

International Day for Biological Diversity

May /22 /2021

Global Theme: ***“Our solutions are nature”***

National Theme: ***“Restoring nature together”***



Uganda ratified the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) on 8th September 1993. The Convention entered into force on 29th December 1993. To-date 196 countries are Parties to the CBD making the CBD of the Conventions with the biggest number of Parties. In December 2000, the UN General Assembly adopted 22 May as the International Day for Biodiversity (IDB) to commemorate the day the text of the Convention was adopted on 22 May 1992 in Nairobi, Kenya. IDB is meant to increase awareness and understanding on the importance/values of biodiversity for human wellbeing.

This year, the global theme for IDB is “We’re part of the solution”. The global theme builds from the 2020 theme which was “Our solutions are nature”. Taking in account the global themes for 2020 and 2021, the national theme for IDB 2021 is “Restoring nature together”.

Why “Restoring nature together”?

Uganda is witnessing unprecedented degradation of the environment which is leading to loss of biodiversity and these include: Loss forest, reclamation and degradation of wetlands, pollution and loss of species among others. The choice of the national theme for IDB 2021 is meant to mobilize all Ugandans to take and sustain concrete action to restore the environment especially focusing on forests, wetlands and species of wild plants (flora) and wild animals (fauna). The UN has declared 2021 -2030 the Decade for Ecosystem Restoration”. Thus the national theme is timely to put Uganda on course to begin a serious and sustained programme of restoration of ecosystems in Uganda

Facts;

Uganda is one of Africa’s richest countries in biodiversity despite its relatively small size. It has diverse ecosystems consisting of forests, wetlands, rangelands, lakes and rivers. The country has 53% of the world’s mountain gorillas, 11% of the global recorded species of birds, 7.8 % of global mammalian species, 19% of Africa’s am–phibians and 14% of African reptilians.

There are however a number of threats leading to loss of biodiversity including conver–sion of natural habitats to ag–ricultural land and infrastruc–tural development.

With the drive to achieve the middle income status by 2020 (NPA, 2013 and NPA, 2015), there has been a tremendous drive in infrastructural development and therefore a need to address the negative impacts of infrastruc–ture development on biodiversity particularly at ecosystem and species safety level.

Other threats to biodiversity include proliferation of invasive species, human-wild–life conflict, illegal wildlife trade, climate change, pollution to mention but a few.



Status of biodiversity according to the latest National State of Environment Report 2018-2019

Forests

- ❑ Forest cover in Uganda declined, from 23.8% (4.8 million ha) in 1990 to about 9.9 % (2 million ha). Natural forests have experienced a decline in the past decades while plantation forests increased from 3% to 8% between 2010 and 2017

Wetlands

- ❑ Out of the 31,411.4 km² of wetlands left country wide, 21,526.3 km² (69%) were intact while 9,885.1 km² (31%) were degraded
- ❑ In rural areas, wetlands are mainly degraded through subsistence and commercial agriculture as a result of poor land tenure system which leaves land fragmented
- ❑ Mbale District has the most degraded wetlands with 99% of its wetlands under threat while Ntoroko has the lowest percentage of degraded wetlands at 2%. Mbale is also prone to frequent mud and landslides

Wildlife

- ❑ Wildlife protected areas and forest reserves altogether constituted 18.8% of the total land area of Uganda
- ❑ In protected areas, there has been an increase in wildlife populations. For instance the number of Mountain Gorilla increased from 292 in 1995 to over 400 in 2017, the Elephant increased from about 2000 in 1996 to 5,808 in 2017, Buffaloes increased from 18,000 to 37,054, Giraffe population increased from 250 individuals in 1995 to 880 in 2017 while the Chimpanzee population increased from 3,300 in 1997 to 4,950 in 2003
- ❑ However, the Grant's gazelle registered a decline from 100 individuals in 1995 to 57 by 2017.
- ❑ The Beisa Oryx, Eastern Black rhino, Northern White rhino and the Lord derby's Eland declined to extinction in the wild.
- ❑ Black rhinos have, however, significantly increased in captivity from 8 in 2004 to over 22

Invasive species

- ❑ The Kariba and water hyacinth aquatic weeds remain a burden on many water bodies in Uganda and affect how aquatic biodiversity thrives

