



WORLD ENVIRONMENT DAY, JUNE 5, 2021



**PAKISTAN
2021**

During the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment (Stockholm, 1972) the United Nations General Assembly declared the 5th of June the international **World Environment Day (WED)**.

On that day, each Member State is supposed to reflect on efforts put in place at national level with regards to protection of the environment. It is also a day for each Member State to reaffirm her commitment to sustainable environmental management.

WED is managed by the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) and, in Uganda, the National Environment Management Authority (NEMA) on behalf of Government of Uganda, is mandated to commemorate this day.

WED is the United Nations' principal vehicle for encouraging worldwide awareness and action for the environment. Over the years it has grown to be a broad, global platform for public outreach that is widely commemorated by stakeholders in about 150 countries. It also serves as the 'people's day' for doing something positive for the environment, galvanizing individual actions into a collective power that generates an exponential positive impact on the

planet.

WED 2021 will be celebrated globally under the theme '**Ecosystem restoration**' and focus on resetting our relation with nature. The Day will also mark the formal launch of the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration 2021 – 2030.

Ecosystem restoration can take many forms including: Restoring degraded landscapes, lakeshores, river banks, growing trees, greening cities and other ecologically sensitive areas. This is the generation that can make peace with nature.

Globally, **Pakistan** will host this year's World Environment Day.

National Celebrations

Uganda is celebrating WED 2021 under the national theme '**Restore Uganda's Ecosystems for Sustainable Development**'. The theme implores us to make conscious efforts to restore our degraded ecosystems, aware that those systems are not only the storehouses for resources that sustain us economically and socially but also, constitute the life supports system for human and other forms of life. It's also reminding us of our duty to save nature and all biodiversity.

WED celebrations, therefore, specifically demonstrate: Human concern over the deteriorating situation of the physical, biological, and human environment. The event provides opportunity to highlight local and global environmental problems and concerns that threaten the existence of life in its different forms. It also demonstrates local and global strategies designed to mitigate current as well as the impending environmental disasters.

Just like in 2020, this year physical gathering to commemorate WED celebrations is limited to very few people due to the Covid-19 challenge. Therefore, most of the WED activities are media-based as shown below.

Uganda's endowments

Uganda, the Pearl of Africa, is known for its splendour, natural wonders, and amazing people. It has substantial natural resources including; a favorable climate, arable land, oil reserves, and small deposits of minerals such as copper, cobalt, limestone, and gold; a varied collection of habitats, landscapes and vegetation from open wooded savannah forest and acacia woodlands, tropical forest, riparian forests, montane forests, rocky outcrops, grasslands, marshes, sweeping valleys, craggy hills, bush thickets, and extensive wetlands. All these varied vegetation hosts abundant wildlife, primates, and birdlife.

Uganda's natural resource base is one of the richest and most diverse in Africa, resulting in

the country's economy relying heavily on goods and services so provided.

The country is among those endowed with the greatest diversity of animal and plant species and ranks among the top ten most bio-diverse countries in the world.

Quick facts

- Uganda hosts 53.9% of the world's population of mountain gorillas;
- 11% of the world's recorded species of birds (50% of Africa's bird species);
- 7.8% (345 species) of the Global Mammal Diversity;
- 19% (86 species) of Africa's amphibian species richness;
- 14% (142 species) of Africa's reptile species richness;
- 1,249 recorded species of butterflies;
- 600 species of fish (MPS, 2013/2014);
- 4,500 species of higher plants

The largest proportion of Uganda's economy is heavily dependent on biodiversity including the fishing industry, tourism (from wildlife biodiversity), livestock industry, commercial and subsistence use of medicinal plants, and ecotourism, among others. In addition to direct gains in government revenues, biodiversity resources also support some of the poorest and most vulnerable sectors of Uganda's population (NBSAP 2016).

As such environmental resources, if used properly, can contribute significantly to Uganda's national

economic development.

Restoration activities in Uganda

As Uganda joins the rest of the world to commemorate WED, NEMA undertakes a number of restoration activities. Restoration is a NEMA's regular intervention aimed at recovering and regenerating the lost ecosystem functions and improving community livelihoods.

We, therefore, undertake restoration as part of WED celebration to raise the level of awareness on the need for sustainable use of environment and natural resources. It is also a way of restoring degraded ecosystems in Masindi, and other districts in greater Bunyoro.

The most affected fragile ecosystems that have been targeted prior to this day include wetlands, riverbanks, lakeshores and hilly and mountainous areas. Important to note is that NEMA adopted a community approach to ecosystem restoration and the main reason for this approach is the need to create a sense of ownership and inclusion for sustainability but to also to avoid litigation and court cases associated with radical enforcement procedures. In the Environment Week, we have had great involvement of the community with us during the restoration interventions.

Achievements

Using a community approach, NEMA has successfully restored over 10,000m in the last five years; and it continues to engage communities, organized groups and local governments to restore critically degraded ecosystems.

WED has always been an important avenue for supporting the local governments on ecosystems restoration.

As we commemorate this year's WED, we need



to appreciate the role of communities in ensuring sustainable ecosystems restoration and the need to support them through regular empowerment discourse. All the district local governments should use the WED

celebration to launch restoration drives for the different affected ecosystems and also ensure regular monitoring to avoid re-encroachment on the restored ecosystems.

'Restore Uganda's Ecosystems for Sustainable Development'.

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