



## MINISTRY OF TOURISM, WILDLIFE AND ANTIQUITIES

### PRESS STATEMENT ON COMMEMORATION OF UNITED NATIONS WORLD WILDLIFE DAY 2022 IN UGANDA

On 20<sup>th</sup> December 2013, the Sixty eighth session of the United Nations General Assembly proclaimed 3<sup>rd</sup> 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 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2022 under the theme ***“Recovering key species for ecosystem restoration”***. Uganda’s national celebrations will be held at the Uganda Wildlife Conservation Education Centre (UWEC) in Entebbe, Wakiso district. HE the Vice 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 ***Recovering key species for ecosystem restoration*** draws attention to the critical role that keystone species of plants and animals – many of which are threatened or endangered, play in ensuring ecosystem health and human survival. It highlights the need to protect and conserve critically endangered species, support

restoration of their habitats and ecosystems and promote sustainable utilisation by humans. It calls for the need to recognize the ecological roles played by keystone species. For instance, elephants are important for maintaining the structures of savannas while lions are key in maintaining the carnivore- herbivore balance. Pollinators, such as bees, maintain gene flow and dispersal throughout widespread ecosystems ensuring plant diversity.

Vegetation is the foundation of the complex interrelationships in an ecosystem. Loss of plant species may lead to the loss of animal species. As a result, these special relationships have to be maintained if we are to enhance ecosystem resilience and survival of mankind.

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. 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 Combating Wildlife Crime on 8<sup>th</sup> – 9<sup>th</sup> February, 2022.

2. Cranes Festival on 28<sup>th</sup> February 2022 in Kaikolongo, Lwengo district.
3. Wildlife Conservation competition.
4. National World Wildlife Day Celebrations and Exhibitions on 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2022.

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 2022.

**HON.TOM R. BUTIME, MP**  
**MINISTER**