



Press Statement:

August 4, 2022

RE: Flash floods in Eastern Uganda are a manifestation of Climate Change

On the Morning of Sunday, July 31 2022, Uganda awoke to the news of floods and landslides in parts of Eastern Uganda, specifically the districts around Mt. Elgon region including Mbale, Kapchorwa, Bulambuli, Namisindwa, Sironko, Manafwa and the surrounding areas. We commiserate with the families that lost loved ones and property as well as those that were displaced in the disaster. May the souls of the deceased persons, rest in peace.

Since the unfortunate events in Eastern Uganda there have been concerns about what could have caused the incident and whether anything could have been done to avert the situation. Over the years, Uganda like the rest of the world has been experiencing erratic alternate drought and high rainfall seasons, which is a manifestation of Climate Change.

Climate change manifests in many ways including extreme heat conditions (heat waves), above normal rainfall, melting glaciers, raising water levels. In recent years there have been droughts and floods alike in several parts of the country including Isingiro, Karamoja, Bundibugyo, Kasese and surrounding areas. In 2019-2020 Uganda experienced rising water levels in the Lake Victoria, Kyoga, Albert and River Nile basins.

Climate Change is attributed to an increase in the amount of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere on a global scale, owing to an upsurge in the use of fossil fuels. And yet the rate of absorption of greenhouse gases by carbon sinks such as forests is also compromised by an increase in the rate of deforestation. As a matter of fact, Climate Change is being manifested more severely now than ever before and the occurrence in Eastern Uganda is one such incident.

Changes in atmospheric temperature due to climate increases evaporation rates thereby increasing moisture in the atmosphere which moisture results in fast rainfall formation characterized by flash floods as we saw in Elgon Region. For every one degree change in temperature, there is 7% increment in moisture in the atmosphere. This results in wet areas receiving excess rains and flash floods and dry areas becoming more dry due to faster loss of water due to high rates of evaporation.

We can mitigate these climate extremes through embracing good environmental practices most especially: -

1. Planting trees particularly on bare hills, rangelands, land boundaries and our farmlands through agroforestry systems

2. Desisting from open burning of bushes, waste and release of carbon through vehicular and industrial air pollution
3. Reducing our carbon emissions through establishing bulk transport systems like buses and trains as well as moving into electric vehicles and motorcycles
4. Desisting from wetland encroachment as these store carbon, recharge water systems, control floods and droughts. Destruction of wetlands increases water volumes and flow speed thereby creating danger to people and property in addition to pollution of rivers and lakes for which these wetlands act as buffers and filters.
5. We need to practice better methods of farming through terracing, trenching, agroforestry to improve land cover and improve soil conservation.

We can reduce climate change induced environmental disasters by not settling on wetlands, hilltops, river banks, river beds, floodplains, lakeshores and forests. These fragile eco systems should be conserved for ecological and touristic purposes.

We call upon all development control authorities not to approve development plans, building plans among others before assessing environment and social impacts of such developments. We must embrace climate proofing of all our developments to reduce damage in case of disasters.

Government has come up with a plan of action for restoration of environment in Uganda and we call upon all Government Ministries, Departments, Agencies, Urban Authorities, Private Sector, Civil Society and development partners to support the implementation of this plan of action.

The National Environment Management Authority will continue to coordinate with relevant Lead Agencies to restore fragile ecosystems and ensure that development integrates sustainable development principles including where applicable, installation of early warning system

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