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PRESS RELEASE

CITIZENS' CONCERN AFRICA (CICOA) RE-LAUNCHES "SAVE LWERA CAMPAIGN"

Kampala, 12 May 2023: Citizens' Concern Africa (CICOA) has today re-launched a campaign that seeks to stop degradation of the Lwera Swamp in Lukaya Town Council, Kalungu District code named "Save Lwera from Rice growing and sand mining". The first campaign launched in 2019, involved an online [petition](#) and [non-online](#) which were signed by more than 4,000 people.

The latest campaign has been prompted by the destruction of River Katonga Bridge and Kampala -Masaka highway by floods, resulting into travel chaos and increased costs for motorists. Traffic has now been diverted to the Mpigi Villa-Maria road which is longer by about 56km, according to the Bus Operators and Drivers' Association

The petition will be open for signing starting at 4PM today through the link below;
https://twitter.com/CICOA_Ug/status/1656934800081428480

"The Uganda Wetlands Atlas puts the cost of wetland destruction at nearly Shs2 billion annually, and contamination of water resources, which is partly caused by reduced buffering capacity of wetlands near open water bodies, to nearly Shs38 billion annually. It's against this background that Citizens' Concern Africa (CICOA), has embarked on this campaign of protection of wetlands", says CICOA Executive Director Mr Andrew Mafundo.

CICOA has previously engaged local government environment officers to explain how this swamp destruction was allowed and what they are doing to stop it. "We also tasked ministry of water and environment to explain why Chinese investors were allowed to reclaim this important swamp and provide to us terms of issuance of permit. We also engaged the National Environment Management Authority (NEMA) on failure to monitor the implementation of conditions issued within the permits.

One of the major achievements from the previous campaign was that, the president of Uganda Yoweri Kaguta Museveni while visiting the neighbouring district of Masaka, noted that he had heard about this Lwera swamp destruction by Chinese investors and ordered that the relevant

ministries stop this irresponsible management of the environment and that these investors stop and vacate the area after the season.

However, no such action has been taken- “meaning the presidential directive was ignored and we are instead seeing more destruction while Ugandans are paying for these irresponsible acts.

Passengers using public transport from Masaka to Kampala now have to pay Shs 25,000- Shs30,000, up from Shs15,000 (according to today’s Daily Monitor). Which is absurd. I urge all Ugandans to act now and save our environment or face even worse forms of the wrath of Mother Nature”, adds Mr. Mafundo.

Background:

Wetlands and Forests are important resources for regulating climatic conditions, erosion prevention, moderation of extreme flows, sediment traps, soil formation, and maintenance of water tables in surrounding lands, and acting as centers of biodiversity and wildlife habitat. They are also sources of wood, timber and other construction materials, food, medicines, water supply, fisheries, dry-season grazing for livestock, nutrient and toxin, tourism, recreational and spiritual functions, and promote aesthetic beauty of the area. Unfortunately, these resources are on the decline in many parts of Uganda. Data shows that the national area of wetlands declined by 30% between 1994 and 2008. And although between 2008 and 2014, there was an increase in areas under wetlands, this was only by 0.03% from 26,307km² in 2008 to 26,315 km² in 2014

NOTES FOR EDITORS:

1. Citizens’ Concern Africa (CICOA) is a Non -Government Organization registered in Uganda with the aim of enabling citizens to exercise their constitutional right of holding government accountable on the social, natural resources and environmental welfare of all citizens. The organization is kin on addressing environmental, social, and climate change issues in Uganda through research, advocacy, and information dissemination.
2. Started in 2012, CICOA operates in line with Sustainable Development Goals; (No Poverty, Zero Hunger, Gender Equality, Clean Water, Reduced Inequalities, Climate Action, Life on Land and Partnerships for the Goals), the Uganda Vision 2040, The National Development Plan (NDPIII) and Articles 38 &39 of the 1995 Uganda Constitution.
3. CICOA’s work is premised on four core pillars:
 - The Protection and Promotion of Human Rights
 - Ending Poverty in All its forms
 - Conservation and sustainable natural resource management
 - Development of livelihoods for marginalized communities

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Further information on CICOA can be obtained from the organisation's website at:
citizensconcernafrica.org or twitter @CICOA_Ug