



World
Wetlands Day
2 February 2022



Wetlands Action for
People and Nature

MINISTRY OF WATER AND ENVIRONMENT

**SPEECH BY THE HONOURABLE MINISTER OF WATER
AND ENVIRONMENT**

AT

**THE COMMEMORATION OF WORLD WETLANDS DAY
2022, GAYAZA PLAYGROUND, KIMANYA-KABONERO
DIVISION, MASAHA CITY**

2ND FEBRUARY 2022

The Rt. Honourable Prime Minister

The Resident Coordinator, UN Agencies, Uganda

The UNDP Resident Representative

Development Partners

Area Members of Parliament

Your Lordship the Mayor – Masaka city

The Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Water and Environment

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen

It gives me great honor to be with you all at this year's world wetlands day celebrations. I warmly welcome all of you present and those joining us on different media platforms for today's celebrations. This day marks the date of the signing of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands in 1971 in Ramsar, in Iran.

Ladies and Gentlemen

As we celebrate 51 years since the signing of the Ramsar Convention, it is prudent for us as a country to take stock of our achievements and milestones in wetland management. What have we achieved to-date? What opportunities have we leveraged to promote wetland action for people and nature? How are we handling the emerging challenges to wetland conservation, specifically balancing between human needs and natural resources development?

As we celebrate, we need to reflect on the theme for the year which is **“Wetlands Action for People and Nature,”** The theme combines the need to integrate both human and nature needs, and this is quite important. The theme is derived from the recognition that wetlands offer important services but are facing increasing pressure from the very people who should protect them. It calls for more financial, human and political capital investments in order to conserve them. It further lays emphasis on the need to promote the sustainable use of wetland resources so as to meet socio-economic needs without compromising other services provided by wetlands for nature preservation. The contribution of Nabajjuzzi wetland to water supply in Masaka City and also to the provision of products for various stakeholders is a great example of the interface between people and nature, and the need to institute actions that sustain both.

Ladies and gentlemen

Despite the valuable services provided by wetlands, it has been realized that they are the most threatened ecosystems globally. Approximately 35% of the world's wetlands were lost between 1970 - 2015 and the rate of loss is accelerating annually since 2000. Uganda has not been an exception with its wetlands cover declining from 15.6% in 1994 to 13% in 2019 arising from poor resource planning and land use management. It is important to note that even the 13% that we have as wetland is not entirely intact. Actually only 8.9% of wetland cover is intact.

In order to address the rampant degradation, my Ministry has continued to profile benefits which individuals, communities and the economy derive from the wetlands through Wetland Economic Valuation studies. Additional effort has been placed in awareness campaigns that highlight the vulnerable state of our wetlands due to unsustainable practices. Other efforts, include restoration of degraded wetlands, provision of sustainable livelihoods specifically for those voluntarily leaving wetlands, enlisting new Ramsar Sites and cities; a case in point is the ongoing process to raise Masaka City to the Ramsar City status.

My Ministry will continue to accord high priority to conservation and wise use of wetlands in the country. Furthermore, great effort will be made to strengthen the legal and policy framework for management of wetlands, increase capacity both at central and local government level to execute integrated and holistic resource management, enhance collaboration with all stakeholders to further the cause for wetlands management and finally promote alternative livelihood options so as to reduce pressure on our wetlands.

Ladies and gentlemen

As I conclude, allow me to congratulate Masaka City for hosting this year's celebrations and spearheading the process of its accreditation as a Ramsar Wetland City. Allow me also to thank my technical team and all partners for the support that has propelled wetland management forward in Uganda for the last 30 years. I wish you all good celebrations.

It is now my singular honor to invite the Guest of honour to address us. Thank you.

FOR GOD AND MY COUNTRY

Sam Cheptoris (MP)

MINISTER OF WATER AND ENVIRONMENT