

 THE REPUBLIC OF UGANDA

**MINISTRY OF TOURISM, WILDLIFE AND ANTIQUITIES**

**PRESS STATEMENT ON COMMEMORATION OF UNITED NATIONS WORLD WILDLIFE DAY 2023 IN UGANDA**

On 20th December 2013, the Sixty eighth session of the United Nations General Assembly proclaimed 3rd March of every year as World Wildlife Day to celebrate the many beautiful and varied forms of wild fauna and flora and to raise awareness of the several benefits that conservation provides to humanity.

Uganda will therefore join the rest of the world to celebrate United Nations World Wildlife Day on the 3rd March 2023. Uganda’s national celebrations will be held in Tororo District. H.E the President of the Republic of Uganda will be the Chief Guest.

Uganda ranks among the top most biodiversity rich countries globally. It is host to 53.9% of the world’s remaining population of Mountain gorillas, 11% of the world’s recorded species of birds (which is 50% of Africa’s bird species richness), 8% of the global mammal diversity (which is 39% of Africa’s mammal richness), 19% of Africa’s Amphibian species richness, 14% of Africa’s reptile species richness and 1,249 recorded species of butterflies.

The theme for the 2023 World Wildlife Day is ***“Partnerships for Wildlife Conservation”.*** The theme focuses on all who are working for wildlife conservation and making a difference for wild species, ecosystems, habitats, local communities and their livelihoods. It draws our attention to people at all levels who work and strive to make a difference for the conservation of species of wild fauna and flora. From national and international organizations and conventions to NGOs, businesses, local communities and homes, the positive work that is being done will be promoted. It will celebrate the partnership work that CITES has done and continues to do daily, as a Convention that sits at the junction of trade and conservation. World Wildlife Day 2023 will draw inspiration from successful partnerships of the past, offering a springboard to the necessary future work needed to bring us into a sustainable partnership with nature.

The Ministry of Tourism, Wildlife and Antiquities recognizes the importance of partnerships is addressing the current challenges of wildlife conservation and management. We aspire for greater synergies and collaboration with local communities, Non-Governmental Organizations, Ministries, Departments and Agencies, academia, conservationists and state governments through regional and global framework treaties and conventions.

We work with local communities who are not only stewards of wildlife but also develop and own wildlife-based enterprises, and transform their communities through tourism development.

We also work with several Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) that pursue and contribute to national conservation goals addressing sustainable wildlife management and community livelihoods.

We further collaborate with the private which is very critical in supplementing government financing to ensure protected areas are conserved for generations. In addition to funding, NGOs provides technical capacities for developing sustainable conservation-led economies within local communities.

The receive a lot of support from the academia and research institutions that undertake both pure and applied research for informing policy development as well as conservation and sustainable development of wildlife resources.

Our commitment and participation at regional and international fora such as the East African Community and Multilateral Environmental Agreements including Convention on Biological Diversity, the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora and Convention on Migratory Species ensures full engagement of other state parties and secure Uganda’s interest in regional and global conservation agenda.

Due to enhanced integrity of the Protected Areas, arising from political stability and associated sustainable security, there has been general increase in wildlife population. For instance; between 1983 and 2021, buffalos have increased from 25,000 to 44,163, Elephants from 2000 to 7,975 and Giraffes from 350 to 2,072. Similarly, Mountain Gorillas have increased from 320 to 459 between 1999 and 2022. Government has been able to successfully reintroduce Rhinos back to Uganda that had gone extinct in early 1980’s. The initial population of 8 has successfully bred and multiplied to the current population of 32 individuals. Efforts to introduce rhinos into the wild have commenced. However, more efforts are required to recover declining populations such as chimpanzees, lions among others. We particularly need to address poaching, habitat loss, retaliatory killings and climate change effects among other threats.

This year, a number of activities have been organized to celebrate the day as follows:

1. Conservation Conference on “Advances in Wildlife and Environment Management in Uganda: *Elucidating knowledge contribution of Sciences Technology Engineering Mathematics (STEM) and non-STEM field actors in the sector* on 9th February 2023.
2. Primates of Uganda Exhibitions to be launched at Uganda Museum on 23rd February 2023.
3. Cranes Festival on 27th February 2023 in Sembabule district.
4. Wildlife Conservation competition:
5. Tertiary institutions on 20th February 2023;
6. Primary Schools on 1st March 2023; and
7. Secondary Schools on 2nd March 2023.
8. Public Talk on Wildlife Conservation 2nd March 2023 at Uganda Museum.
9. National World Wildlife Day Celebrations, Conservation Awards and Exhibitions on 3rd March 2023.

I call upon all Ugandans and all our conservation and tourism partners to promote and participate in the above events to commemorate the World Wildlife Day 2023.

HON.TOM R. BUTIIME, MP

**MINISTER**