



For Immediate Release

April 22, 2022

STAKEHOLDER PRESS STATEMENT

“In Commemoration of International Earth Day 2022

Theme: “Invest in Our Planet”

Tag line: “ Everyone accounted for, and every one accountable

Venue : Isingiro District Headquarters Time: 9.00am to 10.00am

1. On this day International Earth day, we members of the Civil Society in Uganda in partnership with all stakeholders including, District Local Governments, Community Based organizations Business Community, Farmers, have together to amplify the risks an vulnerability of communities due to unsustainable use of our Natural resources consequently affecting our Planet.
2. We recognize that Uganda faces Climate and Environmental hazards such as droughts, flooding, landslides, land degradation, water pollution and water overexploitation and this has caused an imbalance in the ecosystem and this has caused social economic losses including loss of human and animal lives .
3. We would like to commend the Government of Uganda for recognizing the need to harness mother earth and creating institutional arrangements that can support this by designating Ministries, Departments and Agencies to foster responsible use of Natural Resources including Water and Environment. As well as creating relevant offices at Sub National and Local government levels including the creation of Environmental Protection Police Units.
4. We commend the Government for enacting appropriate policy and regulatory frameworks across the sectors that aimed at responsible use of Natural Resources and the fact that Ministry of Finance Requires that planning and budgeting at all levels must integrate climate change actions.

CSOs Concerns

1. As government is working to move the majority of Ugandans from subsistence to the money economy through the National Development Programs and particularly through the Parish Development model with focus on Agro-

Industrialization. We note that there is inadequate supportive human resources and infrastructure to match the needs and with the impact of COVID 19 still with us, the District Local Governments and Lower Local governments need targeted support to avoid overexploitation of the Natural Resources and Environmental protection.

We therefore, call upon government to prioritize financing for the recruitment of key technical staff at all local government levels including but not limited to Natural Resource Officers, Water Officers, Agriculture Extension Workers and all key human resources that directly link with the communities .

2. Drastic Loss of Forest Cover

We note that Uganda lost her forest from 24% in 1990, to 9% in 2015 and now partially recovering at 12.5% in 2020.¹ In Isingiro District the forest cover has been disappearing at an alarming rate for instance in 2010 it had 16.9k ha of tree cover covering over 15% of the land area but in 2020 it had lost 43,5 ha of tree cover .²

We call upon Isingiro Local Government to institute and implement a tree planting ordinance and lower level bye laws

3. Inadequate Local Government financing:

Despite the fact that local governments are at the fore front of delivering services to citizens, financing to local governments through central government transfers is still low. For example, the budget for Local governments is posed to slightly increase from UGX 4,382 Billion in FY2020/21 to UGX 4,611 Billion in FY2021/22. Much as we welcome such an increment, it is still marginal given the high number of new administrative units in the country. This is compounded by the fact that local governments have been performing poorly when it comes to domestic revenue mobilization and have continuously failed to meet their set revenue targets. According to the Local Government Performance Assessment 2019 report, only 23% of LGs were able to meet their revenue targets.

Funding for the Environment Office has been minimal and in some places critical support officers are not in place

a) We call upon Ministry of Finance to provide conditional resources that are aimed at strengthening local government capacity to respond to the climate crisis through recruitment and equipping of the relevant staff.

b) We recommend that Parliament takes action on resources generated from the Environmental Levy on cars and that they be specially appropriated to support climate action at both National and Local government level.

¹ Global Forest Alert

² Global Forest Watch

4. Lack of Land Use Physical Plans , Sanitation Plans at the Local Government Level

We commend government for providing institutional arrangements to enable comprehensive sustainable land use management in Uganda. We acknowledge the enactment of the Town and Country Planning Act 2000 and the Physical Planning Act 2010, National Environment Management Act 2019 among others

We are however concerned despite the presence of the Regulatory Framework, there has been limited funding and enforcement of the laws. The result is development going ahead of planning We are concerned that many Local governments including Isingiro District and the Town Council have no physical plans, land use plans and Sanitation plans in place.

We recommend that Sanitation and Land Use plans are put in place to guide development

5. Inadequate finances to enable communities, small holder farmers adopt practices to enable them adapt to climate change

We are aware that the climate crisis is with us and as a developing countries the effects are borne mostly by the urban and rural poor .We are aware that farmers have indigenous knowledge and technologies as well as improved ones that can help enhance their resilience to the negative effects of climate change .

We call upon government , private sector, and other non -state actors to finance actions aimed at enabling the communities adopt sustainable actions to enable them adapt to the negative effects of climate , Provide technologies such as clean energy, irrigation ,WASH resilient technologies.

6. Inadequate involvement of the Young People and Private Sector and Refugees in the Climate Change Discourse

We commend government for putting in place various actions aimed at involving the young people in the money economy through programmes like Emyooga, Youth livelihood fund .

We recommend that there is an intentional linkage of employment opportunities and Climate change action in the DLGs e.g supporting of Youth build social enterprises that support climate change adaptation, using Youth in the greening of cities and urban places.

The Refugees are burdened by the energy needs and have contributed to land degradation.

We therefore recommend that UNHCR and OPM and other partners support refugees have energy saving technologies at their disposal. This should be coupled with the massive tree planting actions.

7. Delays in passing the National Disaster Preparedness and Management Bill

We note that the process of development of the legal framework of the National Disaster Preparedness and Management Bill began in 2019 with the formulation of the bill has not been finalized. Currently the bills await to be presented to Parliament. The absence of a law has created a big gap yet the National Disaster Preparedness and Management Policy provides a basis for the formulation of a Comprehensive Disaster Management legal framework and yet we continue to have several disasters including the climate induced ones.

We recommend that Parliament should expedite the process of finalization of the development of the National Disaster Preparedness and Management Bill.

Conclusion

As CSOs, we are concerned that we have not harmonized our actions in saving mother earth. We know we need multistakeholder actions to ensure we sustainably use our resources . We must create an enabling environment that ensures that our Natural Resources are sustainably managed and we have the technical capacities to protect Mother

We are accountable

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