reserves (NPs & WRs) managed by Uganda Wildlife Authority (UWA), 0.85% is jointly managed by NFA and UWA, and about 70% managed by Local Governments (LGs) in collaboration with private and local community forest owners (National Forestry Plan 2002).

World Water Day: "Water and Jobs"

World Water Day is an international observance and an opportunity to learn more about water related issues. The Ministry of Water and Environment (MWE) with its mandate of providing safe and clean water to all people in the country is working hand in hand with development partners to focus on placing water and sanitation as a top priority. The theme "water and jobs" was selected this year because of the positive impact water has played in creating employment. This theme focuses on how sufficient water quantity and quality can change lives and livelihoods - transform societies as well as economies in Uganda for example under Agriculture, Energy, Health, Transportation and Tourism sector among others. Today, almost half of the world's workers - 1.5 billion people - work in water related sectors and nearly all jobs depend on water and those that ensure its safe delivery. In Uganda, the close link between water and the economy makes the case that investing in water

management and services are absolutely essential for the eradication of poverty and a necessary condition for enabling sustained economic growth. This is because when a water supply system is constructed in an area the people in that area are involved from the start by being employed as artisans during construction and eventually employed as staff to operate and maintain the systems.

Increased access to safe water supply has increased the time available for women and girls to engage in productive activities like agriculture and education which would have otherwise been used to walk long distances to fetch water. These productive activities help to transform that society from poverty to prosperity. Increased access to safe water ensures that diseases associated with unsafe water are eradicated leading to a healthier and more productive population and savings made

from reduced hospital bills can be channeled to productive activities.

MWE under the Water for Production Department operates and manages earth moving equipment for construction of valley tanks, dams and irrigation. The Ministry not only constructs the Irrigation schemes,

valley tanks and dams but also hires out the equipment to individual farmers at subsidized rates. As a result the number of animal deaths and loss of agricultural produce due to drought and other natural disasters has greatly reduced. This has improved the livelihood of people especially in the east and northern parts of the country where majority are nomads and farmers.

World Meteorological Day: "Hotter, Drier, Wetter. Face the Future."

As a member of World Meteorological Organization, Uganda appreciates the role of the Meteorological services. In order to combat the Climate change challenge, the Climate Change Unit became a department and Uganda Meteorological Department was upgraded to Uganda National Meteorological Authority (UNMA). A total of 50 community rain gauge stations were installed in the Western and Northern parts of the country, with the view of involving the community in appreciating the weather and climate services provided by UNMA. A total of 23 Automatic weather stations (AWS) have been installed in the Kyoga Basin. Automation of UNMA rainfall observation network is in line with the current National Development Plan (NDP II) recommendation of overhauling and automating the weather observing system in the country. The Upper air Sounding Station in Entebbe was reactivated.

The theme "Hotter, Drier, Wetter. Face the Future." has been selected to emphasize the reality of climate change. Scientific evidence has led to the need to take urgent action with focus on advancing low carbon technologies, particularly in the energy sector. The Climate is changing as more and more heat trapping gases are emitted by human activities accumulate in the atmosphere. Climate change is disrupting the natural pattern of the seasons and increasing the frequency of intensity of certain extreme weather.

In Uganda these changes are already influencing many systems essential for human livelihood, including water resources, food security and health. This causes a great challenge for sustainability of life, ecosystems, livelihoods and indeed the development of the economy in Uganda. Accordingly, there is need to adapt to the inevitable effects of climate change as well as to facilitate the development of techniques that can assist increase resilience to the climate change impacts.

The economy and the wellbeing of the people of Uganda are tightly bound to climate with over 80%

of the population in rural areas depending on rain fed agriculture which is prone to impacts of climate variability. The climate change and variability in the coming century will inflate the frequency and intensity of extreme weather events and has the potential to halt or reverse the country's development trajectory. In particular this will be manifested in increased food insecurity, shift in the spread of diseases like malaria, soil erosion, land degradation, landslides, flood damage to infrastructure as well as settlement and lower productivity of agriculture and natural resources. The events of the past years clearly illustrated the magnitude of the problem. In Uganda the frequency of droughts has increased.

An increase in intensities and frequency of heavy rains, landslides, floods as well as outbreaks of associated waterborne diseases were also observed. These impacts of climate are often most felt by the poor and vulnerable.

As we celebrate the World Forestry, Water and Meteorology Days for 2016, the Ministry of Water and Environment re-commits to implementing the Vision 2040 by strengthening the monitoring and enforcement of the water permit conditions to reverse the pollution of our water resources, increase access to clean and safe water and improved sanitation facilities to 100% through construction of various water supply and sanitation facilities including rain water harvesting, and clean piped water to all Ugandans especially women and children. Priority will also be put to complying with the laws and regulations to safeguard our resources for the present and future generations.

For God and My Country!

Prof. Ephraim Kamuntu
Minister of Water and Environment.