

UPDF bans use of ice on Lake Victoria

BY VISION REPORTER

THE Uganda People's Defence Forces Marine Fisheries Enforcement Unit has banned the use of ice by Ugandan and Kenyan fishing communities on Lake Victoria.

The unit says the measures are tailored to preserve fish and outlaw the prohibited fishing gear on Ugandan water bodies.

The communities, therefore, have been given one week to stop using ice in the preservation of fish caught in Lake Victoria because the method is used as a cover to catch immature fish using illegal fishing gear. Uganda and Kenya share Lake Victoria with Uganda taking 47% of the lake while Kenya has 6% and the rest is shared by Tanzania.

The announcement of the ban on using ice on Lake Victoria was part of stringent resolutions reached during a meeting on July 22

between the UPDF Marines Fisheries Enforcement Unit officials, Uganda and Kenya shareholders in the fishing industry at Rand Hotel in Busia, eastern Uganda. Officials of the Association of Fishers and Lake Users of Uganda (AFALU) as well as those of the Operation Wealth Creation programme in eastern Uganda, were also in the meeting.

About 100 fish dealers in attendance, the majority of whom were Kenyans, interestingly were curious to acquaint themselves with the Ugandan law provisions and regulations concerning fishing activities in the country so that the two countries can harmonise good fishing methods.

Maj. James Nuwagaba, who is the commander of UPDF Marines Fisheries Enforcement Unit, said he had been prompted to convene the meeting between the Uganda and Kenya fishing business dealers

to sensitise them on the implications of illegal fishing, security concerns, respect for frontiers of the neighbouring EAC countries, sanity in fishing methods, sanitation and enhancement of co-operation among all the lake users.

A source clarified that the UPDF was implementing the January 8, 2017 presidential directive to ban the use of ice on lakes.

"President Yoweri Museveni issued this directive after realising that sometimes fishermen carry ice along with them on the lake and spend even up to three days there fishing. This makes the lake prone to pollution. For instance, there are no mobile toilets on those boats, so they use the lake to answer calls of nature. There have also been reported issues of fishermen fighting and killing each other on the lake.

"So we are saying, leave the ice on the land shores. Go and fish and come back, then

take your fish to the factory or the market without having to spend several days on the lake," the source explained.

"These operations have yielded fruits. Those who are doing good fishing are beginning to reap profitably. Several fish factories have been revamped, which is a very big boost to the national revenue and economic growth," Nuwagaba said.

He also warned the lake users on security imposters and thieves who masquerade as UPDF Marine Fisheries Enforcement Unit officials.

The team leader of the Kenya Fishing Business Proprietors and also the chairman of the monitoring, control and surveillance on Lake Victoria in Kenya, Edward Oremo, said there are many people joining the fishing business, which must be controlled. He added that working with their counterparts in the fisheries department in Uganda is the way forward.

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