



UGANDA

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Statement by
The President of the Republic of Uganda
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Summit on Climate Change

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Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The environment in Uganda and Africa in general has got two burdens. Burden number one is the global climate change caused by the green house gases and other pollutants to the environment.

The second burden however is local within Uganda and Africa; it is caused by a number of negative human activities.

The first activity is the cutting of biomass for firewood. In Uganda, every year about 40 billion cubic metres of wood is destroyed in order to provide firewood and charcoal to the peasants. This has caused the destruction of forests. The cutting of the forests for firewood is itself linked to scarcity of electricity.

Then you have the peasants in search of agricultural land invading the forest and cutting them down. Therefore, that is why I said in my opening statement, that Uganda has got a double burden as far as climate change is concerned.

There are changes caused by the negative global happenings such as the green house gas emissions among others.

But then within Africa, there are the local factors which accelerate the destruction of the environment. One of such factors is encroaching on the wetlands.

When you encroach on the wetlands and convert them for agriculture, you interfere with the evapo-transpiration which is part of the cycle of making rain. Of course the wetlands are also reservoirs for storing water and for recharging the underground water systems.

Therefore as far as Uganda is concerned, we need to move on two fronts. Front number one is to work with the rest of the international community to deal with the factors that cause the increase of the green house gasses.

However, within Uganda and East Africa, we need to deal with these problems; shortage of electricity leading to people cutting trees in order to use them for firewood. That leads to deforestation and all the negative consequences it comes with.

Secondly, we need to protect the wetlands so that the rainwater cycle is not interfered with.

Thirdly, we need to stop soil erosion so that the lakes and the rivers are not silted up.

Here we need to protect the river banks to ensure that the vegetation is not destroyed, protect the lake shores, so that that vegetation acts as a sieve for the run-off water before it goes into the lake.

And then, through industrialization, but which some other people call value addition and other names, we need to change the structure of the economy so that less and less people depend on agriculture and depend more on industry and services.

That will liberate the country side from too much human pressure which is the cause of invading the forests. This population will be now absorbed in work, industries in towns and in services.

On the second burden caused by the global phenomenon of the green house gases, it should be noted that the primary responsibility for those green house gases are the developed countries which generate those gases. It is therefore their moral obligation to first of all reduce the emissions in their own countries by introducing cleaner technologies which are available. But at the same time they should help us to deal with the negative consequences of their bad practices.

These in my view are some of the major climate change problems in our country.

I thank you for your attention.