



# CENTRE FOR ENVIRONMENTAL RESEARCH AND AGRICULTURE INNOVATIONS

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## **CSOs COMMUNIQUE CALLING ON MINISTRY OF TOURISM, WILDLIFE AND ANTIQUITIES TO CONSIDER TURNING BUGOMA FOREST RESERVE INTO NATIONAL PARK.**

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

Centre for Environmental Research and agriculture innovations (CERAI) is a non-Profit organisation aimed at environmental and natural resource Governance. The organization is committed to conserve and protect Uganda's environment in its density through public policy research and advocacy to influence environmental, Energy and agricultural policies in favour of the local person.

CERAI and partners are concerned about the ongoing activity of Annexing Forests reserves into National parks. On [17<sup>th</sup> January 2023](#), media reported that government of Uganda through the Ministry of Tourism Wildlife and Antiquities is in the final stages of annexing forest reserves to their nearest protected areas in a move that will see them upgraded to national parks .This is aimed at enhancing the protection status of Uganda's networks of protected areas and other critical landscapes for wildlife conservation. The forests being considered included Kalinzu and Maramagambo central forest reserves which are going to be annexed to Queen Elizabeth National Park, and Budongo central forest reserve which is to be added to Murchison Falls National Park.

However this move has left Bugoma forest central reserve outside the equation which has kept the public dismayed due to unexploited tourism potential of the forest. On 29<sup>th</sup> July 2022 CERAI organised meeting with partners and the following observations were made,

### **2. Observations**

**a) Bugoma forest is home to tourist attractions.** The forest is home to over 570 chimpanzees, 225 bird species, bush elephants, butterflies and others alongside forest walks, tree climbing and others which can be harnessed to promote tourism in the forest.

**b) Foreign Exchange and Employment:** Promoting Bugoma Forest into National park can earn the country over half a million dollars a year and employ thousands of unemployed youth especially in Bunyoro kitara kingdom.

**c) Bugoma forest rich in Biodiversity:** According to research done by Birdlife International, an international conservation organization, out of 65 forested Protected Areas that were surveyed for biodiversity in Uganda, Bugoma forest was ranked eleventh in overall biodiversity value and fifteenth in terms of rarity value. The researchers identified chimpanzee and mangabey trekking, bird watching and nature walks as the top tourist attractions in and around this tropical rain forest found in both Hoima and Kikuube districts.

**d) Bugoma forest has plenty of attractions:** such as butterflies, insects, birds like Black and White Casqued Hornbill, Black-billed Turaco and the Olive Sunbird, Bugoma's main attraction is the encounter with the primates, especially groups of the Ugandan Mangabey (*Lophocebus Ugandae*), which are endemic to this forest. The other primates which are also a common sight are the red tailed monkeys and black and white colobus monkeys.

**e) Strategic location to the City:** Given that Hoima is located only 200km from Kampala, Bugoma forest reserve could become the tourism destination nearest to Kampala city. Mbarara where Lake Mburo National Park is found and Mbale that is blessed with Mt. Elgon National Park are located 240km from the capital city. Murchison Falls National Park is 203km away. Tourism potential of Bugoma forest reserve is immense, but is barely being scratched.

**f) Bugoma forest as stop over:** The forest is to become a stopover for tourists heading to the northern tourist circuit (Murchison Falls National Park) and the southern tourist circuit (Queen Elizabeth National Park, Kibale National Park and Bwindi Impenetrable National Park). The prospects of Bugoma as a stopover have increased with the construction of the road linking the Kampala-Gulu highway to Fort Portal through Kigumba, Masindi, Hoima and Kyejono.

### 3. RECOMMENDATIONS

With the above observations and opportunities we recommend the following,

- I. Government should upgrade Bugoma forest to a national park to protect the forest, its biodiversity and promote tourism. Uganda wildlife Authority (UWA) which manages national parks in Uganda, has the expertise and human resources needed to protect the biodiversity in the forest and to promote tourism. The forest should therefore be put under UWA's management after being turned into a national park.
- II. The Ministry of Tourism, UWA and Uganda Tourism Board (UTB) should in consultation with all other tourism stakeholders develop a tourism development strategy for Bugoma forest. This will guide tourism development while ensuring ecosystem and business sustainability.
- III. The Ministry of Tourism, UTB, UWA and other stakeholders should maintain effective community outreach services around the forest and Communities should be trained in tour guiding, crafts-making, beekeeping, catering and other services to enable them to participate in tourism activities in Bugoma forest.

- IV. Government and development partners should support institutions such as the Jane Goodall Institute to habituate more groups of chimpanzees for tourism purposes in Bugoma forest. This will create more tourism opportunities.
- V. Furthermore, government and civil society groups should train communities in interpretive tour guiding, crafts making, catering and others to enable them to participate in the tourism value chain.
- VI. The government should promote public-private-partnerships to attract more sustainable investment options in accommodation and others to promote tourism and annex Bugoma forest with Kabwoya wildlife Reserve.
- VII. Government should also support communities to establish community-private venture partnerships such as that of the Clouds Mountain Gorilla Lodge model in Kisoro to support community participation in tourism.

### **SIGNATORIES**

- Centre for Environment Research and Agricultural Innovations (CERAI)
- Youth for Green communities (YGC)
- Oil Refinery Residents Association (ORRA) –Uganda
- East African Crude Oil Pipeline Host Communities (EACOPHC)
- African Initiative on Food Security and Environment (AIFE)
- Women for Green Economy Movement Uganda (WoGEM)
- Climate biodiversity Initiative (CBI)
- South Western Institute for policy and Advocacy (SOWIPA)
- Guild Presidential Forum on Governance (GPFOG)
- Youth for Development and Advocacy (YODA)
- Safe space for women and girls Uganda