Kadaga roots for national tree planting programme

By Andrew Ssenyonga

The Speaker of Parliament, Rebecca Kadaga, has asked the water and environment ministry to roll out a programme that will put in place national tree planting days to save the environment.

She asked the ministry to send a budget for tree seedlings to Parliament for approval so that every Ugandan can participate in the restoration of the green cover.

"The ministry should spearhead the campaign of restoring green cover in Uganda, rather than offer support to the few organisations that have come up with tree planting campaigns," she said.

Kadaga told the ministry to set days in a year when Ugandans can participate in tree planting campaigns countrywide.

"The days should be on the ministry's calendar of activities and will focus on greening the economy, with the aim of winning the battle against environmental degradation and economic decline, through planting trees," she explained.

The Speaker made the remarks at the launch of the Rotary Mission Green, a programme aimed at restoring and protecting the environment and improving livelihoods at Luzira Prisons Academy and Training School on Tuesday.

The campaign is spearheaded by Rotary International District 9211 in Uganda and Tanzania, in partnership with the Uganda Prisons Services.

As trees grow, Kadaga said, they contribute to reducing climate change by removing carbon dioxide from the air, storing carbon in the trees and soil and releasing oxygen into the atmosphere.

"So, I call for more public education to raise awareness of the importance that such an event can have on an economy," she said.



Kadaga

"All Ugandans should be concerned about the country's dwindling forest cover and join various campaigns aimed at boosting tree planting." Kadaga

National Tree Fund is long overdue

Kadaga appealed to the ministry to investigate the delay in the operationalisation of the Tree Fund.

"This critical call should not be left to environmentalists alone. All Ugandans should be concerned about the country's dwindling forest cover and join various campaigns aimed at boosting tree planting," she said.

In 2003, Parliament enacted the National Forestry and Tree Planting Act. Under Section 40 of the Act, the Government is mandated to establish a Tree Fund to provide financing for promoting tree planting in the country.

Kadaga noted: "The delay and failure to operationalise the Tree Fund amounts to contempt of Parliament.

The Commissioner General of Prisons, Dr Johnson Byabashaija, noted that the prisons host a total of 55,600 inmates in 253 facilities countrywide.

"We use over 8,000 tonnes of wood fuel a year, which means that 9,000 trees are destroyed per day. This greatly affects the environment," he said.

"We have, therefore, decided to work together with Rotary to make our cooking more environmentally friendly. We have also committed to growing trees in all our prisons," he explained.

Byabashaija pledged land for planting trees and labour at a little cost.

Rotary to plant 20 million trees

The Governor for Rotary International District 9211, Ken Mugisha, said during this campaign, they aim to plant over 20 million trees per year, for a period of five years.

"For my tenure, we are focusing on promoting, protecting and restoring the green environment, while also improving the livelihoods of people," he said.

Mugisha noted that the project will focus on afforestation by growing trees in institutions, urban areas and along roads, to replenish depleted forest reserves.

"The campaign will also promote the use of energy-efficient cooking technologies in large institutions, such as like prisons, schools, universities and hospitals," he said.

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