

EXPERTS WARN THERE COULD BE NO FORESTS IN COUNTRY BY 2033

# Go slow on cutting of trees, Ugandans told

GULU

By Jackson Kitara

A senior forestry officer in the Ministry of Environment ministry, Valence Arineitwe, has asked Ugandans to stop burning of charcoal in order to reduce emissions from deforestation and degradation.

Arineitwe said according to research, between 1990 and 2015, the forest cover in Uganda decreased from 24% to 9% due to deforestation and degradation.

He said this was a result of encroachment on the forest and bush-land for subsistence and commercial farming, charcoal burning and firewood.

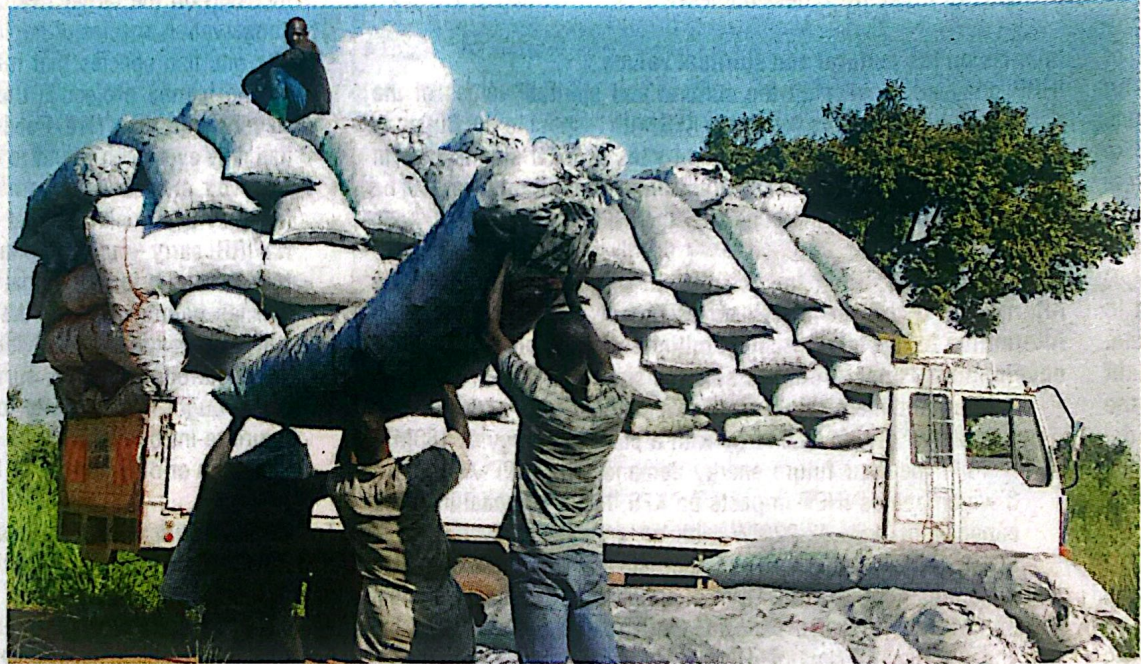
Other causes are illegal timber harvesting, large scale commercial agriculture, free grazing of livestock, wood harvesting conducted by refugees, wild fires, artisanal mining and oil extraction.

Arineitwe said Uganda is the second country with the highest rate of deforestation in the world.

“Deforestation and forest degradation reached its peak in Uganda between 2005 and 2010. People are cutting 200 hectares of forest per year. If no intervention is done by 2033, Uganda will lose all the forest,” he said, adding that this was according to the recent research.

Arineitwe was making a presentation during a regional dissemination meeting to reduce emissions from deforestation in Gulu.

Gaster Kiyongi, the team leader Tree Talk Plus, said deforestation and forest degradation can



Men loading charcoal on a truck. Research indicates that natural trees could disappear completely and the land left bare (like below) if the practice is not checked

be solved by agroforestry and greenhouse cultivation of vegetables.

Felix Okot Okidi, the permanent secretary in the environment ministry, said there is need to sensitise people on environmental degradation and name and shame those at the forefront of deforestation.

“We have virtual roles to play in changing the mindset and attitude of those who deliberately descend on forests and wetlands to acquire land titles for selfish and personal gain,”

Pope Onen, the chairman Uganda Forestry Working Group in northern Uganda, said there is need to register community forest agents to safeguard against cutting of indigenous tree species.



“I request the Government to reduce on certification of forest products by levying heavy taxes to protect our forests. Most of these indigenous tree species like Shea nut, mahogany take many years to grow and their seedlings are hard to find,” Onen

said. Gulu district chairperson Martin Ojara Mapenduzi, said: “There is need to introduce fast-growing tree species that take only five years to mature for charcoal, so that people can stop destroying natural species that have existed for decades.”