

## World Forest Day – 21<sup>st</sup> March 2019.

### 1.0 Introduction

The UN General Assembly proclaimed 21<sup>st</sup> 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.

### 1.1 Environmental Alert Message in relation to the theme

*Though the Government of Uganda has passed policies to protect and enable sustainable use of natural resources especially the forests, the public still remains unaware of these policies, therefore more needs to be done to step up targeted awareness creation especially at the village and community levels. The youth and other forest beneficiaries should be targeted in this effort. Equally important is to simplify the information about the importance and value of forests and related information in respect to investment in forestry.*

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.

### 2.0 Background

The Ministry of Water and Environment (MWE) in collaboration with key partners successfully held the first ever Uganda Water and Environment Week (UWEWK) in March 2018. The event attracted high-level political participation including the Vice President of the Republic of Uganda and the Prime Minister of the Republic of Uganda. Stakeholders presented information, exchanged knowledge, built relationships, and deliberated on pertinent sector issues. Based on the success of the first UWEWK, the MWE will hold the second UWEWK at the **Water Resource Institute in Entebbe from Monday 18 – Friday 22, March 2019**. The event will conclude with the annual commemoration of three important International Environmental Days: *World Forest Day (March 21st), World Water Day (March 22nd) and World Meteorological Day (March 23rd)*.

### 2.1 Theme for International Day of Forests

In 2019, the International Day of Forests (IDF) will address the **theme, 'Forests and Education.'** It will seek to raise awareness on how sustainably managed forests provide a wide array of contributions in this area. This is an opportunity to promote i) Forest research, ii) Forest education, and iii) Awareness raising about the importance of forests.

**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://envalert.org/uganda-water-and-environment-week-2019-uwewk-2019/>
- b) Issue based articles with policy and practice recommendations for wider dissemination through publication in the popular local media for increased awareness.
- c) Exhibit other IECs from other Civil Society Organisation members of ENR-CSO network.

Environmental Alert under ENR-CSO network will participate in the activities of the event as shown in the **Table 1**.

**Table 1:** How Environmental Alert will participate in the event.

#	Event Activities	Participation of EA/ENR-CSO Network
A)	Exhibitions and side events staged by public and private sector institutions, academia, development partners, civil society organizations/non-governmental organizations and others;	Environmental Alert and ENR-CSO network will exhibit Information Education and Communication materials and publications showing best practices and lessons in the water and ENR sector.
B)	Parallel sessions on thematic areas and topics held for different categories of participants;	To participate in the parallel sessions of water, and forest thematic working areas, as a way of tracking progress made by different stakeholders.
C)	One day field visits to selected sites within and around Entebbe and Kampala to provide practical demonstration to participants in line with the sub-themes of the week	To participate in one day field visits, especially the ones targeting forest and water thematic working areas to track progress made in the sector.
D)	Paper and posters presented by different scholars and practitioners;	Environmental Alert will present the following papers during the thematic workshops in the UWEWK, 2019: <i>a) The Contribution of Alternative No-Regret Livelihood Enterprises for building Resilient Communities, Ecosystems and Associated Catchment in Uganda; A case of communities within Nyarunzinga, Kandekye—Ruhorobero and Nyamuhizi-Kagogo wetland systems catchments in South Western Uganda;</i> <i>b) The Uganda National Forest Stewardship Standard approved and launched; what are the opportunities for advancing responsible Forest Management in Uganda.</i> <i>c) The Uganda REDD+ National Strategy was launched in November 2017! So what next moving forward?</i>

	<p>d) <i>Civil Society Organization's Contribution in advancing Uganda's Green Growth Path; a case of the Environment and Natural Resources Civil Society Organizations Network.</i></p> <p>e) <i>Advancing Civil Society Organizations and Networks coordination for contribution to effective Renewable Energy Policy formulation and implementation in Uganda.</i></p>
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As we celebrate the **International Day of Forest Day** under the theme “**Forests and Education**”, 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.



**Figure 1:** Farming activities taking over the forest land. Photo by Environmental Alert.

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 2018**, identified challenges and recommended the government through various line ministries to perform the following to achieve that:



**Figure 2: Illegal loggers inside Zoka Forest. Photo credits: Friends of Zoka.**

**Table 2: Challenges and Recommendation in the Water, and Environment Sector.**

Challenges	Recommendations
i. Failure to curb illegal logging in northern Uganda	a. Implement the presidential ban on logging
ii. The influx of refugees has presented stress on environment and natural resources	b. CSOs engage MWE and Office of the Prime Minister on sustainable utilization of environment and natural resources in refugee settlements.
iii. Failure to cancel land titles in forest reserves despite the plea from CSOs and commission of inquiry on land matters.	c. MWE, Forest Sector Support Department (FSSD), National Forestry Authority (NFA) and affected District Local Governments fast track the cancellation of titles in forest reserves and wetlands across the country.
iv. Inadequate funds to NFA, FSSD, District Forest Services (DFS) to implement their mandates.	d. CSOs support MWE in lobbying for increased funding of the sector, especially at parliamentary level.
v. Delay in the finalization of registration and recognition of community forests.	e. MWE/FSSD fast tracks the registration of community forests
vi. The District Land Board, sub-county chiefs (Senior Assistant Secretaries) and area land committees are not aware of their roles in ENR management, a reason for continued issuance of titles in reserves,	f. MWE engages MoLG and Ministry of Lands Housing and Urban Development (MoLHUD) on issuance of land titles in gazetted areas.
vii. A delay in up scaling collaborative forest management undermines community interest/role/responsibility in policing and enforcement of ENR management at community level.	g. NFA and DFS roll out Collaborative Forest Management especially those communities that have applied for memorandum of understanding.
viii. Boundaries for wetlands and forest reserves continue to be a challenge, especially with communities living adjacent to these resources.	h. MWE/NFA needs 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 **1<sup>st</sup> 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 responsible 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>.
- e) National CSO Network on Renewable Energy.

**Further information** about **Environmental Alert** is available at: <http://entalert.org/>