

The partnership will also strengthen environmental protection mechanisms, enhance policy implementation and intensify public sensitisation through kingdom structures.



NEMA ED Dr Barirega Akankwasah (left), Katikkiro Charles Peter Mayiga (2nd left), Buganda Kingdom environment minister Mariam Nkalubo (right) during the signing ceremony of the MoU to preserve the environment and natural resources. PHOTO/SHABIBAH NAKIRIGYA

Nema, Buganda sign environmental protection agreement

SHABIBAH NAKIRIGYA

Buganda Kingdom and the National Environment Management Authority (Nema) have signed a memorandum of understanding, to mark a beginning of closer institutional collaboration between the two entities.

The Katikkiro of Buganda, Charles Peter Mayiga, said the partnership formalises shared responsibility in environmental compliance, monitoring and public awareness, and will help translate national policies into action at the grassroots.

"Environmental governance cannot succeed in isolation, rather it requires unity between statutory authorities such as Nema and institutions such as kingdoms that work directly with communities," Katikkiro Mayiga said during the signing of the MoU at Bulange, Mengo.

He noted that Buganda's clan system, characterised by totems and sub-totems found in forests, wetlands, lakes and swamps, historically served as a traditional conservation mechanism.

"Our natural resources such as forests, wetlands, lakes and rivers are not merely natural assets. They are part of our identity and our responsibility to future generations. Protection and sustenance of our environment means protecting our own heritage," he told members in attendance.

The event also saw the launch of the Air is Life programme aimed at addressing air pollution, which officials described as one of the most pressing but least visible environmental threats.

"Air pollution is one of the most pressing but least visible environmental

threats. It affects the health of our children, health and the productivity of the workforce and the biggest risk is the impairment to the health of our children the babies and the infants," Mr Mayiga explained.

Citing global estimates indicating that between six and seven million deaths occur annually due to air pollution, Katikkiro Mayiga warned that the invisible nature of pollutants often leads to complacency.

"Because you cannot see the pollutants in the air we breathe, we tend not to give it the attention it deserves. Yet the impact on public health is enormous," he said.

On his part, the executive director of Nema, Dr Barirega Akankwasah, said the agreement demonstrates recognition that environmental conservation cannot be left to government alone.

"This agreement aims at working together with the Buganda Kingdom to promote environmental conservation. The future of our environment cannot be managed by central government alone but also by cultural institutions that have protected our land for years," Dr Akankwasah said, adding that cultural institutions have historically played a critical role in safeguarding natural resources, which in turn support tourism, livelihoods, health and cultural norms.

More support

"These natural resources have supported us in several ways - tourism, financial development, health and preservation of culture and norms," he said.

The partnership will also strengthen environmental protection mechanisms, enhance policy implementation and inten-

sify public sensitisation through kingdom structures.

"We expect to implement available policies in protecting the environment together with Buganda Kingdom. This will contribute to the National Development Plan IV, which aims at safeguarding the environment for a better Uganda," he said, before warning that environmental degradation affects not only wildlife but also communities, cultures and economies.

"If we destroy natural resources, it does not affect only the creatures residing there. All tribes, cultures and the financial status of our country are affected," he noted.

Continued challenges

Dr Akankwasah noted that Uganda continues to face challenges including wetland encroachment, forest degradation, poor waste management, air pollution and climate change.

"To resolve these challenges, we need to work together with different stakeholders and bring communities on board so they are sensitised on how to protect the environment from their respective areas," he said.

Long before, Dr Akankwasah said, modern environmental policies were enacted, kingdoms had their own strategies of conservation, including protection of sacred forests, totems and water sources.

"Those strategies are still very important because nothing has changed. We request the kingdom to continue protecting the environment in all ways because we know people are very obedient to the kingdom," he said.

Buganda's Minister for Environment Mariam Nkalubo reaffirmed the kingdom's commitment, saying the partnership would help to translate policy into measurable outcomes across all counties.

"We are connected to the environment. Our culture is intertwined with nature, and we are committed to ensuring measurable environmental outcomes across the 18 counties," Ms Nkalubo said.

DEAL

Under the programme, Katikkiro Mayiga pledged to advance air quality monitoring, increasing public awareness and supporting data-driven environmental decision-making. At least 15 air quality monitors have already been distributed across the kingdom's counties, with additional equipment donated to the Kabaka.