

Protect the Environment for Future Generations [opinion]

by Yoweri Museveni

TODAY, Uganda joins the rest of the **Commonwealth** family in commemorating the **Commonwealth** Day. The aim of the **Commonwealth** Day is to promote understanding on global issues, international cooperation and the work of the **Commonwealth** to improve the lives of its two billion people. It helps rekindle the unity of purpose that the organisation is known for.

The Theme for this year's **Commonwealth** Day is: 'The Environment; Our Future'. It reaffirms the commitment of the **Commonwealth** to the protection of the environment. In 1989, the **Commonwealth** Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) held in Malaysia adopted the "Langkawi Declaration on the Environment" which recognised that 'Our shared environment binds all countries to a common future'. It committed **Commonwealth** countries to undertake a number of actions to protect the environment.

In Kampala last year, the Heads of Government adopted the "Lake Victoria Commonwealth Climate Change Action Plan" which reiterated the Langkawi position that serious deterioration of the environment is a threat to the well being of current and future generations and that "solutions to today's environmental challenges also require active participation by all".

The Theme of this year's Commonwealth Day, "The Environment: Our Future", is a reminder of both the serious consequences of environmental degradation as well as our collective responsibility to protect the environment.

Uganda, under the National Resistance Movement (NRM), has been an active participant in the Commonwealth and international campaign to protect the environment. Nationally, we have created a fully fledged Ministry of Water and the Environment. We have also created the National Environment Management Agency to oversee our development efforts and to ensure that these are environmentally-friendly. We have launched the rural electrification programme to reduce and eventually eliminate the depletion of the environment through deforestation.

Concurrently, we are pursuing the search for and development of alternative clean energy sources such as solar energy and hydro-electric power. In the near future, Bujagali Dam will come on stream. It will make electricity more affordable and reduce the current use of firewood. Karuma Falls Dam is also in the pipeline. Increased generation of power will enhance our transformation efforts and help launch Uganda on an irreversible path to development.

Fellow Ugandans, I call upon all of you to ensure that in all our activities, we put environment protection in consideration. The environment remains our future and the future of generations to come.

I wish you happy celebrations.

The writer is the President of Uganda