



THE REPUBLIC OF UGANDA

CLOSING REMARKS

BY

**HON DR. MARIA MUTAGAMBA
MINISTER OF TOURISM, WILDLIFE AND ANTIQUITIES**

AT

THE AFRICAN LION RANGE STATE MEETING

**LAICO LAKE VICTORIA HOTEL
ENTEBBE, UGANDA**

31ST MAY 2016

Representatives from CITES and CMS Secretariats

Representatives from our Conservation Institutions

Distinguished Delegates

Representatives of the media

Ladies and Gentlemen

1. Am delighted to be here with you today to close this important meeting that has been deliberating and laying strategies to conserve the African lion.
2. Distinguished Delegates, Uganda is a privileged country to have hosted this meeting for the two days. As you are aware, Uganda is such an endowed country with a variety and diversity of resources. We host over 53% of the World's remaining population of mountain gorillas, 11% of the world's recorded species of birds (50% of Africa's bird species richness), 7.8% of the Global Mammal Diversity (39% of Africa's Mammal Richness), 19% of Africa's amphibian species richness and 14% of Africa's reptile species richness, 1,249 recorded species of butterflies and 600 species of fish.
3. These species are maintained inside a network of protected areas covering about 10% of the country's total land surface (25,981.276 Sq km). These include 10 National Parks, 12 Wildlife Reserves, 10 Wildlife Sanctuaries and 5 Community Wildlife Areas.
4. Uganda has in the recent past, registered impressive performance with regard to wildlife conservation largely due enhanced security and political stability. The country has recorded a general increase in wildlife populations.
5. However, the lion population has overall been decreasing not only in Uganda but also other selected range states. As you may have noted from recent reports, our lion population remains isolated and largely restricted to only three of the ten national parks namely; Kidepo Valley National Park, Queen Elizabeth National Park and Murchison Falls National Park. An assessment in 2008/09 around these three main conservation areas estimated 144 lions in Queen Elizabeth National Park, 132 in Kidepo

National Park and 132 in Murchison Falls National Park respectively. The lion population in Uganda is estimated at 493 individuals as of 2015.

6. In the 5 years (2010 -2016) Kidepo Valley National Park has lost 05 lions, Queen Elizabeth National Park 14 and Murchison Falls National Park 06. The general lion population decline in Uganda is attributed to indiscriminate killing by the local communities, road accidents, habitat loss and diseases.
7. As a signatory to both the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) and Convention on Migratory Species of wild animals (CMS), Uganda recognises the immense contribution made by the two institutions especially with regard to regulating trade in endangered species, promoting the conservation of migratory species and raising awareness about the need to conserve our wildlife heritage.
8. Ladies and gentlemen, one of the recent key outcomes of CMS is the report on Regional Lion Conservation Strategies that was presented during this workshop. This assessment and review was indeed timely in view of increasing concerns about the declining lion population and I hope you made good use of its recommendations during this meeting.
9. It is my sincere hope that this meeting was able to exhaustively discuss the current lion conservation status, identify threats and related information gaps, share best management practices, explore potential collaboration opportunities and recommend varying conservation strategies.
10. It is equally important to highlight the importance of generating consensus on the way forward particularly with regard to ensuring stronger protection and conservation measures for this species. We need to note that, unless urgent measures are implemented, we shall sadly witness a species' extinction in the medium or long term.
11. As you might have observed from the presentations here, a number of countries have made an attempt to develop species-specific Action Plans to conserve the lion. Uganda has developed a general "Strategic Action Plan for Large Carnivore Conservation" (2010-2020) to guide her implementation. However, this is not enough. Having documents without implementing them does not help to solve the problem. We therefore need to implement, strengthen local, regional and international cooperation to

deal with the challenge holistically. I believe this meeting provided an opportunity for you to embark on this journey.

12. I wish to reiterate Uganda's commitment to fulfilling her obligations under CITES, CMS and all other Multilateral International Agreements (MEAs). We have already made several commitments to conserve wildlife and fight wildlife crime at different fora including at the UN General Assembly (Resolution 69/314), which aims to tackle illicit trafficking in wildlife; Several Multilateral Environment Agreements decision making meetings, the London Conference on the Illegal Wildlife Trade, 2014; Kasane Conference on the Illegal Wildlife Trade, 2015; Arusha Regional Conference on conservation and combating wildlife crime among others.
13. Government of Uganda will continue to collaboratively work with all partners to protect the lion and other wildlife species. We will continue to develop our human resource and institutional capacity, strengthen law enforcement, promote equitable and sustainable utilisation, mitigate human wildlife conflicts, undertake applied research, promote education and awareness and share benefits that accrue from wildlife with communities neighbouring conservation areas.
14. I have been informed that, some of you visited the Uganda Wildlife Education Centre (Entebbe Zoo) yesterday. I hope you enjoyed your visit. For those who missed, we still have a lot to offer including the beautiful national parks, historical sites, museums and communities. Do not miss Uganda's warm hospitality and unique biodiversity.
15. Ladies and gentlemen, join me to thank CITES and CMS secretariats for partnering with us to organise this important meeting. We also do acknowledge the contribution from the IUCN-Cat Specialist Group. This meeting was indeed necessary, very timely and relevant to the conservation of the lion.
16. I thank you for your kind attention. It is now my singular honour to declare this workshop officially closed.

FOR GOD AND MY COUNTRY