



21 MARCH
INTERNATIONAL DAY OF FORESTS 2018

FORESTS AND SUSTAINABLE CITIES

Let's make our cities greener, healthier, happier places to live

The UN General Assembly proclaimed 21 March the **International Day of Forests (IDF)** in 2012. ***The Day celebrates and raises awareness of the importance of all types of forests.*** On each International Day of Forests, countries are encouraged to undertake local, national and international efforts to organize activities involving forests and trees, such as tree planting campaigns. The theme for each International Day of Forests is chosen by the Collaborative Partnership on Forests. Forests have been at the forefront of international discussions, from the 2030 Agenda to the Paris Agreement.

In 2018, the International Day of Forests (IDF) will address the theme, '**Forests for sustainable cities,**' and ***will focus on how forests and trees in urban areas regulate temperature and water flows, provide nutritious foods and shelter, cleanse the air and foster community cohesion and individual well-being, among other benefits***

More people live in cities than ever before and by 2050, 6 billion people or as much as 70% of the global population is expected to live in urban areas (World Forum on Urban Forests, 2018). But rapid urbanization does not need to result in polluted urban sprawl. ***Trees and urban forests can make our cities greener, healthier and happier places to live by cooling the air, filtering out harmful pollutants and mitigating the effects of climate change.***

In order to capitalize on this interest, members of the **Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF)** proposed that a central theme for the annual celebration of the international Day would provide an opportunity to highlight specific forest contributions to the 2030 Agenda for **Sustainable Development** by considering topics of the annual sessions of the **High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development**. In so doing, it would also enhance coordinated communications from the forest community.

This year's theme "**Forests for sustainable cities**" was *selected because of the ever growing number of city dwellers who may be a threat to trees and forests as result of settlement and income generation, and so this theme was selected to create awareness about the important role of Forests in and around urban areas.*

Environment Alert observes the global theme (**Forests for sustainable cities**) and the event is well thought out and timely. *This is largely because several forest reserves (such as Mabira Forest, Kalinzu forest, Lutoboka and Bunjazi Central Forest Reserves , Kalinzu, Kasyoha-kitomi, Budongo, Kaniyo, Busingiro, Bugoma and Mpanga Central Forest) are under a very serious threat of total depletion and degradation. This is partly due to inadequate regulation of urbanization and industrial development which results from loss of forests and trees; lastly there is an issue of encroachers seeking agricultural land around the existing demarcated forest reserves.*

The loss of forests and trees in urban areas also means **loss of the goods and services** they provide. **This has serious implications for economic development and sustainable livelihoods in the cities.** Therefore, the **International Day of Forests** celebrations *provides an opportunity for reflection and call for action for all Ugandans to be cautious of the decisions and actions they implement to ensure that they prevent adverse effects on the forests and trees in urban areas.* Hence, *all illegal activities in the designated forests should give way for forest reclamation, restoration and conservation; and any actions resulting in further destruction and degradation of forests and trees in urban areas should be avoided.*

Environmental Alert (see **Box 1** for details about Environmental Alert), and ENR-CSO network will participate in the UWEWK through rolling out the following interventions:

- a) Active participation in the UWEWK week long engagements organised by the Ministry of Water and Environment at the **Directorate of Water Resources Management Complex in Entebbe**. For instance, Best practices, lessons and recommendations for sustainable environment and natural resources management will be shared with stakeholders at the exhibition stall for Environmental Alert and ENR-CSO Network. Further information about the planned events is available through this website: <http://www.mwe.go.ug/events/uganda-water-and-environment-week-uwewk-2018>
- b) Issue based articles with policy and practice recommendations for wider dissemination through publication in the popular local media for increased awareness.

As we celebrate the **world Forest Day** under the theme “**Forests for sustainable cities**”, it is of greater importance to further understand various roles played by Forests in and around urban areas, and some of these are:

- a) Forests and trees **store carbon**, which helps mitigate the impacts of climate change in, and around, urban areas.
- b) Trees also **improve the local climate**, helping to save energy used for heating by 20%-50%.
- c) Strategic placement of trees in urban areas can **cool the air** by up to 8 degrees Celsius, reducing air conditioning needs by 30%
- d) Urban trees are **excellent air filters**, removing harmful pollutants in the air and fine particles.
- e) Trees **reduce noise pollution**, as they shield, as they shield homes from nearby roads and industrial areas.
- f) Local populations use the fruits, nuts, leaves and insects found in urban trees **to produce food and medicines** for use in the home, or as a source of income.
- g) **Wood fuel** sourced from urban trees and planted forests on the outskirts of cities provides *renewable energy* for **cooking and heating**, which reduces pressures in natural forests and our reliance on fossil fuels.

- h) Forests in and around urban areas **help to filter and regulate water**, contributing to high-quality freshwater supplies for hundreds of millions of people. Forests also protect watersheds and prevent flooding as they store water in their branches and soil.
- i) Well-managed forests and trees in and around cities **provide habitats**, food and protection for many plants and animals, helping to maintain and increase biodiversity.
- j) Urban green spaces, including forests, **encourage active and healthy lifestyles**, improve mental health, prevents disease, and provide a place for people to socialize.
- k) Forests in cities and surrounding areas **generate tourism**, create tens of thousands of jobs and encourage city beautification schemes, building dynamic, energetic and prosperous green economies.

The **major challenge for forest management in Uganda** is **de-forestation** which is demonstrated by the decline of forest cover from 24% in 1990 to 11% in 2015, forest coverage in the country is now at 9% only (**Water and Environment Sector Performance Report, 2017**). In response to this alarming rate of forest cover loss, Uganda through its **Nationally Determined Contributions (Uganda NDC, 2015)** committed to reverse deforestation trend and increase forest cover to 21% in 2030, from approximately 14% in 2013, through *forest protection, afforestation and sustainable biomass production measures*, the **Environment and Natural Resources Civil Society Organizations (ENR-CSO) Network** through their published **ENR-CSO Network Position paper 2017**, recommended the government through various line ministries to perform the following to achieve that:

- a) Ministry of Water and Environment (**MWE**), Forest Sector Support Department (**FSSD**), National Forest Authority (**NFA**) and affected District Local Governments (**DLGs**) should develop a strategy with clear timeframe and resources to fast track the cancellation of titles in forest reserves and wetlands across the country.
- b) National Forestry Resources Research Institute (**NaFORRI**) should undertake research and recommend options to evade the pests and diseases affecting forest plantations.
- c) Civil Society Organizations (**CSOs**) support **MWE** in lobbying for increased funding of the sector, especially at parliamentary level.
- d) **MWE**, Ministry of Local Government(**MoLG**) and Ministry of Lands Housing and Urban Development(**MoLHUD**) should harmonize the land cadaster to avoid future titling of land in FRs but also guide the cancellation of existing land titles in gazetted areas.
- e) **MWE** fast tracks the registration and recognition of private and communally own forests.
- f) **NFA** and District Forest Services (**DFS**) roll out Collaborative Forest management (**CFM**) especially those communities that have applied for memorandum of understanding.
- g) **MWE**, **NEMA** and **NFA** need to avail financial resources and staffing to fast track work on demarcation of wetlands and forest reserve boundaries.

Box 1. About Environmental Alert

Environmental Alert (EA) was founded in **1988 and this year (2018) marks 30 years** of contribution to improved livelihoods and development in Uganda through several interventions in sustainable agriculture, environment and natural resources management. EA is officially registered with the NGO Board as a Ugandan non-governmental organization, incorporated as a company limited by guarantee. EA is governed by an independent Board that is responsible for providing strategic oversight of the organization including ensuring its integrity as a voluntary service organization.

EA is a 1st prize winner of the Energy globe award for environmental sustainability-2005 under the category, earth.

EA is a member of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and a Member of The IUCN National Committee for Uganda.

EA envisions, *'Resilient and dignified communities, managing their environment and natural resources sustainably.'*

EA's mission is to, *'Contribute to improved livelihoods of vulnerable communities by enhancing agricultural productivity and sustainable natural resources management'*

Program and institutional Components:

1. Environment and Natural resources management;
2. Food security and Nutrition;
3. Water, Sanitation and Hygiene;
4. Finance and Administration;
5. Resource mobilization and Investment.

Scale of Implementation:

EA operates in selected districts for generation of evidence to inform policy engagements on agriculture, environment and natural resources at National and International levels. Currently EA's operations are in 20 districts across the country. EA undertakes area wide targeted awareness on selected issues in agriculture, environment and natural resources engagements

EA is a Secretariat for following networks:

- a) The Network for Civil Society Organizations in Environment & Natural Resources Sector (ENR-CSO Network) - <http://enr-cso.org/>;
- b) Uganda Forestry Working Group - <http://ufwg.entalert.org/>;
- c) The Standards Development Group (for promotion of Sustainable Forest Management in Uganda); and
- d) Promoting Local Innovation in ecologically oriented agriculture and natural resources management (PROLINNOVA-Uganda Network) - <http://www.prolinnova.net/uganda>.

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