

Climate Change, what must our government do?

By Vincent Ogal.

Climate change is one of the absolute challenges facing humanity in this modern age, as the Earth's near-surface temperatures continue to rise. Climate change is likely to disrupt the Earth's ecological systems and to have serious negative consequences for agricultural production, forests, water supply, health systems and overall human development. Vulnerable populations (mainly the poor and most marginalized, including children, women and people with disabilities in developing countries) are particularly poorly equipped to cope with the adverse impacts of climate change. As temperatures throughout East Africa and the rest of the world rise, precipitation is expected to increase, along with the frequency and intensity of droughts, floods, heat waves and landslides. Scientists predict that the rate of climate change will be more rapid than previously expected.

"No matter how much half the world does to clean up its act, if similar steps aren't taken by the rest of the world, Earth still has a problem," John Kerry the former secretary of state of the United States once said. It is therefore imperative that every able body from all walks of life from the East to West and from the North all the way to the Southern hemisphere to therefore take action.

Climate Change in Uganda.

The average temperature in semi-arid climates in Uganda is rising, especially in the southwest. The frequency of hot days has increased while the frequency of cold days has decreased. As a result, the malaria parasite is spreading into new areas of the country, and the ice caps on the Rwenzori Mountains have shrunk significantly. Changing temperature patterns in Uganda have been linked with more frequent and longer lasting droughts and consequent increased cattle death. Rainfall has decreased and become less predictable and less evenly distributed. Floods, landslides, droughts and other extreme weather events are increasing in frequency and intensity. Uganda's economy is particularly vulnerable to climate change given its heavy reliance on its natural resource base. Droughts have significantly affected water resources, hydroelectricity production and agriculture, among many other sectors.

In following suit and in the spirit of participating in the climate change action just like the rest of the world, the government of Uganda must come up with possible interventions to this effect which is clearly articulate to ensure awareness creation among her citizens.

Promoting sustainable development and a green economy, with identification and promotion of common policy priorities to address climate change in Uganda, promotion of adaptation policy responses for Uganda, and identifying and promoting

mitigating policies responses for Uganda as some of the objectives the government must prioritize.

The other step the government of Uganda must take is to support the integration of climate change issues into planning, decision making and investments in all sectors and trans-sectoral themes through appropriate institutional arrangements as well as facilitating the mobilization of financial resources to address the awareness gap which is still looming.

Providing adequate support for policies and programmes that take into account the interactions between population dynamics, climate change and development

Providing proper support for the information sharing and research that is required to better understand the impacts of climate change in Uganda and the vulnerabilities of particular groups and populations

Supporting education, awareness raising and capacity development for a range of stakeholders (government, academics, civil society and private sector) contributing to the national development process, from the local level to the national level

Promoting research and development, transfer and diffusion of technology through the use of appropriate information sharing, incentive schemes and support mechanisms, as relevant to the various sectors concerned

Mainstreaming gender issues in climate change adaptation and mitigation approaches in order to reduce the vulnerability of women and children to the impacts of climate change and recognize their key role in tackling this issue.

Why we need 100% renewable energy

“With the recent discovery of oil in the Albertine graben, one can only fear for the worst considering the fact that we have already suffered the wrath of climate change which has hit the country and the rest of the world in many forms ranging from the long drought leading to abnormal rise in temperatures, the unpredictable short spells of rain falls among others”, said an activist, during a recent conference for the transformation of Kampala City Council in to a green City.



Oil Mining (Oil wells) in the Lake Albert Basins of Western Uganda

The first call for action that the government must undertake is to forego Burning fossil fuels such as, oil and gas as this in the long run will just precipitate climate change making us less productive due to the side effects such as sickness and destruction of the lands and waters around the Albertine grabben.

This is however a tall order and a daunting challenge as the government have already invested heavily upon. Dozens of richer nations literally eat, wear, work, play and even sleep on the products made from such fossilized sunshine, and citizens of developing nations want and arguably deserve the same comforts, which are largely thanks to the energy stored in such fuels.

An efficient, smart energy future

The government of Uganda must also rethink its strategy on energy production. To get to 100 percent renewable energy, we'll also need to do more with less. Greenpeace's philosophy on energy efficiency is all about intelligent use, to squeeze more out of every bit of energy.

Sustainable, renewable transport to cut out oil

According to GreenPeace International, Today about one-quarter of the world's energy almost all of its oil products is used to power transport by road, rail, air and sea and a shift to renewably powered, smart transport is essential to reach 100 percent renewable energy future.

It also goes ahead to say, governments worldwide to participate in financing the future we all want. The flow of money to fossil fuel and nuclear projects stands in the way of a clean, safe and secure future for all. The government of Uganda must follow suit and instead, support investments in the secure, clean renewable energy future.

Going by the recent innovations where a research group at Makerere University college of Engineering designed an electric power car (Kiira EV) solar powered bus (Kayoola) the future does not look murky after all if all countries embark on such alternative sources of energy with mass production to start in 2020.

The government must of Uganda must therefore embrace this initiative and provide support in the best way it could to help promote the cause.



The Kiira EV (sedan), hybrid car (left) and the solar powered bus (Kayoola) with panels aloft (right)

Political willingness to take action

The government of Uganda through the different the decision making organs must therefore enact laws and resolutions that are climate friendly, in this regard, the hurdles and barriers that hinder engagements are eradicated to pave way for climate change action. The ban on the use of polythene bags which is one of the largest contributors to environment destruction have been a hot topic with the government bowing down to pressure from investors dealing in the production in, giving back license after they were previously revoked, such contradictions and playing double standards will just jeopardize the efforts that are currently in place.

Encourage mass plantation of green belts

The government through its various institutions must encourage the population to embark on large scale plantation of trees in a bid to curb climate change. Speaking at a press conference to announce the launch of a national tree planting campaign on all major roads at Parliament April 16, Hon. Kadaga said planting trees across the country should be supported because they help mitigate climate change.

“In the last one month almost three quarters of Uganda has been devastated by hail storms. The reason is because there are no windbreakers everywhere. I don’t know how much money we shall require to repair and rebuild all the schools that are down. We shall also need to resettle families that lost everything,” she told journalists at Parliament.

“The time is now to take action on tree planting. Now we need everybody. It is no longer a matter of choice anymore,” the Speaker added. The Speaker re-echoed calls for a designated national tree planting day to enable the spread of tree planting across the country.

She appealed to corporate companies to join the campaign to plant trees along all the road

major roads.

Encourage Irrigation

By virtue of its existence within the tropical region which is widely known as blessed with favorable climatic condition, this has not stopped some parts of the country from experiencing wide spread famine as a result of prolong drought. Alternative ways of mechanization in agriculture such as irrigation and use of use of other machineries are still unknown to the rural poor, many of which use rudimentary tools to work out fields, of which even if they did, still they would be unable to afford. The government should therefore promote such alternative means and if possible bring services closer to the rural population. In this regard the government has done a bit of sensitization on the use of drip irrigation to help people in the drought affected regions the country learn how to keep the gardens moist in order to ensure good yields even in periods of drought.



The president of the republic of Uganda demonstrating to farmers drip irrigation and mulching

Drip irrigation is the cheapest and effective irrigation method for any farmer in the country.

“I decided to come here because the people have failed to listen to the message of the Movement (his political party).

I decided to come to the centre where the peasants live. I have been involved in the fight against poverty right from 1967 near my home in Rwakitura (south western Uganda) and I know that you can overcome poverty through modern agriculture even on a small piece of land,” Mr Museveni said.

The President also showcased various agricultural practices and visited the different model farmers in the district.



Mr. Museveni in his banana plantation (left), Tomatoes plantation supported by drip irrigation (right)

It is therefore imperative that actions geared towards climate change mitigation start now and our governments must take the leading role in championing this cause.

End.

