

Make rescuing Lake Victoria a national priority

BY turning green and beginning to stink, Lake Victoria has sounded a national alarm bell.

From Port Bell in Luzira to Ggaba and Munyonyo, the foul smell and algal blooms choking the lake are clear evidence of years of neglect, weak enforcement and collective indifference to one of our most important natural resources.

The communities living along the lake are already paying the price. Fishermen are losing customers, small businesses like restaurants are collapsing and families report rising cases of diarrhoea.

Lake Victoria is the pillar of our fish sector, supplies water to Kampala and other cities across the region, supports transport, trade, hydropower and feeds more than 45 million people in East Africa. It is dangerous to allow it to degenerate like this.

The Ministry of Water has rightly pointed out that the core of the problem is pollution. This is driven by unchecked wastewater, industrial effluent, plastic waste and agricultural runoff, worsened by the rampant



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destruction of wetlands.

These wetlands were the lake's kidneys, filtering waste before it entered the lake. Their destruction has turned storm-water channels into express highways of filth flowing straight into the lake. Therefore, the Government must prioritise restoration of wetlands, enforcement of

the 200-metre buffer zone and regulation of industrial discharge. Polluters, whether factories, institutions or municipalities, must be sanctioned and compelled to comply with environmental standards.

Kampala Capital City Authority and surrounding local governments also have to increase investments in waste treatment infrastructure, routine monitoring and strict supervision of developments near the lake.

But government action alone will not save Lake Victoria. Concerted effort is required. Communities must reclaim their role as the primary custodians of the lake, stop the casual dumping of plastics and encroachment on wetlands. Lake Victoria has sustained generations without complaint.

Today, its green colour and unbearable stench are its loudest protest. Ignoring this warning would be a betrayal not only to the lakeside communities, but to the nation itself and generations to come.

Rescuing Lake Victoria must be treated as an urgent national priority because millions of lives are at stake.