



**Press Statement:**

March 11, 2022

**RE: NEMA commences enforcement and restoration of Kitagata wetland**

The National Environment Management Authority (NEMA) Western Regional Office based in Mabarara has started a restoration exercise of the Kitagata Wetland system that has been threatened by encroachment.

The exercise that is jointly being undertaken with Sheema District Local Government and Kitagata Town Council follows routine inspections of the wetland system that revealed a systematic encroachment through, illegal construction, planting of alien tree species such as eucalyptus, establishment of illegal automobile and motorcycle washing bays, dumping of murrum and disposal of both degradable and non-degradable waste into the fragile ecosystem.

Yesterday's enforcement exercise involved demolition of illegal structures and removal of the resultant debris for proper disposal. The exercise follows several eviction notices to the encroachers and appeals from the respective local governments for them to vacate the wetland in vain, prompting NEMA to intervene. A meeting with the community was held thereafter, to educate them on the anomalies associated with wetland degradation; and sustainable use of natural resources.

Wetlands are an important part of our ecosystem because they are a habitat for some species, perform hydrological functions such as regulation of water quality, reduce downstream soil erosion and aid in flood control by storing excess water during heavy rains. The Kitagata wetland system is particularly important because it is the sole water source for the surrounding communities and nearby urban centres. Therefore, just like other wetlands in the country, it out to be protected to enable it to perform its vital ecological functions.

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