

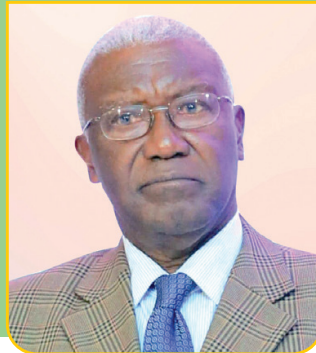


THE REPUBLIC OF UGANDA

MINISTRY OF TOURISM, WILDLIFE AND ANTIQUITIES



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STATEMENT ON THE OCCASION OF UNITED NATIONS WORLD WILDLIFE DAY 2024

On the occasion of the United Nations World Wildlife Day 2024, the Ministry of Tourism, Wildlife and Antiquities congratulates HE the President of the Republic of Uganda, entire Government and People of Uganda for continuing to conserve Uganda's natural heritage for the benefit of the present and future generations.

On 20th December 2013, the Sixty eighth session of the United Nations General Assembly under **Resolution 68/205** proclaimed 3rd March of every year as United Nations World Wildlife Day to celebrate the many beautiful and varied forms of wild fauna and flora and to raise awareness of the several benefits that conservation provides to humanity.

Uganda therefore joins the rest of the world to celebrate United Nations World Wildlife Day on the 3rd March 2024 at Kagorogoro Primary School Playground, Bugaaki Sub County, Kyenjojo District under the theme **"Connecting People and Planet: Exploring Digital Innovation in Wildlife Conservation"**.

Uganda's robust wildlife conservation efforts are underscored by comprehensive policy and legal frameworks established by the NRM Government since 1986, outlined in the NRM Manifesto 2021-2025. The country boasts numerous wildlife conservation areas, encompassing 10 National Parks, 12 Wildlife Reserves, 10 Wildlife Sanctuaries, and 5 Community Wildlife Areas. With a documented 18,783 species of flora and fauna, Uganda stands among the world's most biodiverse

nations. It is home to over 50% of the global population of Mountain gorillas, 11% of the world's bird species (equivalent to 50% of Africa's bird species richness), 8% of global mammal diversity (representing 39% of Africa's mammal richness), 19% of Africa's Amphibian species richness, 14% of Africa's reptile species richness, and records 1,249 butterfly species.

Enhanced management of protected areas has led to a general increase in wildlife populations. For instance, between 1983 and 2021, buffalo populations have risen from 25,000 to 44,163, elephant numbers from 2,000 to 7,975, and giraffes from 350 to 2,072. Similarly, the population of Mountain Gorillas has grown from 320 to 459 between 1999 and 2022. However, concerted efforts are still needed to recover populations of species facing decline such as the Indomitable lions and the recently reintroduced Rhinos in Uganda.

Uganda's rich wildlife and natural resources form the cornerstone of its tourism industry, which has demonstrated consistent growth over time. From 1986 to 2019, international visitor arrivals surged from 35,000 to 1,500,000. Tourism annually generates over US\$ 1.5 billion, constituting a significant portion of the country's revenue and contributing to 8% of total employment opportunities within Uganda. This remarkable growth underscores the pivotal role of digital innovation in wildlife conservation efforts, bridging the connection between people and the planet.

Technological innovations play a crucial role in Uganda's conservation efforts,

particularly in managing human-wildlife conflicts, poaching, and monitoring wildlife populations. SMART Tools for ecological monitoring, Cybertracker for data collection, ODK System for managing human-wildlife conflict, and EarthRanger Application System & ArcGIS for real-time data integration are key applications. Additionally, GPS, camera traps, radio telemetry, drones, and the Tourism Information Management System (TIMS) aid in wildlife monitoring and anti-poaching efforts. Platforms like East African TWIX facilitate information sharing on illegal wildlife trade among law enforcement authorities and the development of the CITES-Electronic permitting system to effectively regulate legal wildlife trade.

Community-centered conservation methods, such as revenue distribution and collaborative wildlife management, have played a pivotal role in safeguarding and revitalizing Uganda's wildlife. The enactment of the Uganda Wildlife Revenue Sharing regulations 2022 and Uganda Wildlife compensation regulations 2022 is expected to further bolster the bond between communities and wildlife. Over the last decade, communities have experienced substantial benefits from revenue sharing, incentivizing their active participation in conservation endeavors.

Despite advancements, persistent challenges like human-wildlife conflicts, habitat deterioration, poaching, and land use conflicts remain. Nevertheless, the Ugandan government remains committed to tackling these threats and ensuring the preservation of wildlife. The resurgence of tourism in 2023 has been

a critical driver of economic stability, providing essential foreign exchange earnings crucial for financing conservation initiatives. Moreover, a notable surge in domestic tourism has been observed post-COVID-19, indicating promising growth opportunities in this sector.

Great appreciation goes to all Ministries, Departments and Agencies, the Private Sector, Conservation Civil Society Organizations and Development Partners for the tireless efforts in partnering to enhance conservation in Uganda. Special thanks go to the European Union, the United Nations Development Program Uganda country office, WWF Uganda Country office, Wildlife Conservation Society and International Crane Foundation for the support towards the commemorative events.

For God and My Country

