

THE STATE OF ENVIRONMENT, 2022

KEY STORIES





COMPILED BY:

The Environment Shield Limited
Master Plaza, 1st Floor, Room F.10
Plot 88, Ben Kiwanuka Street
Opp. Watoto Church Central
Kampala, Uganda
@EnviShield

<https://www.environmentshield.org>.

Table of Contents

About us	4
Vision	4
Mission	4
Our Values	4
Foreword.....	5
Methodolgy.....	6
PART ONE: LOCAL /NATIONAL STORIES.....	6
Hunger in Karamoja	6
FLOODS	6
Kasese floods.....	7
Floods in Western Uganda	7
Swelling Nalubale	8
Kampala Floods	8
Busia Floods.....	9
FOSSIL FUEL	9
Pro-EACOP Protests	10
Stop - EACOP protests.....	10
More stop EACOP protests	10
2 stop EACOP EACJ SUITS.....	10
POLLUTION	11
Kampala dust	12
Noise pollution.....	12
FORESTS.....	13
Bugoma Forest	14
Mabira Forest	14
Bundibugyo Forest	15
Forest cover	15
WETLANDS	15
Nakivubo wetland	16
Otuke wetland	16
Wetlands’ rice ban	17
Climate Conference	17
PART TWO: GLOBAL TOP STORIES.....	18
Cop 27	18
Cop 15	18
Right to a clean and healthy environment	19
Negotiations commenced on plastic pollution	19
Stockholm +50	20
RECOMMENDATIONS.....	21
Endnotes.....	23

About Us

The Environment Shield is a civic organization (nonprofit) working for people and planet/nature. We use the law, media/advocacy, strategic litigation, community engagement, research, collaborations, monitoring and documentation to battle the climate emergency, biodiversity loss and pollution while centring social justice, rule of law, human rights, and ecological justice. SDGs, sustainable development, climate justice and the right to a clean and health environment are key pillars of our work.



VISION

A Green and just society



MISSION

To advance Environmental Rights by Advocacy, Partnerships, Research and Documentation



OUR VALUES

- Integrity
- Passion
- Innovation & creativity



Foreword



Grassroots work and global environmental processes are mutually reinforcing in battling the triple planetary crisis of climate hell, biodiversity loss and pollution. Uganda had her fair share of environmental opportunities and challenges in 2022. The thirst for oil money continued to divide opinion, and the EU parliament threw a spanner in the works with its 14th September, 2022 resolution, cautioning TOTAL Energies to suspend work on EACOP.

Less divisive was the biodiversity COP 15 in Montreal; Stockholm 50+ conference; and the UN declaration on the right for everyone, everywhere, to a clean and healthy environment. Work on a global plastics treaty commenced to deal with the intensifying plastics crisis. There was the good news of a loss and damage fund from a generally mild climate COP 27 in Sharm el Sheikh – Egypt, that was swamped and swarmed by fossil fuels voices, who blocked strong action on fossil fuels, that the best available science acknowledged by UNFCCC, IEA, WHO and the Vatican agree, are the primary drivers of climate change. To limit the global temperature rise to 1.5 degrees Celsius relative to pre-industrial times, there is no more room for new fossil fuel investments and existing fossil fuels must be phased out in a rapid and equitable transition to renewables.

Floods, hunger, landslides, deforestation, wetlands degradation, pollution and other environmental disasters continued to besiege Uganda in 2022, but Uganda also hosted an international conference that made interesting resolutions. Resolutions are great but blah blah blah must be matched with concrete action on ground that transforms the sustainable development, circular economy and green growth ideas, strategies, declarations and development plans from the paper ghettos in towns; and the plains, hills and gorges of Uganda's villages. It is in the mountains, forests, wetlands, lakes, parks, cities, villages that the threats to people and the planet, paused by the climate crisis, biodiversity loss and pollution are experienced. It is there that battles against them must be won. Healthy forests, lakes, rivers, wetlands – healthy nature – is good for people and their welfare, life, dignity, health, stomachs, hearts and souls. That is why efforts to protect them are the most definitive of our generation, and must be undertaken with every drop of our blood and every ounce of our energy. We hope this report tickles your better understanding of the urgent tasks facing humanity, and the priorities we must get right in order to guarantee a livable future for all species – not just humans. What we need to do to tame the sixth extinction!

Kiiza Eron

CEO

@kiizaeron



Methodology

This report was generated from press reviews, desk research and interviews followed by verification, organization and analysis of the collected data. Discretion was employed on which stories to include in this report with the awareness that some important stories may be omitted.

Gratitude

We are grateful to The Environment Shield Programs team coordinated by Salimati Mutale, the input of Timothy Kalyegira, Ssebayinga Richard, Mwajuma Namutebi and others. We laud the wisdom and guidance of Kay Achak Carol, Turyakira John Robert, and Kiiza Eron our Director, Deputy ED and CEO respectively and appreciate our board and staff as well as our sources for the great support extended to the making of this report.

PART ONE: LOCAL/NATIONAL STORIES

1. HUNGER IN KARAMOJA

Between **July and August, 2022**, more than 900 people died of hunger this year in the Karamoja sub-region of northeastern Uganda, mostly as a result of prolonged drought. The region consists of districts of Kotido, Kaabong, Moroto, Napak, and Amudat.

Eight in every 10 households in this region are food-insecure, putting about 23,000 children at high risk of severe acute malnutrition. The misery was made worsened by uptick in raids and massive crop failure as a result of drought. This was visible in massive crop failures as a result of a long dry spell. The scorched gardens and pasture mean limited or no food for both humans and their animals, yet cattle keeping provides main livelihood.¹

The death toll started rising, as the help, including the government's 790 metric tons of maize flour and beans trucked to the famine hotspot were slow

to reach the most in need and too small a handout. Among the most at risk were the underfed HIV and Tuberculosis (TB) patients on strong daily drugs, but lacked proper dieting and let alone food to eat in sufficient quantities.

The Karamoja region suffered widespread crop losses and harvest failure due to delayed rains resulting in hunger and the area is suffering a prolonged drought since **2020**. There has been limited effort from the government to address the issues of mitigation and adaption to climate change in this semi-arid area. Government efforts such as irrigation farming schemes are at a very limited scale. Several Ugandans in the region are deprived of their basic rights such as the right to shelter, food and health inclusive of a clean and health environment and a consequential deprivation of the right to life.

2. FLOODS

Floods damage homes, gardens and disrupt transport and communications. They lead to famine, diseases, death and destruction. They hit several parts of Uganda in **2022**, in some areas, often. We highlight only a few.

Several Ugandans from the region were deprived of their core fundamental human rights such as the right to life, personal property, a clean and health environment and other civil, social and economic rights. Several people were displaced from their homes, during and after the floods.

NEMA reported that this was a manifestation of climate change it is attributed to an increase in the amount of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere on a global scale, owing to an upsurge in the use of fossil fuels. Yet the rate of absorption of greenhouse gases by carbon sinks such as forests is also compromised by an increase in the rate of deforestation.²



Eastern Uganda

On the Morning of **Sunday, July 31 2022**, Uganda awoke to the news of floods and landslides in parts of Eastern Uganda, specifically the districts around Mt. Elgon region including Mbale, Kapchorwa, Bulambuli, Namisindwa, Sironko, Manafwa and the surrounding areas. These floods, triggered by heavy rainfall, claimed the lives of at least 30 people, left 400,000 without access to clean water, and destroyed more than 2,000 hectares of crops.³

Kasese Floods

Heavy rain caused multiple landslides in Kasese District between 6th and 7th September, 2022. This triggered flooding in low-lying areas, especially in the village of Kaiska in Kigoro Parish of Rukoki Sub-County. The area has poor storm-water drainage systems. The flash flooding followed relatively short periods of intense rainfall. Landslides were inevitable in this hilly or mountainous area, especially where heavy rainfall had saturated the soil.

15 people, mostly mothers and children, were left dead. At least 18 people were declared missing and at least 7 injured. Several homes were destroyed and multiple people were buried alive by the landslides since rescue efforts focusing on those still trapped underneath were not sufficient enough.⁴

There are no measures put up by government in preparation for such a disaster in case it happens again, for which chances are high even this year, the same crisis is to occur.⁵

Section 56 of the **National Environmental Act, 2019 (NEA, 2019)** provides that a hilly or mountainous area is at risk from environmental degradation, natural processes or natural disaster if it is prone to soil erosion or exhibits signs of soil loss and if landslides have occurred in the area. And for sustainable use of hilly and mountainous areas as per **Section 58** of the **NEA 2019**, the

authority is obligated to take measures on disaster preparedness in areas prone to landslides. The recurrent flooding in the Kasese area means government should be prepared to effectively and swiftly respond to them at any time of the year to reduce or avoid loss of life and property.

Floods in Western Uganda

In **September, 2022**, deadly floods and landslides hit the Western Region of Uganda. Homes were destroyed and several lives lost after heavy rain in the Western Region of Uganda caused by flash floods and landslides. Landslides in villages near Rubuguri in Kisoro damaged at least 8 houses, displacing or affecting 37 people.⁶

Heavy rains took a toll in Bundibugyo District and several people including children were reported missing after severe flooding struck in villages near Ntandi town. It was reported that around 10 homes were filled with mud and the belongings of the residents destroyed or swept away.⁷

The enjoyment of the rights to health, dignified and secure lives requires the state to establish facilities for the proper enjoyment of these rights.

20th December 2022, saw Rwizi River and Lake Kijanebalola overflowed. Several parishes in Rakai District were severely affected. Homes were completely destroyed, along with infrastructure including bridges which left areas isolated. Damage to crops and livestock severely impacted livelihoods.

At least 3 people died and several went missing after floods in Kagaaga Parish. Over 130 people were left homeless.⁸

As of **26th December, 2022**, a total of 10 fatalities was reported, with a further 6 people who were feared missing. According to local government figures, at least 216 families were displaced as a result of the floods.⁹



Warmer temperatures cause more water to evaporate into the air and allow that air to hold more water, this sets the stage for heavier downpours. Areas near lakes and rivers are likely to flood after heavy rains due to the fact that the drainage infrastructure is usually not strong enough to curb the much flowing water. .

Swelling Nalubaale

The increased water level of Lake Victoria remained a major concern in 2022. It was first noted in **2019**, when the lake's water level rose to a record 13.42 meters, surpassing the record of 13.41 meters recorded in 1964. By 2022, radar altimetry data was indicating that Lake Victoria, of which the bulk of the volume is in Tanzania and Uganda, had reached 1137.29 meters above mean sea level.

This rise in the lake's level, affected fish landing sites, lakeside hotels and tourism venues, among other places.

According to Government of Uganda: Intensive and prolonged rainfall in Uganda and in the East African region has caused a rise in water levels of Lake Victoria and all major water bodies in the country.

The quick rise is further hastened by environmental degradation and urbanization;¹⁰ The Lake Victoria water level continues to rise to critical levels despite increased releases due to the increased inflows and heavy rains in Lake Victoria Basin. The rivers discharging into Lake Victoria from upstream countries have uncontrollably more than doubled their inflows.

Kampala Floods

Following the start of the rainy season in August, there was substantial flooding in Nankulabye, Kasubi, Katanga, Kibwa, and Bwaise located in Kampala during the heavy .

Unusually, Kampala continued to receive regular rain into December when it is usually part of the dry season, and so the flooding in the above-mentioned



areas remained a constant problem.

Busia Floods

Heavy rain in **January, 2022** caused floods that cut off two major bridges in Sikuda sub-county in Busia district near Uganda's border with Kenya. The two bridges, Solo and Nakhola, left residents stranded after two rivers in the area, River Solo and River Malaba, burst their respective banks.

The significance of this development is that Busia is one of Uganda's two land routes to the sea through Kenya, the other being Malaba. Future heavy flooding and the collapse of bridges could bring to a halt to the international cargo and passenger transport activity into and out of Uganda, paralyzing Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi and the Democratic Republic of Congo..

3. FOSSIL FUELS

EU Resolution

On **14th September, 2022**, The European Union Parliament referenced its previous resolutions on Uganda and Tanzania and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights to pass a resolution urging TOTAL to suspend the construction of the East African Crude Oil Pipeline (EACOP) for at least a year.¹¹

The 1443 km pipeline that will transport an estimate of 200,000 barrels of crude oil per day from Kabale, Uganda to the Tanga port in Tanzania and in order to transport the crude oil, the pipeline will need to be heated up to a temperature of fifty degrees Celsius and will be the longest heated pipeline in the world;

The EU parliament advised that since both Uganda and Tanzania are parties to the Paris Climate Agreement and extraction of oil in Uganda would generate up to 34 million tons of carbon emissions each year, this will be a great setback to the global warming limit of 1.5 degrees Celsius relative to pre-industrial times.

The European Union Parliament warned that since Lake Victoria in the Albertine Graben Region is a source of life as largest freshwater body in Africa and the largest inland fishery in the world, supporting over 40 million inhabitants, an oil spill accident would prompt an environmental and humanitarian crisis of overwhelming proportions with decades of enduring effects.

The EU Parliament resolution triggered a media blitz and the issue with those for against trading sharp accusations.

The Uganda government angrily reacted to the resolution with President Yoweri Museveni warning the EU that they have previously defeated 'enemies' of Uganda's economic progress. The deputy speaker went as far as calling the resolution economic racism.

Vice President Jessica Alupo even petitioned the United Nations General Assembly in New York over what she called the hypocrisy of the rich nations on selective condemnation of polluting the environment.

Pro- EACOP Protest

On **3rd October, 2022**, a group of students from various schools marched around Kampala and Hoima streets holding placards and banners asking the European Union to 'leave Uganda's oil' and the EACOP project alone.

This followed an EU Parliament resolution that called for the halting of EACOP for at least a year until the environmental and human rights concerns have been addressed. The students' demonstration was the latest attempt by government to pressure the EU to reverse its resolution. However, several head teachers blamed top leaders of the Uganda National Students Association (UNSA) for duping them into using their students for personal gains.¹²

Though, **Article 29 of the 1995 Constitution of Uganda** guarantees the freedom of expression, assembly and peaceful demonstration, this demonstration lacked free expression as secondary school students were hoodwinked to stage on the streets for a cause they really didn't understand or consent to. They were, surprisingly, granted security by top security agencies in the name of government justifying their EACOP project which has grave climatic implications.

STOP EACOP ROTESTORS

On **5th October, 2022**, Nine people including four university students marching to deliver a petition in support of the European Parliament resolution calling for the suspension of the East African Crude Oil pipeline (EACOP) project were arrested. The nine were **Ntabazi Imran Java, Lubega Vincent Nsamba, Nkurunziza Althouse, Wenani Gerald, Musiri David, Waswa Alex Lyazi, Akiso Benjamin, Gongga Akisi and Kajubi Marktom.**¹³

Police intercepted the protesters around Kingdom Kampala building on their way to the EU offices at Crested Towers to hand in their petition. In their petition, the protesters demanded that the EACOP be stopped over human rights, environmental and climatic concerns.

The security agencies applied double standards and arrested and detained STOP EACOP protesters after protecting protesters in favour of the project a few days earlier. This was a clear violation of their freedom.

MORE STOP EACOP PROTESTORS

The second batch of EACOP protestors¹⁴ were 3 (three) activists namely; **Musoke Hamisi Walusimbi, Barigye Bob** and **Kabaale Ivan** who were arrested and subjected to similar treatment as above including the same *common nuisance* charges. The irony is that pro – EACOP students get flowers from the state while those opposed to the fossil fuels project are repressed.

2ND STOP EACOP EACJ SUIT

14th November, 2022. The Environmental Shield and the African Initiative on Food Security and Environment Ltd (AIFE) filed Reference no. **57 of 2022** before the East African Court of Justice



The governments of Uganda and Tanzania colluded with Total Energies to embark on a fossil fuel project that will worsen climate change in East Africa. The East African Crude Oil Pipeline (**EACOP**)¹⁵ and associated oil infrastructure will worsen global warming and the climate crisis that is causing starvation, death, drought, and other health problems in East Africa and beyond. Fossil fuels (oil, gas and coal) cause cancer, blood and health complications among other diseases. Scientists, International Energy Agency (IEA), World Health Organization (WHO) and over a thousand medical professionals have joined the people in calling an end to new fossil fuel investment and an anti-fossil fuels proliferation treaty.

We availed the East African Court of Justice (**EACJ**)¹⁶ a fine opportunity to contribute climate solutions and a just energy transition for the sake of people and the planet in our corner of the world by filing a reference on **Monday, November 14,**

2022. The case/reference seeks: Permanently stopping EACOP and related oil activities; environmental restoration orders and compliance with the Treaty for the Establishment of the East African Community obligations on sustainable use of natural resources.



AIFE - UGANDA



STOP EACOP

The governments of Uganda and Tanzania have colluded with Total Energies to embark on a fossil fuel project that will worsen climate change in East Africa. The East African Crude Oil Pipeline (**EACOP**) and associated oil infrastructure will worsen global warming and the climate crisis that is causing starvation, death, drought, and other health problems in East Africa and beyond. Fossil fuels (oil, gas and coal) cause cancer, blood and health complications among other diseases.

On **14th September** World Health Organisation (WHO) and other **200** health associations outlined the health dangers of fossil fuels and called for an end to the new fossil fuel projects, phasing out existing ones and for a fossil fuel none proliferation treaty. The **WHO** call for no more **EACOP** like fossil fuel project across the world rhymes with the best available climate science.

Ignoring climate science especially when it says more fossil fuels will harm the lives, livelihoods and economies of the present and future generations in Africa and beyond is both unwise and illegal. That is why we are suing in the East African Court of Justice to STOP it.

Ignoring climate science by Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (**IPCC**), International Energy Agency (**IEA**) and **WHO** among others is classic bad governance contrary to the foundational principles of the East Africa Community (**EAC**) of democracy, rule of law, transparency, good governance and accountability. It is incompatible with sustainable development and Inter-generational equity. We cannot allow East African governments to ignore science to the jeopardy of present lives and livelihoods.

Future generations will note, with this suit, that we availed the East Africa Court of Justice (**EACJ**) a fine opportunity to contribute climate solutions and a just energy transition for the sake of people and the planet in our corner of the world: East Africa.

**Monday, November 14, 2022
END.**

4. POLLUTION

According to WHO, 7 million people die due to pollution annually. Pollution is amongst the triple planetary crises threatening life as we know it. The other two being climate change and biodiversity loss.

Article 39 of the Constitution of Uganda guarantees all Ugandans the right to a healthy and clean environment. Once polluted, the air Ugandans breath is contaminated thus depriving them of their right to a clean and healthy environment and in a consequential deprivation of other rights such as the right to health and the right to life.

Section 78 of the National Environment Act of 2019 prohibits pollution; and under **Section 79**, the polluter is responsible for taking the necessary action to stop further pollution and minimize the impacts of the pollution on human health and the environment, mitigate the



damage, clean up and restore the environment plus compensation to the victims. This is in line with section 80 on polluter's liability.

Pramukh steel plant in Kayunga

October 24, 2022, NEMA suspended operations of Pramukh steel plant over pollution. The National Environment Management Authority (NEMA) halted the operations of Pramukh Steel Limited (steel manufacturing and power generation plants) located along Kayunga Road in Njeru Municipality, Buikwe District. The suspension followed several complaints from the public over air pollution from the two plants. It was found that the plants did not have adequate air pollution controls and there were several health and safety concerns as well.¹⁷

Air pollution in this case was in the form of black ash arising from burning of bagasse at the power generation plant and pungent fumes from the steel furnaces that were being openly released into the environment and had become a nuisance to the surrounding communities. The impact of this increase in greenhouse gases as a result of pollution is trapping excess heat and causing the climate to warm as well as the unhealthy ozone levels.

Kampala Dust

While not a particularly new story or unique to 2022, Kampala City during the year continued to experience a general environment of dust from murrum roads, the constant honking of vehicle and motorcycle horns, exhaust fumes from all sorts of cars and trucks, a casual attitude toward waste disposal by the city's residents, from littering roads with plastic and paper to burning solid waste, and emissions from various factories in the Industrial Area.

Noise pollution

In **September, 2022**, the National Environment Management Authority (NEMA) carried out an operation on noise pollution at several places of entertainment in Kampala. It confiscated sound equipment from bars in Komamboga and Makerere-Kikoni over noise pollution.¹⁸

In **November, 2022**, NEMA, Uganda's national environment protection agency started a clampdown on entertainment venues in Kampala that exceeded the permitted noise level.

Equipment from three venues, the Liquor Shade, Olives Bar & Restaurant and Nexus Bar was seized by NEMA after they repeatedly violated the agency's guidelines.

In **November, 2022**, A report by the French news agency AFP discussed how industrial pollution threatens the River Nile in Uganda. The Voice of America in Washington DC reported the AFP story as well, increasing international awareness of the danger facing the world's longest river. Factories dump waste directly into the Nile River. The resulting industrial pollution has compromised drinking water and threatened the rich biodiversity of Africa's longest river.¹⁹

5. FORESTS

Forests are critical carbon sinks making them indispensable for climate action. Yet United Nations sources say the world loses 10 million hectares every year. The urgency for conservation and restoration of forests has never been greater.





As emphasized in our press release dated **27th September, 2022**, forests are major carbon sinks, regulate the climate and are essential for human health, tourism, green growth, biodiversity, circular economy and sustainable development; they provide medicine, water shades, foods, wildlife habitat and other ecological functions. Yet, everywhere you look in Uganda, forests are threatened with unsustainable land use change, charcoal burning, lumbering etc. Below are few examples of the many threatened forests of Uganda;

Bugoma Forest

On **September 27, 2022**, NEMA ordered Hoima Sugar LTD to restore degraded parts of Kikuube mixed land-use project area in Bugoma forest and cancelled approval for urban center development in the ecosystem.

This was after Hoima Sugar Limited submitted an environmental and social audit report for the project in **June, 2022** and after inspection, NEMA found that: there was deforestation of the natural reserved forest areas contrary to approval conditions. As a result of this, the area of natural forests that was supposed to be protected was severely degraded; Hoima Sugar Ltd has carried out deforestation of the Eco-tourism site - space contrary to approval conditions which affected the quality of the site for Eco-tourism purposes.

This was defiance of the guidelines issued by NEMA to Hoima sugar Ltd, the lead perpetrator in Bugoma deforestation. NEMA ordered Hoima Sugar Ltd to immediately stop any further deforestation of the natural reserve forest area, ecotourism area, cultural sites and land reserved for urban center and restoration of all degraded areas of the natural reserved forest area, ecotourism area, cultural sites and land reserved for urban center. Failure by Hoima Sugar Ltd to comply with the given instructions could result in NEMA canceling the ESIA certificate and further legal actions against Hoima Sugar Limited.

The deforestation in Bugoma forest has grave climatic impacts since trees that are cut are the same trees responsible for capturing greenhouse gases like carbon dioxide from accumulating in the atmosphere and warming our planet. Section 69 of the National Environment Act of 2019 requires lead agencies in consultation with the Authority to put in place guidelines and prescribe measures to address the impacts of climate change on ecosystems, including improving the resilience of ecosystems, promoting low carbon development and reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation, sustainable management of forests and conservation of forest carbon stock.

Mabira Forest

In **November, 2022**, government-owned newspaper, the *New Vision*, reported that 117 acres of land in **Mabira forest** are owned by private individuals as the National Forest Authority (NFA) battled to recover the land.²⁰

In **October**, the High Court in Mukono had ordered the re-opening of boundaries on the land.

In **November**, the Deputy Speaker of Parliament, Thomas Tayebwa, called for an investigation into the continued cutting down of trees in Mabira.²¹ Mabira forest, since massive public protests in 2007 over the proposed sale of part of the land to the Lugazi based Sugar Corporation of Uganda, has become perhaps the best-known political and national symbol of Uganda's endangered ecological system.

For an initially big forest that few people would comfortably drive through at night, Mabira forest or what is left of it has over the 10 years of unrelenting deforestation evolved into something of a joke with most travelers to Jinja claiming that it is now down to a few trees lining the road.

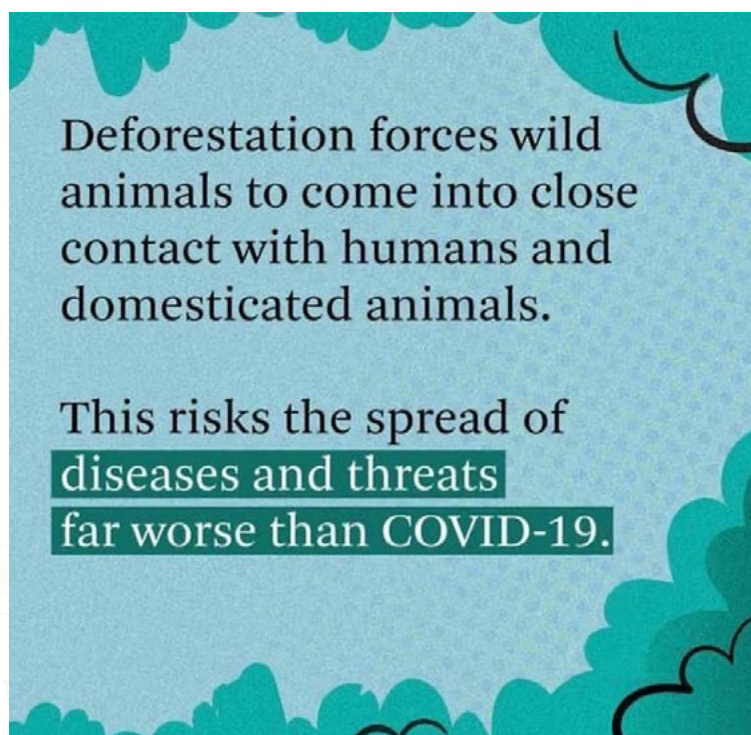
Bundibugyo Forest

In **2021**, **Bundibugyo** district in Western Uganda lost 295 hectares of tree cover. Deforestation in **Bundibugyo**, in western Uganda close to the border with Congo, continued in 2022. There appeared to be politically powerful people behind the cutting down of trees on the outskirts of Bundibugyo township, as seen in the soldiers who guarded the forest as trees were being cut.

There were also 16 fire alerts reported in the forest starting in **February, 2022**. The cutting of trees for charcoal used as cooking energy also played a role in the deforestation in Bundibugyo.

Forest Cover

In **April, 2022**, NEMA's Executive Director, Barirega Akankwasa, said Uganda's forest cover had reduced to just **9%** of the country's land area by **2022**. NEMA, he said, was working on restocking forests to return Uganda to at least a **15%** forest cover by **2030**.



6. WETLANDS

Wetlands are important because they provide numerous benefits for people, fish and wildlife. These include protecting and improving water quality, providing fish and wildlife habitats, storing floodwaters and maintaining surface water flow during dry periods.

Wetlands store water, act as carbon sinks and are food sources. However, they are disappearing and being degraded at an alarming rate.

In line with **Section 54 of the National Environment Act No.5 of 2019**, a local government cannot lease out or otherwise alienate any wetland. **Section 58(3)** on wetland management principles provides that special measures are essential for the protection of wetlands of international, national and local importance as ecological systems and habitats for fauna and flora species, and for cultural and aesthetic purposes, as well as for their hydro-logical functions. The provision of the law does not in any way include human residence or occupancy of the same wetlands.

Nature has rights recognized by **Section 4 of the NEA of 2019**. Wetlands, as part of nature, have rights



to exist, persist, maintain and regenerate their vital cycles, structure, functions and its processes in evolution.

Nakivubo wetlands

On **Wednesday, October 12, 2022**, NEMA suspended construction works by Majestic Commodities Limited in a section of Nakivubo wetland in Bugolobi, Kampala. There was back-filling of the wetland and damage to access roads occasioned by numerous trucks ferrying murram to the site mainly at night. The inspection established that the developer intended to construct residential apartments and this same area was declared as a vanquished wetland by the Cabinet.

NEMA directed the developer to immediately halt all activities at the project site until further notice. Wetlands, are natural sponges that soak up water, absorb excess water, and are vital to Eco-systems. Wetlands protect against flooding; they are habitats to several species and play a crucial role in combating climate change.

Otuke wetland

In **July, 2022**, NEMA reportedly destroyed a large rice plantation in Otuke district in Lango for having been planted in a wetland. The action was controversial. While the encroachment on the wetland rightly stopped, residents argued that destroying the crop of rice at a time of food shortages in the region was ill-advised.

An estimated 30 acres of rice were cut down in drought-ravaged Otuke District under unclear circumstances. Whereas local authorities suspected the crop to have been destroyed as part of an effort by the government to restore wetlands in the country, the National Environment Management Authority (NEMA) denied responsibility. "There is information circulating on social media alleging that NEMA has slashed down rice in Otuke. We wish to clarify that Nema has not carried out such an operation in Otuke. We are establishing facts on ground and will update the public on the same," NEMA tweeted. According to the LC3 chairman of Barjobi Sub-county, Mr Daniel Ojok Aruca, Nema targets rice illegally planted in wetlands, but the one slashed was planted in low-land areas. "The environmental police came from Kampala, proceeded to the gardens and destroyed the crops," Mr Ojoke told Daily Monitor on Sunday. "Most of our cultivable land is low-land and so, it is very difficult to distinguish between wetland and low-land. And even if they had illegally planted the rice, the farmers should have first been allowed to harvest their crops and later warned," he added.

Mr Ojoke claimed that farmers in other districts like Mbale are allowed to grow rice in wetlands. "I passed by Mbale last week and I saw rice planted in wetlands and nobody is destroying their crops," he said. The Otuke County MP, Mr Paul Omara, condemned the act, saying they were yet to establish the people behind it. Ms Proscovia Acham, the Kwania deputy Resident District Commissioner (RDC), said residents have destroyed all the wetlands in the area. "We don't have any wetland to the extent that they have gone ahead to cultivate in the night. You can imagine at 2am somebody is in the garden. Whatever has been planted in the wetlands is going to be slashed down," she said," Ms Acham said.

Wetlands' rice ban



The government in **July, 2021** had banned the growing of rice and other crops in wetlands across the country. In a resolution passed by the Cabinet chaired by President Museveni, and communicated by the Minister of State for Environment, Ms Beatrice Anywar, the government said the move aimed at restoring the environment. President Museveni had in February warned Ugandans against encroaching on wetlands, saying the government will cancel their titles.²²

CLIMATE CONFERENCE

Governments from across Africa met at an Inter-Ministerial Conference on Migration, Environment and Climate Change held from **27 to 29 July, 2022** in Kampala, Uganda to advance cooperation on climate change induced human mobility.

Hosted by President Yoweri Museveni of the Republic of Uganda, Ministers of Environment, Interior and Foreign Affairs from countries in the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD), the East African Community (EAC), and States of the East and Horn of Africa met with high level representatives of the African Union, UN agencies, development partners and youth representatives. They discussed the conference themed *“Enhancing cooperation in relation to climate change induced human mobility, including migration, displacement, and planned relocation”*

The conference resulted in a landmark declaration. The Kampala Ministerial Declaration on Migration, Environment and Climate Change that outlines concerns on the effects of climate change on human mobility.

The Declaration called for enhanced cooperation and action to address five areas of concern:

- Progressive desertification and land degradation creating forced mobility of people and livestock
- Unsustainable use of ecosystems and the impact of frequent and intense extreme weather events on people and livestock
- Unplanned migration of people from rural to urban centres as a result of climate change and disasters
- Paucity of data and statistics on the impact of climate change on human and livestock mobility in the region
- Limitations of partnerships and financing to respond to the climate crisis adversely affecting the mobility of our people and livestock in the region

The conference closed with a signing ceremony presided over by President Yoweri Kaguta Museveni of Uganda and his guest, President Salva Kiir Mayardit of the Republic of South Sudan. They shared their commitment and unwavering support to the Declaration.

PART TWO: GLOBAL TOP STORIES

1. COP 27



In **November, 2022**, the **27th United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP27)** took place in Egypt at Sharm el Sheikh. COP27 resulted in countries delivering a package of decisions that reaffirmed global commitment to limit global temperature rise to 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels. The package also strengthened action by countries to cut greenhouse gas emissions and adapt to the inevitable impacts of climate change, as well as boosting the support of finance, technology and capacity building needed by developing countries.

Agreeing to a specific fund for loss and damage marked a milestone with the issue added to the official agenda and adopted for the first time at COP27. Governments took the ground-breaking decision to establish new funding arrangements, as well as a dedicated fund, to assist developing countries in responding to loss and damage. Governments also agreed to establish a 'transitional committee' to make recommendations on how to operationalize both the new funding arrangements and the fund at COP28 next year. The first meeting of the transitional committee is expected to take place before the end of March 2023.

If it materializes, the historic loss and damage fund would help vulnerable nations contend with droughts, floods and rising seas, all of which are expected to become more severe as the planet's climate changes. The fund had long been seen as one of the most contentious issues in climate negotiations.

2. COP15

Between **7th and 19th December, 2022**, representatives from 188 governments gathered in Montreal for two weeks for an important summit on nature, the **15th United Nations Biodiversity Conference (COP15)**, Montreal, Quebec and Canada. COP15 ended with a landmark agreement to guide global action on nature through to **2030**.

Chaired by China and hosted by Canada, COP 15 resulted in the adoption of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF). The GBF aims to address biodiversity loss, restore ecosystems and protect indigenous rights. The plan includes concrete measures to halt and reverse nature loss, including putting 30 per cent of the planet and 30 per cent of degraded ecosystems under protection by 2030. It also contains proposals to increase finance to developing countries which was a major sticking point during talks.

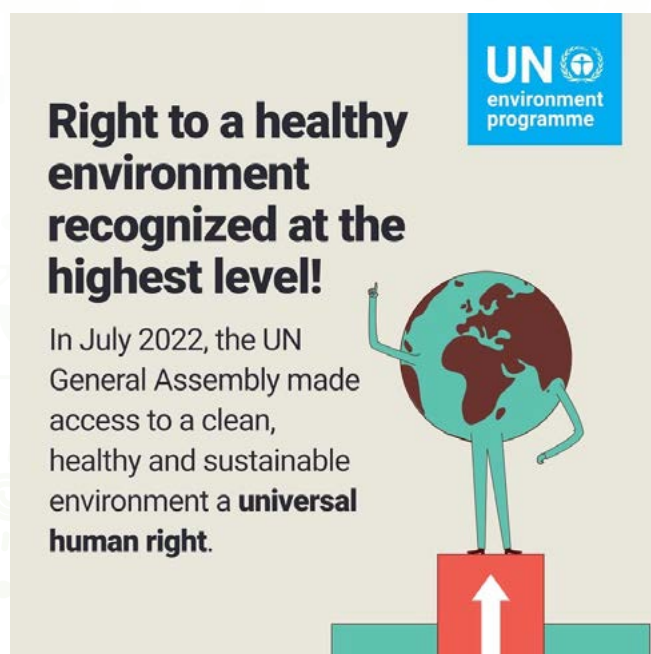
GBF consists of four overarching global goals to protect nature, including: halting human-induced extinction of threatened species and reducing the rate of extinction of all species tenfold by 2050; sustainable use and management of biodiversity to ensure that nature's contributions to people are valued, maintained and enhanced; fair sharing of the benefits from the utilization of genetic resources, and digital sequence information on genetic resources; and that adequate means of implementing the GBF be accessible to all Parties, particularly Least Developed Countries and Small Island Developing States.

Finance played a key role at COP15, with discussions centering on how much money developed countries will send to developing countries to address biodiversity loss. It was requested that the Global Environment Facility set up a Special Trust Fund – the GBF Fund – to support the implementation of the GBF, in order to ensure an adequate, predictable and timely flow of funds.

3. Right to a clean and healthy environment

On **28th July, 2022**, at UN headquarters in New York City, the General Assembly noted that climate change and environmental degradation were some of the most pressing threats to humanity's future as it called on states to step up efforts to ensure their people have access to a "clean, healthy and sustainable environment."

The resolution, though not legally binding, will hopefully push countries that are yet to do so to enshrine the right to a clean and healthy environment in their constitutions, allowing campaigners and climate change activists to challenge environmentally destructive policies and projects. According to Inger Andersen, Executive Director of the UN Environment Programme (UNEP), the resolution sends a message that nobody can take nature, clean air and water, or a stable climate away from people, "at least, not without a fight." The resolution situates itself in the context of a planet grappling with a triple planetary crisis of climate change, nature and biodiversity loss, and pollution and waste. Left unchecked, those problems could have disastrous consequences for people around the world, especially the poor, and women and girls.²³



4. Negotiations commenced on Plastic Pollution Treaty

Close to 400 million tons of plastic waste are generated every year – a figure set to double by 2040. Only a fraction of that is recycled and much infiltrates the environment, including the ocean, where it causes a host of problems for humans and wildlife. Approximately 7bn of the estimated 9.2bn tonnes of plastics produced between 1950 and 2017 are now waste. About 75% of that waste is either deposited in landfills or accumulating in terrestrial and aquatic environments and ecosystems.

The good news is that, states in **March, 2022** at the **5th UN Environment Assembly (UNEA5.2)** agreed to begin negotiations on a legally binding international

agreement to end plastic pollution. The Resolution, struck in Nairobi, Kenya, committed nations to having a draft agreement in place by the end of 2024. UNEP Executive Director Inger Andersen called the treaty, which will cover the "full life-cycle" of plastics from production to disposal, the most significant environmental multilateral deal since the Paris climate change accord.

The resolution established an intergovernmental negotiating committee, tasked with drafting and ratifying the treaty. It was tasked to start work in **2022** and finish by **2024**. It also introduced provisions to recognize waste pickers, a "ground-breaking development" that would affect millions of people, and the acknowledgment of the role of indigenous peoples. It is the first-time waste pickers, low-paid workers in developing nations who scavenge for recyclable plastic and other goods, have been recognized in an environmental resolution.²⁴



Important agreement on plastic pollution

Nations agreed to negotiate a global deal to end plastic pollution at the **5th UN Environment Assembly** (UNEA 5.2)

UN environment programme

the environmental dimension of sustainable development. These Leadership Dialogues, along with the statements in plenary, yielded interesting insights and conversations both on the past 50 years and action needed going forward. The main outcome from the meeting was a series of recommendations focused on the right to a healthy and sustainable environment, changing the global economic system, accelerating implementation of existing commitments, rebuilding trust, and strengthening multilateralism.

The meeting also marked a moment of ascendancy for the leadership of young people, personified by the role of the Ugandan climate leader, Vanessa Nakate, who brought the ethical demands of future generations and lively debate to the table.²⁵

5. Stockholm+50

From 2nd to 3rd June 2022, fifty years after the landmark 1972 UN Conference on the Human Environment, the first ever UN conference on the environment, Stockholm was once again the gathering point to take stock of the state of the human environment and collectively brainstorm on how to move forward.

The two-day meeting, *Stockholm+50: A Healthy Planet for the Prosperity of All – Our Responsibility, Our Opportunity*, featured an interactive series of free-flowing dialogues focused on three key themes: achieving a healthy planet and prosperity for all; a sustainable and inclusive recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic; and implementation of



“

The planet was already showing signs of buckling under the weight of humanity back in 1972 when the agency was founded. In the following decades, UNEP and its partners would work with Member States to combat air pollution, restore the ozone layer, protect the world's seas, promote a green and inclusive economy, and raise the alarm about biodiversity loss and climate change.

That work has never been more important.

UN Secretary-General
António Guterres

UN environment programme



The Stockholm+50 Conference marked 50 years since the birth of the environmental movement in 1972.

UN environment programme

RECOMMENDATIONS

In light of the key environmental developments highlighted in this report, The Environment Shield makes the following recommendations:

a) **Government of Uganda:**

- i. Stop EACOP for the sake of people and planet and in light of her legal and moral commitment to climate, health, right to a descent environment, sustainable development and generational equity. Government should get and unite behind the science and rally all nations and peoples to do likewise cognizant that Uganda is a climate vulnerable country.
- ii. Put more energy in fighting hunger and protecting the right to food of all Ugandans - especially for the people of Karamoja.
- iii. Increase the pace of renewable use in Uganda. The need for a rapid and just transition from reliance on fossil fuels has never been more urgent given that humanity has no more than 7 years within which to avoid tipping points beyond unstoppable chain reactions of climatic disasters could kick in.
- iv. Stop deceiving Ugandans that gas is a clean energy. Natural gas is a fossil fuel. It is not clean. It is not an answer to our energy problems here or anywhere in the world.
- v. Heed the call of UWA and civil society to convert Bugoma Forest Landscape into a National Park or Game reserve for better protection of the priceless natural resource.
- vi. Ensure people affected by development projects are given prior, fair, prompt and adequate compensation in keeping with **Article 26 of the Constitution of the Republic of Uganda, 1995** that eschews arbitrary expropriation of property including land which should only be compulsorily acquired in public interest and following the Constitution.
- vii. Ensure and encourage adequate and meaningful public participation in natural resources governance including and more the governance of forests, wetlands, minerals, oil and gas.

b) **National Environment Management Authority (NEMA)**

- i. Continue its crusades against wetlands degradation and forest degradation that is starting to gather steam.
- ii. Increase the pace of fighting deforestation as many forests are yielding to the interests of powerful and almost untouchable individuals backed by Uganda's military, political and business elite.
- iii. Freeze the work of Hoima Sugar Limited in Bugoma Forest Landscape completely including, if necessary, compulsorily acquiring the land it has financially or otherwise wrestled from the community and the area cultural institution.



c) National Forestry Authority (NFA)

- i. Increases, amplifies and escalates her tempo, tone, volume, verve and vigor in protecting natural forest in Uganda.

d) The International Community

- i. Ensure availability of funding for renewables, sustainable development, biodiversity, health and climate action to governments especially LDCs, private sector and CSOs;
- ii. Broaden and deepen participation of vulnerable voices like disabled persons, youth, women, indigenous people in environmental pacts, conferences and consultations.
- iii. Intensify environmental education and awareness.

End.


March, 2023

Endnotes

- 1 <https://www.monitor.co.ug/uganda/special-reports/hunger-kills-900-in-karamoja-leaders-3891186#:~:text=what%20you%20need%20to%20know,as%20a%20result%20of%20drought>
- 2 <https://nema.go.ug/media/flash-floods-eastern-uganda-are-manifestation-climate-change>
- 3 <https://nema.go.ug/media/flash-floods-eastern-uganda-are-manifestation-climate-change>
- 4 <https://floodlist.com/africa/uganda-landslide-kasese-september-2022>
- 5 <https://floodlist.com/africa/uganda-landslide-kasese-september-2022>
- 6 <https://floodlist.com/africa/uganda-floods-western-region-september-2022>
- 7 ibid
- 8 <https://floodlist.com/africa/uganda-floods-rakai-december-2022#:~:text=At%20least%203%20people%20died,6%20people%20still%20feared%20missing.>
- 9 ibid
- 10 See: <https://www.mediacentre.go.ug/media/statement-rising-water-levels-lake-victoria-and-nile-system>
- 11 <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/RC-9-2022-0409-EN.html>
- 12 <https://observer.ug/news/headlines/75378-oil-protests-schools-say-they-were-duped-into-releasing-students>
- 13 <https://observer.ug/news/headlines/75412-police-blocks-anti-eacop-protest-9-arrested>; <https://www.monitor.co.ug/uganda/news/national/nine-students-arrested-over-eacop-protest-granted-bail-3980350>
- 14 See: <https://allafrica.com/stories/202212100255.html>; <https://www.environewsnigeria.com/ugandan-police-urged-to-release-activists-arrested-while-protesting-eacop-project/>
- 15 See: <https://www.stopeacop.net/home>; and, <https://eacop.com>
- 16 EACJ Reference No.35 of 2020; The Environment Shield Ltd. And another V The Attorney General of Uganda.
- 17 <https://www.nema.go.ug/media/nema-suspends-operations-pramukh-steel-plant-over-pollution>
- 18 See: <https://mbu.ug/2022/09/19/nema-confiscates-sound-equipment-from-bars-over-noise-pollution/>
- 19 See: <https://ww.voanews.com/a/6825453.html>
- 20 See: <https://www.newvision.co.ug/category/news/individuals-claim-177-acres-in-mabira-forest-147617>
- 21 See: <https://www.ugstandard.com/tayebwa-we-are-going-to-punish-whoever-participated-in-committing-environmental-crimes-on-mabira-central-forest-reserve/>
- 22 <https://www.monitor.co.ug/uganda/news/national/rdc-on-the-spot-over-slashed-rice-in-otuke-3884424>
- 23 <https://www.unep.org/news-and-stories/story/historic-more-un-declares-healthy-environment-human-right>
- 24 <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2022/mon/02/world-leaders-agreement-draw-up-historic-treaty-plastic-waste>
- 25 <https://enb.iisd.org/stockholm50-summary#:~:text=The%20meeting%20also%20a,lively%20debate%20to%20the%20table.>



The Environment Shield Limited

 Master Plaza, 1st Floor, Room F.10
Plot 88, Ben Kiwanuka Street
Opp. Watoto Church Central
Kampala, Uganda

