



# Ministry of Water and Environment

## Wetlands Management Department



## COMMEMORATING WORLD WETLANDS DAY IN UGANDA

**2 FEBRUARY 2008**

### INTRODUCTION:

On 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2008, Uganda will join the global community to commemorate the World Wetlands Day. This is a day to reflect on the contribution of wetlands to our health, livelihoods and the general well being of the environment.

World Wetlands Day 2008 will mark 37 years since the signing of the convention on wetlands (Ramsar Convention) in the Iranian City of Ramsar on the shores of the Caspian Sea.

The Ramsar Convention is an intergovernmental treaty which provided for the framework for national action and international cooperation for the conservation and wise use wetlands and their resources. It is the only global environmental treaty that deals with a particular ecosystem, wetlands.

Since 1971, when the Ramsar Convention was signed, wetland management and conservation has gained more recognition worldwide. This is reflected by the number of contracting parties, now 158 countries. Over 1,709 wetland sites totaling 153 million hectares have been designated for inclusion in Ramsar list of Wetlands of International Importance.

Uganda ratified the Convention in 1988 and has made considerable progress in fulfilling the obligations under the Convention. Uganda has also so far designated 11 Ramsar Sites including, Lake George, Lake Nabugabo, Nabajjuzi, Sango Bay, Lake Mburo-Nakivali, Lake Opeta, Mabamba Bay, Lake Bisina, Lake Nakuwa, Lutembe Bay and Murchison Falls, all covering a total surface area of 307,756 hectares.

### Theme

The global theme for World Wetlands Day 2008 is **'Healthy Wetlands Healthy People'**. This theme highlights the important role wetlands play in the livelihoods of people, contributing to their health and wellbeing. This is depicted in the services and products provided including water purification, flood control, provision of food like fish and fruits, ensuring food security, provision of raw materials for shelter and crafts. An example of the vast services is the ability for inland wetlands to perform a vital function in filtering and purifying fresh water, rendering it clean for human consumption. In a situation where more than one billion (1bn) people world



wide cannot access clean water supplies there is need to conserve the remaining ecosystems in order to avoid further destruction and increase in health related problems.

In terms of nutrition, the fisheries sector provides high quality protein to 17 million people, accounting for about 50 percent of animal protein consumption in the country. Therefore fish as a key resource from wetlands also contributes to the health and wealth of the citizens. There is need to continue creating awareness in this regard.

Wetland ecosystems also have vital functions such as habitats for disease vectors like, mosquitoes. If well managed there is high possibility of ensuring a co-existence between healthy wetland ecosystems and human beings.

More to that, in an era where there increasing research on the effectiveness of herbal medicine and where part of the world's population does not have access to medical services, it is important to explore the rich medicinal values of wetland biodiversity and also create awareness on these values.

Uganda will join the rest of the world, to commemorate the World Wetlands Day 2008 to create awareness about the values of these ecosystems and the need to keep them healthy for our health and wealth.

## **MAIN OBJECTIVE OF THE WWD 2008**

The purpose of the WWD 2008 is to create more awareness about the benefits, values and functions of wetlands and to demonstrate wise use practices that can help the users to sustain the resource for their wellbeing.

## **SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES**

- a) To demonstrate the contribution of wetlands and their products to the health and wealth of people;
- b) To exhibit cases of areas where wetlands have performed great functions thus saving people from health risks like diseases associated with flooding;
- c) To generate a clear understanding and knowledge of the status of wetlands in the host district and the surrounding districts, the opportunities and challenges in terms of good conservation measures and the rate at which diseases associated to wetland mismanagement occur;
- d) To create a linkage between WMD staff, members of NGOs, district wetland/environment officials and the media so that the threats to wetlands can be addressed collectively.

## **PROPOSED ACTIVITIES**

### **Mass media campaigns:**

Focusing on the theme **Healthy Wetlands Healthy People**, this will explore all wetland benefits and functions. In particular, the mass media campaign will include;

- Newspaper supplements in the New Vision and Monitor newspapers to appear on 2 February 2008
- Talk shows on UBC TV
- Radio talk shows and programmes on a variety of FM stations across the country
- Press release

## **Ministerial Address**

A recorded message by the Hon. Minister of Water and Environment will be aired on the eve of the World Wetlands Day on UBC Television, WBS TV and UBC Radio and other stations that may be willing to offer this service at a friendly cost. The address will highlight key policy issues, challenges to sustainable wetland management and progress with implementation of the Wetlands Sector Strategic Plan.

## **Memorial Lecture**

Wetlands Management Department has over the years worked with various stakeholders in creation of awareness and sensitisation on wetlands resources, their management and conservation. Such partners include media like the New Vision Newspaper.

As part of the activities to commemorate World Wetlands Day 2008, the WMD in collaboration with the New Vision Newspaper has organised a memorial lecture in honour of the late Sir. Ndyakira Amooti who was a front runner in environmental awareness and an advocate of wetlands wise use.

It will also be an opportunity to launch the African Network of Environmental Journalists – Uganda Chapter, (ANEJ-Uganda). The Lecture will attract members from the media fraternity, academic institutions, environmental institutions/organisations that appreciated the work of the late Sir. Ndyakira Amooti and the general public.

## **National Celebrations**

The proposed venue for WWD 2008 is Uganda Museum Kampala District. Kampala is the district where central planning for wetlands started. It has also had long experience in wetland management. However besides the experience Kampala continues to be a district with vast challenges in wetland management and also continues to feel the impact of wetland misuse. About three quarters of the wetlands in Kampala have been degraded mainly through human activities. Key of the causes of degradation include;

- Enchroachment on vital wetlands by squatters, business people, veterans and other private developers;
- Unplanned settlements in vital wetlands like Kinawataka and Nakivubo;
- Poor waste disposal leading to health risks to the communities living within the wetland areas;
- Drainage of wetlands for cultivation thus compromising their ability to perform important functions like water purification;
- In-filling with murram for construction as evidenced in Kinawataka and Nakivubo wetland

Such activities as mentioned above have led to the deterioration of the quality of the environment, the life and livelihoods of the people not only in Kampala but within the Lake Victoria Basin. This is evidenced through the reports on the reduction in the quality and quantity of Lake Victoria waters and flooding in and around Kampala.

Commemorating WWD 2008 will provide a platform for wetland stakeholders to assess the achievements so far made in terms of wetland management, the challenges faced and how best to deal with problems mentioned.

Activities for the day will include:

- ✚ Exhibitions by wide selection of stakeholders including, herbalists, media, private companies to showcase best practices in wetland management;
- ✚ Children's Fish recipe festival;
- ✚ Memorial lecture;
- ✚ Music Dance and Drama;
- ✚ Speeches

## EXPECTED OUTPUTS

- ✚ Exhibition held form 1<sup>st</sup> to 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2008;
- ✚ A memorial lecture in honour of the Late Ndyakira Amooti and his contribution to environment/wetlands conservation through awareness;
- ✚ African Network for Environmental Journalists-Uganda Chapter launched;
- ✚ A children's fish recipe presentation ;
- ✚ Talk shows on radio and television held;
- ✚ Supplements and articles in newspapers published;
- ✚ A report distribute it to the participants and Ramsar Secretariat.

## PROGRAMME

Below is the tentative programme for planned activities to commemorate WWD.

Date	Activity /Activities
15 <sup>th</sup> January – 1 <sup>st</sup> February 2008	Radio and Television Talk Shows
29 <sup>th</sup> January 2008	Recording of Minister's Statement and Press Conference
Friday 1 <sup>st</sup> February 2008	Ministerial Address on UBC TV & WBS TV
Friday 1 <sup>st</sup> to Saturday 2 <sup>nd</sup> February 2008	❖ Exhibition at the Uganda Museum
Saturday 2 <sup>nd</sup> February 2008	Memorial Lecture in Honour of the Late Ndyakira Amooti

### District activities

Apart from Kampala District which will host the national celebration for WWD 2008 it is proposed that the rest of the districts select one or more of the activities below to commemorate the day.

- A public lecture attracting high profile people in the district
- Radio Talk shows
- An exhibition
- Music Dance and Drama presentation involving school children or drama groups
- A procession match
- Speeches from distinguished guests in the district.

The Wetlands Management Department will offer the technical backstopping as required