



Ministry of Tourism, Wildlife and Antiquities

PRESS STATEMENT ON COMMEMORATION OF UNITED NATIONS WORLD WILDLIFE DAY 2026 IN UGANDA

On December 20th 2013, the Sixty-eighth Session of the United Nations General Assembly declared March 3rd of each year as World Wildlife Day to celebrate the many beautiful and diverse kinds of wild fauna and flora and to raise awareness of the benefits of conservation to humanity.

Therefore, in view of the foregoing, Uganda being an active member of the United Nations and biodiversity-rich country, will join the rest of the world on 3rd March, 2026 to celebrate the World Wildlife Day. Uganda's national celebrations will be held in Entebbe Municipality, Wakiso District. The Chief Guest will be H.E. President of the Republic of Uganda.

Uganda is one of the world's most biodiverse countries. It is home to more than 50% of the world's remaining mountain gorilla population, 11% of the world's recorded bird species (which is 50% of Africa's bird species richness), 8% of 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 documented butterfly species.

As you may be aware, the Uganda Wildlife Act cap 315 defines 'Wildlife' as "any wild plant or animal species or their derivative products that are indigenous, migrated to or introduced in Uganda". Therefore, in recognizing the role and importance of plants, this years' World Wildlife Day theme is "***Medicinal and Aromatic Plants: Conserving Health, Heritage and Livelihoods,***". The theme calls us to recognize the fundamental interconnections between biodiversity conservation, human well-being, and sustainable development.

Medicinal and aromatic plants represent far more than botanical specimens. They are the foundation of traditional healthcare systems, a source of ancestral

knowledge and traditional medicine, and economic lifeline for millions of rural communities worldwide. As we face unprecedented challenges from climate change, habitat loss, and unsustainable exploitation, the conservation of these plants has never been more urgent or more critical to our collective future.

The Global Significance of Medicinal and Aromatic Plants

Millions of people around the world consume plant-based medicines as part of traditional medicine for a range of medical disorders. Medicinal and aromatic plants are vital to global health, cuisines, culture, and economies. Around 80% of people in developing countries depend on plant-based traditional medicine for primary healthcare. Globally, about 60,000 plant species are used for medicinal, nutritional, and aromatic purposes, with roughly 500,000 tons traded each year. The traditional medicine market is valued at USD 60 billion and is growing at 7% annually. Yet nearly 90% of these plants are still harvested from the wild, placing severe pressure on ecosystems and threatening long-term availability.

Use of Medicinal Plants in Uganda

The use of traditional medicine in Uganda contributes directly to the socio-economic status and wellbeing of several communities. Herbalists and traditional healers generate income from medicinal plants. A 1995 report by the World Health Organisation estimated that, about 80% of the human population in developing countries including Uganda largely depend on herbal medicine for treating various diseases. Some of the identified important medicinal plants include; *Vernonia amygdalina*, *Albizia coriaria*, *Bidens Pilosa*, *Prunus Africana*, and *Warburgia ugandensis*.

It is also important to note that, medicinal and aromatic plants are inseparable from cultural heritage. Indigenous medicinal and aromatic plants provide critical income for millions, particularly in rural areas, through harvesting, trade, processing, and cultivation. Women play key roles across these value chains. However, there is need to regulate harvesting and mitigate against overexploitation and potential depletion of these important species. Shifting toward sustainable cultivation, fair market access, and benefit-sharing can strengthen rural livelihoods while conserving plant resources for the future.

Conservation Challenges:

Despite their immense value, medicinal and aromatic plants face serious threats that jeopardize their survival and the benefits they provide. Some of these include : (i) Overexploitation and Unsustainable Harvesting; (ii) Habitat Loss and Land-Use Change; (iii) Climate Change; (iv) Loss of traditional knowledge; (iv) Weak regulation; and (vi) Poor monitoring.

On this World Wildlife Day, let us reaffirm our commitment to conserving medicinal and aromatic plants, honoring traditional knowledge, and supporting community

livelihoods. Their conservation is not a burden but an opportunity to protect biodiversity, strengthen healthcare, preserve culture, and build resilient, equitable societies.

I therefore call upon all Ugandans and our conservation and tourism partners to actively promote and participate in the events commemorating World Wildlife Day 2026 (Annex 1).

**TOM R. BUTIIME, MP
MINISTER**