

Yoweri Kaguta Museveni, President of the Republic of Uganda

Wetlands encroachers must vacate

President Yoweri Museveni was in Ankole on June 28. He addressed the community at Rushororo Seed Senior Secondary School grounds in Kihini. The address focused on the state of the environment in the country. Below is his statement.

Ministers,
Bishop and other religious leaders,
Members of Parliament,
All other leaders,
All people of Uganda:

Among the Banyankore/Rukiga proverbs, there is one which says that when a wild animal refuses to heed the warnings of a hunter, it becomes roasted meat.

Have you ever heard of that proverb, that when a wild animal ignores to heed the warnings of a hunter that animal becomes roasted meat? When a hunter's bugle sounds and the wild animal neglects it, it becomes meat for the hunter and is eaten. That is one of our proverbs.

Another proverb says that when you blow in a sounding mortar you are bound to soil your eyes.

So, now then, God loved Uganda so much but because of the disobedience of the people, God has become disillusioned and now seems to have ignored us. In the book of Genesis - I read the old Bible written in Ruvum/Rutun.

The later translations I read them in English, but I was used to the Ruvum/Rutun Bible. The 1st Book of the Bible is called Genesis.

In this book, God ordained the world as it should be, on Monday. He created the earth, on Tuesday. He said the earth should separate from the seas, etc, until Saturday when He created Man.

When He created man, He told him to look after this creation and establish dominion over nature and dominate the world.

To dominate is like, in Ankole, when a bull fights and defeats another one, it gains control over the kraal. That is domination; that is what it means to establish dominion over nature.

He told man, whom He created at the end of all creation and in His own image to dominate all creation, multiply and fill the earth.

Now, to multiply and fill the earth, that you have fulfilled. I cannot say you are lacking there. No, that one you have achieved.

But there are two things that have not been done: To disobey God and destroy wetlands and turn them into gardens. Do you, by that act, think God did not know what He was doing when he created wetlands?

When He created wetlands, made lakes and rivers and for you, you stand there in your clan of Basigi, Bahimba or Musika like me and say God did not know what He was doing, me I am going to do what I want with this wetland. What more disobedience do you want? Disobeying God is wrong.

We have continuously told you and appealed to you to vacate wetlands in our characteristic peaceful NRM methods of doing things without



President Yoweri Museveni at Ntungwa Bridge on River Ntungwa in Kihini sub-county in Kinkizi West Constituency in Kanungu on June 28

using force. We always want to teach.

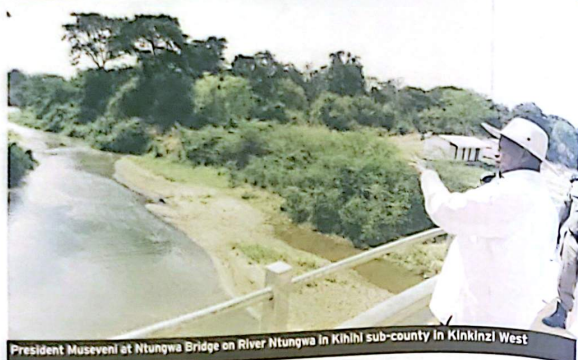
Now, if you come to my village, you would not find that I have encroached on God's creation of wetland. That is why you hear that God blesses me! I cannot even create one papyrus plant. It is impossible for me.

It is God who planted these wetlands with noble intentions but you just come and say God did not know what He was doing.

You now put potatoes where God had put marshes. But God designed that potatoes be planted on hillsides and valleys so that wetlands become water reservoirs like we have granaries for grain storage, wetlands are for water storage. But now you are destroying these water reservoirs saying God did not know what He was doing.

Now you can see the consequences of your actions. In the past, even before I was born, there was locust invasion. Some people went to catch locusts to eat. A woman went into the swamps too, with a baby on her back

If you come to my village, you would not find that I have encroached on God's creation of wetland. That is why you hear that God blesses me! — President Museveni



President Museveni at Ntungwa Bridge on River Ntungwa in Kihini sub-county in Kinkizi West

to have her catch.

Those reeds in swamps are sharp edged. Now, the sharp edge of the papyrus cut the baby's throat on her back. The woman felt wet at the back but thought it was sweat. She continued with catching locusts until the end when she looked behind only to find blood instead of sweat. She cried out saying, "I thought it was sweat instead it is blood!"

Now this is where we Ugandans are leading. God endowed us with a lot of opportunities. There is nothing that is not in Uganda. Elsewhere you find their countries are deserts like in Egypt. But our country is a country of plenty. But disobedience is a country of poverty.

Now Bishop, I thank you. It is not very common for me to appreciate Bishops but this one has spoken very well because he was focused on God's message and explained how God commanded us.

NRM has been soft towards wetland degradation, explaining

to people who have not taken our advice.

I spoke to the late Mzee Barigisa of Kabale. They were cultivating in wetlands. He took my advice and left the wetland even his widow there after he vacated the wetland below their home near Kabale.

Other people are argumentative saying this and that; but I go slow, saying to convince them. There is a trying to convince them. Here is a trying to convince them. There is a trying to convince them.

The NRM has always been patient, taking situations easily but it seems this is leading us astray. Now, I have to repent in front of the Bishop - you know my mother was a born-again Christian. She would always repent of her sins.

Now I am going to bear with Pilate. You remember Jesus before Pilate. The Jews came and brought falsehoods against Jesus before Pilate

for Him to be crucified. Pilate had not found fault with Jesus and had not wanted Jesus to be crucified. He even proposed to them to surrender the thief - Barabbas instead. They refused and said "NO".

Pilate became a coward. My case too is that of cowardice. Pilate declared that the blood Jesus be on their heads and said he was innocent of Jesus' blood and washed his hands before them.

Now my case is like that of Pilate, people to destroy things under my watch because I am patient. If Pilate had stood his ground and refused to surrender innocent blood, may be Jesus would not have died.

I became like Pilate, appealing to the people to leave wetlands and they refused. Now God has given us a punishment - prolonged drought. I am told this drought has been here for the last three years.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 23

Yoweri Kaguta Museveni, President of the Republic of Uganda

to pave way to fight drought



An aerial view of part of Kabale showing overused land. President Yoweri Museveni has been sensitising Ugandans on environmentally friendly land use methods

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 22

Now some of you who studied Geography, this is a valley, across are hills. This is called rain shadow in Geography. The valley here is overshadowed by those hills.

When there is little rain it remains in the hills there and does not reach the valley here. That is the problem.

But this is brought about by lack of support from swamps and other wetlands beyond in Kabale, because these wetlands are like women cooking in a sauce pan emitting heat. Now if you cover the saucepan you will find there are drops of water under the covering used.

This means the heat that evaporated condensed into water. That is how rain is formed. Rain is produced through wetlands, swamps, lakes etc when warmed up by the sun there is evaporation. When up in the sky there is condensation, then that is seen as rain fall.

Scientists say that 40% of the rainfall we receive comes from the wetlands and swamps, lakes and forests of Uganda. 60% of the rainfall is made by the large oceans like the Pacific or Indian Oceans.

Now to destroy our swamps means we are depriving ourselves 40% of our potential to create rainfall.

Therefore, we are the losers who in the valleys because the little rain that is available only remains in the hills and mountains. That is the punishment God has given us

for degrading and destroying our wetlands.

The Bible says that what one sows is what one will reap. We are reaping what we sowed. The good side is that our God is a forgiving God. If God had not taken me into politics, I would probably have become a Bishop.

There is in the prayer book - we had a pastor - Rev. Karyahwera who would put it well - that if a sinner turned and left the bad things he committed and did good and deserving acts, that person will save his/her life from going to hell.

Here at Rushororo, we have come to confess and repent that God forgive us our disobedience and opposition to your arrangement. You go and tell all the people of your repentance the Bishop's work is being eased! In the book of Matthew, Jesus says when one slaps you on the left cheek you turn the right also. But other people misinterpreted it with disobedience.

But when Jesus found people selling merchandise in the temple He was angry and over turned tables and pots. You remember what he did.

The Bishop has advised that those in wetlands must vacate them and I support him. Those cultivating in swamps and planting eucalyptus trees must vacate the swamps and wetlands so that we find an answer to the drought and associated disasters.

So now, what brought me here was to convey relief to those hunger stricken areas. We have brought 550, 100 kgs bags of maize flour,

God is still merciful over us because our rivers and streams are okay, although we have mismanaged the wetlands. So let us use this water meaningfully

1,000 bags of 50kgs rice, 100 bags of 100kgs of beans.

But remember the Banyankore proverb "the teeth of a foolish man eats the seeds and laughs at the garden where he would have planted".

A foolish man when he feels hungry, he will eat the seeds reserved for planting. When it rains, he will have no seeds to plant but just to smile at the garden.

I do not want us to be like that foolish man. I have brought relief food to those starving, but also I have come with medicine to deter hunger in future - I have come with my

daughter called Nakyebe. This lady works in my office.

I want you to show her the place down the valley on this river where she will establish a solar powered irrigation scheme. She will send technicians to the District Chairperson Mrs. Katsya - I have been to the river valley down there, you know I am a guerrilla fighter.

I first survey, I have been to the park also. That river is the Kahengye River, which connects with Minera and Mutama. It is one I want you to identify an area, not in the park, where this scheme, using solar energy, will be established for irrigation.

You do not have to wait for the rain as the minister suggested. No, do not wait for the rain. Start immediately. When you are to save a sick chicken, you do it as soon as you notice its slow movement.

Therefore, let us will send technicians who will identify a place for this scheme to begin. We could also use gravity water from high hills into the lower areas in villages so that we begin this initiative of irrigation.

Additionally, I have brought seeds for quick maturing high yielding crops. These include pumpkins.

God is still merciful over us because our rivers and streams are okay, although we have mismanaged the wetlands. So let us use this water meaningfully.

The seeds we have brought include four types of beans; there is sorghum, millet, three types of maize, cassava, Irish potatoes and dodo which is

multipurpose-used by both human beings, animals and birds.

Now all these seeds are here. Ms. Katsya, the district chairperson, will receive them. These beans will yield in 60 days. In three months, they will be ready for harvest.

There is much more of these seeds in stores. So you should not worry about hunger again. As soon as the irrigation scheme is put in place, all the seeds will be available here.

I came here because of four things: Firstly, I brought relief food to those in need whether sick or hungry. Secondly, I came to launch the irrigation initiative so that we do not look like birds of the air, but are we birds, why then did God create us on the 6th day when he had created everything else which he said we should dominate. We are not birds. He gave us wisdom and knowledge next to his own.

Therefore, let us use this knowledge. I had not in the past emphasised irrigation because we were relying on God's provision of rain. But now that we have spoilt the environment and rains are not coming as we expected. Let us wake up and irrigate our gardens and farms.

The third reason was to provide and promote quick maturing and high yielding crops which we must apply. There are also those crops that are drought resistant like cassava and sweet potatoes.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 24