

The ISO director general ordered anyone not listed among the genuine native herders to leave the area immediately.

BY SADAT MBOGO

The Director General of Internal Security Organisation (ISO), Mr Arthur Mugenyi, has said President Museveni is determined to put an end to the disputes over ownership of Nsowe Central Forest in Gomba District.

The dispute involves licensed forest tree planters, native herders (Balaalo) and a section of locals.

Addressing a stakeholders' meeting on April 4, Mr Mugenyi said: "The President is tired of being repeatedly disturbed by this matter. We will be investigating many other aspects regarding the Nsowe land matters."

He said anyone not listed among the genuine native herders should leave the area immediately.

President Museveni's message is clear. Those whose names are not on the list of genuine native herders should vacate immediately. All recent illegal encroachers must be removed while the investments of the licensed tree planters must be safeguarded," he added.

The ISO director general ordered that only the 175 individuals listed as genuine native herders be verified, and they will be the only ones allowed to remain on the forestry reserve land. The verification exercise is set to begin tomorrow.

Nsowe Central Forest Reserve has de-

Museveni intervenes in Nsowe forest land fights



ISO Director General Arthur Mugenyi addresses a stakeholder meeting at Kalusina Primary School in Gomba District on April 4. PHOTO/SADAT MBOGO

BACKGROUND

In 2017, the National Forestry Authority (NFA) allocated 2,885 hectares of land to private tree planters to grow pine and eucalyptus trees. It also set aside 1,750 hectares for 175 local families, with each family given 25 acres on condition that they plant trees.

Recent reports show that more than 2,300 hectares have since been replanted. However, local leaders warn that the ongoing disputes could slow down reforestation efforts at Nsowe Forest Reserve.

teriorated over the years due to illegal tree logging, uncontrolled cattle grazing, charcoal burning, illegal farming and land grabbing.

Recently, the area has also seen disputes involving native herders, illegal settlers, and individuals licensed by the National Forestry Authority (NFA) as tree planters.

The tree planters accuse the native herders of destroying young tree plantations, attacking plantation workers, and frustrating efforts to grow new trees in Nsowe Forest Reserve in Gomba District.

Mr Asaph Besigye, a tree planter, said the violence is driven by the native herders who have no interest in the tree-planting project.

"Since September 2025, we have been attacked by individual herders who continue to destroy the young trees planted on the forest land. The cattle herders have injured our workers. We need protection from the government," he said in an interview at the weekend.

But a representative of the native cattle herders, Mr Francis Bwoya, argued that the forest has served as communal grazing ground for generations. He said the allocation of land to outsiders denies locals the opportunity to engage in the tree-planting project.

There have also been allegations of brokers extorting money from the public, promising to sell them pieces of land within the forestry reserve. It is alleged that the individuals claim to be acting on behalf of President Museveni and his office, and demand between Shs5m and Shs10m for plots of land.

Ms Robinah Rwakojo, the Gomba West Member of Parliament, questioned the criteria used to select the tree planters at the forest reserve land, saying many residents were denied a chance to participate in the exercise.

Mr David Nasasira, the Kyayi Sub-county chairperson, said: "We want the government to investigate the individuals who have been getting money from the public with a promise to allocate the land at the forestry reserve."

Gomba Resident District Commissioner Ronald Katende urged residents to change their attitudes.

"Let us cooperate to stop all the chaos and misunderstandings. We need a peaceful end to the chaos at the forest land," he said.