

AYENI WILL ADVOCATE PLANTING OF ONE MILLION TREES TO SAVE THE ENVIRONMENT

# Cheptoris flags off climate walk

KAMPALA

By Gerald Tenywa

The Minister of Water and Environment, Sam Cheptoris, has flagged off Geoffrey Walker Ayeni, a climate change activist who will walk 370km in 10 days from Kampala to Kasese to create awareness about climate change.

Cheptoris handed a flag to Ayeni and David Duli, who is the World Wide Fund for Nature's (WWF) country director, yesterday at his office in Luzira, Kampala.

Cheptoris said it was important for the population to take action against climate change. He said Ayeni would help to amplify his voice as he moves from Kampala to Kasese.

Ayeni emerged as a new face of the campaign against climate change at the end of last year, when he conquered 520km from Kampala to Kapchorwa.

He spread the message about the effects of climate change as he walked and inspired many to take action against the changing climatic conditions. He said tree planting was one of the interventions that could be taken up by the people.

After conquering eastern Uganda, Ayeni is now spreading his tentacles

to parts of western Uganda by walking from Kampala to Kasese via Fort Portal. He started the walk yesterday.

"As I walk, I am going to advocate the planting of a million trees to save our environment," Ayeni said. He said Ugandans needed to take action as individuals, community, private sector, local government and government.

Ayeni belongs to the Walkers Association of Uganda, which is the biggest walking club in the country. The club is expected to dispatch some of its members to accompany him.

He is being funded by WWF, together with the environment ministry, among other partners. Ayeni's walk will end on March 24, the day Earth Hour, which is a global campaign to inspire the public to adopt sustainable lifestyles, will be taking place. WWF mobilises activities under Earth Hour in Uganda. Prior to the flag-off, Duli said last year in November, WWF in partnership with the water ministry supported the Walkers Association in the first Change Walk from Kampala to Kapchorwa (260km).

"The walk generated interest from the public and media," Duli said. He said this year WWF is supporting the Earth Hour walk from Kampala to Kasese, a total distance of 370km.



Duli (left) flags off Ayeni for a 10-day walk to Kasese in order to create awareness about climate change. Photo by Gerald Tenywa

## BETWEEN THE LINES:

■ Ayeni emerged as a new face of the campaign against climate change at the end of last year when he walked 320km from Kampala to Kapchorwa.

He said the Earth Hour walk was important to WWF because the accelerating climate change and staggering biodiversity loss which threaten the planet. He also pointed out that climate change and its impacts could threaten, with extinction, one-quarter or more of all species on land by the year 2050.

In addition, environmental degradation is driving down the

productivity of over a fifth of the world's cultivated land.

Uganda loses an average of 122,000 hectares of forests annually while two-thirds of wetlands were destroyed in the last century

"We need to inspire people to take action and live more sustainably, and expect that of businesses and their governments," Duli said. "It is important to influence the policymakers to make the right decisions to curb the loss of biodiversity."

Climate change is caused by emissions such as carbon dioxide from production processes, which trap heat escaping into the atmosphere, thereby causing global warming. The warming of the earth disrupts rainfall patterns and melts the ice on mountaintops such as Mount Rwenzori.



## Students charged

● Four students of Kibuuka Memorial Senior Secondary School in Mpigi district were charged with malicious damage to property and unlawful assembly at Mpigi Police Station. This follows a violent strike on Monday during which students vandalised school property. The four students were arrested on Monday after they were suspected of leading a riot which left property worth millions destroyed.

## NGO bid rejected

● Kyotera district council has thrown out an application by Fauna & Flora International (FFI) seeking to renew its partnership with the district to conserve wetlands and forests. Patrick Kintu Kisekulo, the district chairperson and Paul Wasswa, the Kakuuto sub-county councillor, convinced the majority of the councillors to reject the FFI proposal, claiming its activities were unclear.