



Press Statement  
December 8, 2021

## **NEMA registers progress in first 100 days of Dr. Barirega Akankwasah**

On September 1, 2021, Dr. Barirega Akankwasah was appointed as NEMA Executive Director, with the immediate task of reviving the environment sector through halting degradation of environment, strengthening of environmental justice systems (Enforcement and Prosecution), improving efficiency of the Authority through automation of systems and improving service delivery through restructuring, reforms and enhancing citizen participation.

### **i. Restructuring**

In response to a Cabinet decision to rationalize the operations of Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) and a recommendation from the Ministry of Public Service to restructure NEMA; the restructuring process is ongoing under the guidance of the NEMA Board. The restructuring process is aimed at improving the effectiveness, efficiency and capacity of NEMA in delivering the institutional mandate in the field of Environmental Compliance and Enforcement, Environmental Planning, Research and Innovations, Environment and Social Impact Assessment, Human Resource Management, Corporate Planning and Strategy, Management of chemicals and Pollution, Public education and awareness, Lead Agency Coordination, Environment Monitoring, Resource Mobilization among others.

### **ii. Wetland management reforms**

On September 2, 2021 NEMA indefinitely suspended the receipt, processing and issuance of ESIA certificates and permits in wetlands. The suspension is intended to reduce pressure on the resource and to build institutional capacity to regulate developments in wetlands.

### **iii. Environment and Social Impact Assessment (ESIA) reforms**

NEMA has introduced new conditions in all ESIA certificates, a breach of which may attract certificate cancellation or legal action, namely;

- Linear infrastructure in wildlife conservation areas must provide for animal crossing bridges
- All single use polythene bags (kaveera) are prohibited at all project sites

- The right to recall a certificate if there is a change in standards, government policy or prevailing conditions in the environment
- Need to display the NEMA Certificate for all Sites to enhance transparency

In addition, we have

- Created submissions pre-assessment verification before we issue reference numbers. This has reduced clogging of system and has improved efficiency.
- We have improved days for securing reference numbers from more than 7 to now two days at maximum.
- Status of submissions (ESIA, ToRs, PB, Audit ) can now be found on online vide [www.nema.go.ug](http://www.nema.go.ug)
- We have reformed the internal review system to reduce delays for submissions
- We have partnered with the Association of Certified Environment Practitioners to clear backlog and facilitate green development, green jobs, tourism etc etc

#### **iv. Enforcement of Environment laws**

The process to operationalize the Environmental Protection Force (EPF) as stipulated in section 25 of the National Environment Act has commenced. The force will have operations, investigations, intelligence arm and Intelligence. Despite exiting challenges;

- An Environment Restoration Order was issued to protect Kimbejja wetland.
- NEMA stopped wetland degradation in many sites along Munyonyo road including Kyetinda. Several arrests and confiscations of vehicles from these sites.
- NEMA stopped the construction site in a wetland around Bunamwaya. The encroachment of wetlands in this area has been one of the major drivers of flooding along Entebbe Road and the surrounding areas.
- NEMA stopped illegal mining of Pozollana in Kabarole District
- Several environment offenders have been arrested and in Quarter 1, a total of five suspects were remanded as the prosecution process continued. These include cases of backfilling wetlands, illegal operation of stone quarries, sand mining etc
- NEMA has stopped sand mining in Kalungu for all sites without Environment Impact Assessment certificate issued prior to the ban on 2<sup>nd</sup> September.

- Sensitization campaign about the dangers of single user plastics and the need to shun them by Uganda.
- Issuance of monthly updates on air quality in urban areas.
- Development of biodiversity offset guidelines and air quality regulations
- NEMA has also engaged with Uganda National Bureau of Standards, to work out a mechanism to enforce the ban on single use plastics (Kaveera) below 30 microns. A joint enforcement exercise against Kaveera is on next week.
- We have strengthening our partnership with Lead Agencies including National Physical Planning Board, UNBS, PAU, MLHUD, DWRM,
- Approved several Projects for development, audits and Licenses

#### **v. Constraints**

- a. The biggest constraints at NEMA have been gross understaffing
- b. Chronic underfunding of the Authority
- c. Lack of equipments e.g. mobility, air quality monitoring etc
- d. Take away of the National Environment Fund which crippled restoration efforts.

NEMA is facing a number of challenges arising from inadequate funding, low staffing, inadequate equipment for environmental monitoring, fleet and office space. These challenges have further been exacerbated by limited capacity of lead agencies to manage segments of environment under their respective jurisdictions.

The recent budget cuts left NEMA with an allocation of UGX 13 billion, of which UGX 10 billion goes towards payment of salaries and other statutory obligations. The institution therefore has an operational budget of only UGX 3 billion for the financial year amidst increasing demands for service delivery in the environment sector. With such meagre financial resources, it is not possible for NEMA to effectively respond to all the Country's environmental needs. We therefore appeal to the responsible ministries to look into the financing of the country's environment sector.

## **vi. Strategic Interventions**

As an immediate response to address some of the binding constraints and challenges the Authority is facing, the following have been planned as part of the strategy to turn around NEMA

1. Automation of systems especially ESIA and licensing systems
2. Restructuring of the current NEMA to reset the system functioning
3. Creation of Environment Protection Force
4. Strengthening NEMA Regional Offices
5. Evicting of encroachers in sensitive ecological environment eg wetlands and cancellation of titles in these wetlands
6. Technology based environment monitoring and knowledge management
7. Enhanced stakeholder coordination (MDAs, Urban Authorities, LGs and MD.
8. Retooling of NEMA with modern equipment and pollution management tools. We need air quality monitoring, a functional laboratory,
9. Deepening our partnership linkages with development partners, Government MDAs and to leverage available resources
10. Lobbying for a dedicated environment division of the high court
11. Greening the parish development model-environment extension and area needs based nursery bed

NEMA continues to work within the available means to ensure that the environment and the Country's natural resources are safeguarded.

We call upon all Ugandans to value and protect our environment. Environment guarantees our wellbeing, let's protect it.

ENDs

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