

NO CAUSE FOR ALARM OVER EBOLA, SAYS MUSEVENI

By Vision Reporter

President Yoweri Museveni has appealed for calm over the current Ebola situation, saying the viral disease is easier to control than COVID-19 because it spreads through close physical contact rather than through breathing.

While opening the 10th Pearl of Africa Tourism Expo at Speke Resort Munyonyo in Kampala yesterday, Museveni assured Ugandans and international visitors at the expo that the disease can be effectively managed if detected early.

"I want to start by giving you a few hints of science because I really saw that many people were panicking," Museveni said.

Ebola spreads through intimate contact and an infected person only develops visible signs after several days. If it is reported early, it is treatable because what kills many patients is the high fever and dehydration and these can be controlled by doctors," he said.

The President revealed that the current outbreak originated from neighbouring DR Congo, with a few infected individuals entering Uganda. He noted that the Government chose not to close borders entirely, but, instead adopted targeted measures.

"When we met with the task force, we did not agree with closing borders completely. We shall continue working; no cause for alarm. However,



Museveni with some of the cultural leaders from Africa during the official opening of the Pearl of Africa Tourism Expo at Speke Resort Munyonyo in Kampala, yesterday

border markets will be closed, like there is one busy market in Ntoroko, which has many Congolese mixing with Ugandans; these border markets will be closed."

At a separate press conference in Kampala yesterday, the health ministry permanent secretary, Diana Atwiine, announced that public transport, including water transport between Uganda and the DR Congo, had been suspended for four weeks, with only goods to be allowed.

UGANDA'S TOURISM

Turning to tourism, Museveni described Uganda as one of the most unique countries in the world because of its geographical location along the equator.

He noted that Uganda lies directly across the equator and enjoys moderate temperatures throughout the year because of its high altitude, which averages approximately 1,200 metres above sea level.

"In Uganda, you do not have extreme temperatures. The climate remains comfortable throughout the year and that is part of Uganda's uniqueness," the President said.

He said Uganda's beauty was the reason former British prime minister Winston Churchill described Uganda as the "Pearl of Africa".

Museveni further said Uganda offers more than scenery, highlighting the country's culture, food and peace as major attractions.

The President said Africa possesses enormous potential,

especially through indigenous foods and natural resources, noting that traditional African foods are healthier and more organic.

"Africa can save the world from bad foods because our foods are rich and original," he said.

On Uganda's economic progress, Museveni stated that the country had moved beyond striving for high-middle-income status.

"We are already a lower-middle-income country. We are no longer struggling to become one; now we are aiming at becoming an upper-middle-income country," he noted.

Museveni explained that Uganda's economy continues to grow steadily through three major sectors namely

WHAT OTHERS SAY

The tourism ministry permanent secretary, Doreen Katusiime, credited the country's tourism growth to peace and stability established under his leadership.

She said restoring peace in previously conflict-affected regions and securing Uganda's borders had significantly boosted tourism.

Katusiime also noted that investments in infrastructure, including road networks, had improved access to tourism sites across the country.

"Your Excellency, I am happy to report that tourism has recovered strongly after the pandemic and we are on the right trajectory," she said.

Katusiime added that international events hosted by Uganda, such as the Non-Aligned Movement summit and the G77 + China summit, as well as preparations for the upcoming Africa Cup of Nations (AFCON) tournament, continue to showcase Uganda's potential globally.

The chief executive officer of Uganda Tourism Board (UTB), Juliana Kagwa, thanked Museveni for supporting the tourism industry.

Kagwa noted that Uganda's tourism strategy seeks to differentiate the country from other destinations by showcasing its unique experiences and attractions.

The UTB board chairperson, Pearl Hoareau Kakooza, said Uganda was ready for expansion within the tourism sector following an increase in the tourism budget allocation by 12%.

She revealed that visitor numbers from Europe had increased and expressed optimism that AFCON would significantly boost tourism arrivals.

The President of the Uganda Tourism Association, Yogi Biriggwa, also thanked Museveni for maintaining peace and stability.

commercial agriculture, manufacturing and services.

The President also revealed plans to improve tourism through friendlier visa arrangements.

"In the new government, we are going to extend visas for tourists and remove the short-term visa restrictions. Some countries give Ugandans

three-year visas, so why should Uganda give very short stay visas?" he asked.

The Pearl of Africa Tourism Expo remains one of Uganda's flagship tourism events aimed at marketing the country as a preferred destination and bringing together tourism stakeholders, investors and international buyers.