



THE REPUBLIC OF UGANDA

OPENING STATEMENT

BY

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AT

**THE OPENING OF THE THIRD MEETING OF PARTIES TO THE
AGREEMENT ON THE CONSERVATION OF GORILLAS AND THEIR
HABITATS (GORILLA MOP3)**

IMPERIAL GOLF VIEW HOTEL, ENTEBBE

18TH JUNE, 2019

Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,
The UN/CMS-Gorilla Agreement Secretariat staff
Distinguished observers
Dear friends of conservation
Ladies and Gentlemen

1. Permit me to warmly welcome you all to Uganda, the “Pearl of Africa” and to the third Meeting of Parties to the UN Agreement on the conservation of gorillas and their habitats. This is an important meeting for CMS implementation in Africa.

-Before I proceed, let me request all of you to stand up and observe a moment of silence in honor of the late Dr. Bradnee Chambers, the fallen CMS Executive Secretary who passed away on 23rd January 2019. May the Almighty receive his soul with mercy.

2. Uganda is profoundly delighted to host this important meeting. The choice by the Secretariat to hold this meeting in Uganda could not have been more appropriate. This is because of the key role Uganda plays in the conservation of migratory species. Uganda has over 18,783 so far recorded Species of Fauna and Flora.

3. We have over 50% of the World's remaining population of mountain gorillas, 11% of the world's recorded species of birds constituting 50% of Africa's bird species richness. We have 7.8% of the Global Mammal Diversity constituting 39% of Africa's Mammal Richness; Uganda also has 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. Uganda is indeed a country gifted by nature.

4. Substantial numbers of these species especially mammals and birds move across national boundaries, with birds regularly migrating as far as Europe and Asia. The Mountain Gorillas of Mgahinga Gorilla National Park range freely in the Virunga massif that is shared between Uganda, Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of Congo. This in itself calls for regional and international collaboration, in order to better manage migratory species.

5. We must conserve wildlife not only because it's our God given and constitutional duty but also because of various ecological, social and economic benefits that we derive from these species. In Uganda, for example, tourism which is largely wildlife based contributes about 9% of the country's GDP. Tourism continues to be the leading foreign exchange earner for Uganda, bringing in US\$ 1.45 billion annually. The sector provides 1.173 million jobs in Uganda accounting for 8% of total employment in the country.

6. Uganda's success in mountain gorilla conservation is an example of our commitment to conserving migratory species. Not only are mountain gorilla numbers increasing which is the ultimate sign of success, but also the well managed gorilla tourism supports the conservation of other species as well. Gorilla tourism alone accounts for about 60% of the total wildlife protected area earnings for Uganda.

7. As you are aware, Virunga mountain gorillas population shared by Uganda, Rwanda and DRC increased from 480 individuals in 2010 to now 604. The Bwindi Impenetrable mountain gorilla population in western Uganda was about 400 individuals in 2011. The 2018 census is now complete and all signs from the census indicate that the population has grown significantly. We shall be announcing the census results soon after genetic analysis.

8. We are very proud to be part of a global success story to recover the iconic mountain gorilla population of the world. I need to remind you, that in 1981, the total mountain gorilla population was estimated at only 254 individuals. Its now 604. In 1997, Bwindi Impenetrable population was only 300. So growing the mountain gorilla population from 600 to more than 1000 individuals has been a great success story largely delivered by regional cooperation between Uganda, Rwanda and DRC. And to cement this collaboration, we now have a fully-fledged Greater

Virunga Transboundary Collaboration Treaty with a permanent secretariat which is represented here in this meeting. Strong law enforcement, sharing gorilla revenue with communities, mitigating human gorilla conflicts, robust research and monitoring system and strong community participation have been key to our success.

9. Uganda remains fully committed to the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals and all Agreements concluded thereunder including the Gorilla Agreement and African Eurasian Water bird Agreement.

10. Once again, I would like to thank the Parties and the Secretariat for choosing Uganda to host this meeting and the Government of Luxembourg for supporting the meeting.

11. I welcome you all to Uganda and invite you to explore a variety of wildlife and magnificent sceneries in our 10 National Parks, 12 Wildlife Reserves, 10 Wildlife Sanctuaries, 5 Community Wildlife Areas, 506 Central Forest Reserves and 191 Local Forest Reserves; the source of the River Nile-the longest river in the world, snowcapped legendary Rwenzori mountains along the equator and above all, the hospitable people of Uganda, the Pearl of Africa.

12. It is now my singular honor and pleasure, to declare the third Meeting of Parties to the Agreement on the conservation of gorillas and their habitats officially open.

FOR GOD AND MY COUNTRY