

By Juliet Kasirye

UGANDA, GERMANY PARTNER TO RESTORE DEGRADED FORESTS

The Government of Uganda, through the environment ministry, has partnered with Germany's International Climate Initiative to restore degraded forest landscapes in eight districts.

The districts are Bundibugyo, Ntoroko, Bunyangabu, Kabarole, Pader, Agago, Kitgum and Lamwo.

The five-year Forest Landscape Restoration implementation hub programme will be funded by the federal government of Germany to a tune of euro 20m in six countries, including Uganda. Others are Brazil, Peru, Colombia, Madagascar and Tanzania.

"Uganda's forest landscapes are central to our ecological integrity, economic productivity and climate resilience. However, we continue to face significant challenges of forest degradation and deforestation, driven by population pressures, unsustainable land use practices and competing development needs," the permanent secretary of the environment ministry, Dr Alfred Okidi, said.

While the Government currently co-ordinates the ROOTs Campaign to restore degraded landscapes with an anticipated 40 million hectares, Okidi said a lot more needs to be done to achieve this goal.

To advance Uganda's restoration agenda, Okidi said the Forest Landscape Restoration implementation hub programme will represent

a shift from fragmented interventions to a more integrated and programmatic model, one that strengthens governance, mobilises financing and delivers measurable restoration outcomes at scale.

"This initiative aims to restore approximately 200,000ha of degraded forests and sequester 500,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent, while supporting livelihoods, biodiversity conservation and climate adaptation," Okidi said.

He said this initiative is aligned with Uganda's national priorities and international commitments, including restoration targets under the Bonn Challenge and African Forest Landscape Restoration Initiative, as well as obligations under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change framework.

Okidi made the remarks during the launch of the forest

landscape restoration implementation hub at Four Points Hotel in Kampala on Tuesday.

STATISTICS

According to the water ministry, Uganda has registered substantial progress in the restoration of the forest cover from 12.4% in 2020 to 12.6% currently. A total of 1,293,869ha of central forest reserves have been protected and freed from illegal activities.

The World Wide Fund for Nature Uganda landscapes coordinator, Phillip Kihumuro, said forest landscape restoration has become one of the most urgent priorities for Uganda because of the accelerating forest loss, climate change impacts, declining biodiversity and growing pressure on livelihoods.

"Under the Natural Forests Regeneration for Enhanced Carbon Absorption in the Albertine Rift project in the Bugoma-Kagombe landscape, we are restoring 1,576ha of Kagombe Central Forest Reserve, establishing 1,036ha of woodlots and supporting the development of district forestry development plans and co-management of natural resources by support groups," he said.

Through initiatives such as agroforestry promotion, restoration of degraded riparian zones and support to community forest management arrangements, Kihumuro said, these experiences demonstrate that restoration works best when communities are at the centre and when nature and livelihoods are restored together.

"With strong leadership, co-ordinated action and sustained investment, Uganda can position itself as a regional leader in forest landscape restoration and demonstrate that restoring nature at scale is both achievable and essential for the country's sustainable future," he said.

Although forests play a vital role in maintaining ecosystem balance, climate

regulation, protection of water catchments and securing critical biodiversity, the country representative of International Union for Conservation of Nature, Moses Egaru, said forests continue to experience significant pressure.

The loss of the forest cover, he said, is driven by rapid population growth and agricultural expansion; heavy dependence on biomass energy, with the vast majority of households relying on firewood and charcoal; encroachment into forest reserves; and weak enforcement, among others.

To address this challenge, Egaru said, the ministry through the Bonn Challenge, pledged to restore 2.5 million hectares of degraded landscapes.

This commitment reflects Uganda's determination to reverse land degradation, restore ecosystem services, and improve livelihoods.

The Restoration Opportunities Assessment Methodology conducted in Uganda identified over eight million hectares available for restoration, providing a strong, evidence-based foundation for scaling up restoration efforts across the country.

"Restoration is, therefore, not just an environmental priority; it is central to achieving food security, climate resilience, and green economic growth. The project aims at delivering the Bonn Challenge, while providing responsive and needs-driven support and financing for the implementation of forest landscape restoration," he said.



Forest restoration: Okidi

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