

Letters

LETTERS

It is time for global action to preserve biodiversity



Every May 22, Uganda joins the rest of the world to celebrate International Day of Biodiversity. This day is aimed at increasing understanding and awareness of biodiversity issues. This year's theme is Acting Locally for Global Impact, which highlights how community level of conservation, such as indigenous tree planting, riverbank restoration, and sustainable agricultural practices within Ugandan communities, supports the global goals of halting and reversing biodiversity loss.

Uganda, with its rich ecosystems and biological wealth, stands at a critical juncture in the global effort to push back on biodiversity loss, one of the facets of the triple planetary crisis. The other two are climate change and pollution. It provides food, medicine, clean water, climate regulation, energy sources and supports livelihoods. Yet, this intricate web of life is under growing pressure from human activities, making the call to live in harmony with nature more imperative than ever.

Uganda ratified the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) on September 8, 1993 and is a party to its protocols, including the Cartagena protocol on biosafety, Nagoya protocol on access and benefits sharing, and its supplementary protocol on liability and redress.

To domesticate these commitments, Uganda developed the national biodiversity strategy and action plans (NBSAP I in 2002 and NBSAP II in 2015), which guide national efforts to conserve and sustainably use biodiversity. According to the National Environment Management Authority, Uganda is home to more than 18,783 documented species of flora and fauna, making it one of Africa's top ten most biodiverse countries.

She also hosts 53.9 percent of the world's mountain gorillas, 11 percent of global bird species 1,063, 7.8 percent of mammal species and significant proportions of amphibians, reptiles, butterflies, and freshwater fish. Over 5,400 plant species are recorded, with 30 of them endemic to Uganda.

Despite this natural wealth, Uganda loses between 10 and 11 percent of its biodiversity every decade. The major drivers include over-exploitation of resources, habitat destruction, particularly wetlands and forests, agricultural expansion, pollution, illegal wildlife trade, invasive species, and climate change.

Efforts to strengthen environmental monitoring, enhance transparency, and promote good governance in natural resources management have gained traction. Local and international organisations are advancing conservation, environmental education, and community empowerment, including equitable benefit sharing and revenue allocation.

To achieve harmony with nature, Uganda must scale up ecosystem restoration, particularly of degraded wetlands and forests, curb illegal wildlife reinvesting biodiversity research, and strengthen access and benefit-sharing frameworks.

Integrating biodiversity into development planning at all levels, national, sectoral, and local, is crucial. Greater inclusion of youth women and indigenous communities in decision-making will also ensure more just and effective outcomes. We must all renew our commitments to safeguarding Uganda's natural heritage.

Whether through policy advocacy, community engagement, education or sustainable everyday choices, each of us has a role to play in building a future where development is sustainable and in consonance with ecological balance. Remember its biodiversity that makes Uganda the pearl of Africa.

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