

GREENING UGANDA'S 2016 GENERAL ELECTIONS

Key Issues for Political Parties and Political Leaders to
Address in their Manifestoes



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A photomontage of some of the 2016 Presidential Candidates and unregulated cutting down of forests for charcoal burning.

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List of Acronyms

ACODE	Advocates Coalition for Development and Environment
CODECA	Community Development and Conservation Agency
DFS	District Forestry Services
DDP	District Development Plans
DFDP	District Forestry Development Plans
DFO	District Forest Officer
ENR	Environment and Natural Resources
EITI	Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative
EPPU	Environmental Protection Police Unit
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
GNP	Gross National Product
JESE	Joint Effort to Save the Environment
LC	Local Council
LFRs	Local Forest Reserves
MIRAC	Mid-Western Region Anti-Corruption Coalition
NEMA	National Environment Management Authority
NRM	National Resistance Movement
REDD	Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation
UBOS	Uganda Bureau of Statistics
UFGLG	Uganda Forest Governance Learning Group

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I. Introduction

In February and March 2016, Uganda will hold its general elections where eligible citizens will elect their next set of leaders including the President, Members of Parliament, LC Chairpersons and councillors at various levels. The elected leaders will serve for a term of five years. The 2016 Uganda general elections are taking place at a time when the Environment and Natural Resources (ENR) Sector is facing enormous challenges that threaten to substantially reduce their contribution to national growth, development, poverty reduction and peoples' welfare. It is therefore important that political parties and other actors vying for power in the 2016 general elections prioritize and effectively address ENR issues in their manifestoes.

This paper highlights some of the most pressing issues in Uganda's ENR sector that political parties and other actors vying for power in 2016 should consider addressing in their manifestoes. Although it makes some specific recommendations, the paper does not prescribe any particular approach that political parties and other actors should take in addressing the issues. That is a question for the political parties to decide internally. Different approaches can be devised to address the same issue. The important concern is to have the issues effectively addressed. The paper is also expected to guide voters in their interactions during the campaign period with the persons standing for different political offices.

The paper largely draws on previous studies and assessments done in the sector¹ and the recommendations that ACODE and other members of Uganda's ENR Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) Network have been making over-time. It also draws on the outcomes of the ENR governance fora² and the Uganda Forestry Governance Learning Group (UFGLG) meetings that ACODE has convened over the years.³

The paper is divided into four sections. Section 1 is the introduction. Section 2 gives the reasons why political parties and politicians standing for different political offices should address ENR issues in their manifestoes. In Section 3, we

¹ See for instance, ACODE and UFGLG (2013). "The State of Forest Governance in Uganda: Citizens Voices". Draft Report, December 2013.

² For instance on 30th October 2014, ACODE in partnership with Joint Effort to Save the Environment (JESE) organized a regional forestry governance forum in Fort-Portal, Kabarole district. On 27th-28th August 2015, in partnership with MIRAC and CODECA, ACODE organized a similar forum in Masindi. The reports of these fora are available at ACODE.

³ UFGLG is an informal and loose network of selected in-country institutions, individuals and international partners focusing on issues of forestry governance in Uganda. It does research and analysis, capacity building, policy outreach and advocacy to support and promote good governance in the forestry sector.

highlight some of the major challenges facing the ENR sector that need to be addressed in the manifestoes and provide some measures that can be taken to address them. Section 4 is the conclusion.

2. Why Political Parties and Political Leaders Should Address ENR Issues in their Manifestoes

Uganda's ENR include the environment, forestry, wetlands, climate, oil, minerals, wildlife, water and fisheries. The ENR sector is the foundation of the country's economic growth, development and peoples' livelihood security. Although not all its contribution is captured in official statistics, ENR sector's contribution to GDP is significant. In 2012/2013 for instance, the forestry sub-sector alone contributed 11.9 percent of Uganda's GDP.⁴ The ENR sector is also a major source of foreign exchange earnings. In 1999 for instance, the ENR sector contributed over 90% of Uganda's exports valued at USD 478,750,000.⁵ The ENR sector also supplies over 90% of Uganda's energy requirements in terms of firewood and charcoal used for domestic purposes.⁶

The ENR sector is the lifeblood of many Ugandans. Many Ugandans especially the rural poor who constitute 80 percent of the country's population directly depend on ENR sector for employment, food, shelter and medicine. It is for instance estimated that the forest sub-sector alone employs over one million people.⁷ Ensuring the conservation and integrity of Uganda's ENR is therefore very important in securing the livelihoods and livelihood security of many Ugandans. The ENR sector also plays important roles in servicing and supporting the productivity of other sectors such as agriculture, health, industry and services. The productivity and growth of these sectors heavily depends on the health of the environment and natural resource base. The ENR sector for instance supplies most of the raw materials used in Uganda's industries. Through its sink function, the environment also helps to absorb waste generated from all other sectors which is important for their positive growth potential. In sum, although all sectors of the economy are inter-dependent, it is plausible to argue that the ENR is the most important sector as far as Uganda's national economic growth and peoples' welfare is concerned.

Unfortunately, despite the importance of Uganda's ENR sector, the last two decades have witnessed unprecedented degradation and destruction of the country's environment and natural resources. Uganda's forest area is for instance

⁴ See Background to the Budget 2015/2016.

⁵ Moyini Y, et al (2002). 'The Cost of Environmental Degradation and Loss to Uganda's Economy with Particular Reference to Poverty Eradication,' IUCN Policy Brief No.3, p.3.

⁶ Republic of Uganda (2013). The National Forest Plan 2011/12-2021/22, Ministry of Water and Environment, Kampala, p.6.

⁷ *Ibid*, p.7.

reported to have reduced by 28.5 per cent between 2005 and 2010⁸ and 27 percent between 1990 and 2005.⁹ On average, Uganda loses 90,000 hectares of forest cover annually.¹⁰ Wetland coverage is estimated to have reduced from 32,000 km² in 1999 to 26,308 km² in 2005.¹¹ This is a loss of about 17.8 percent of Uganda's wetland resources in just six years. Overall, the National Environment Management Authority (NEMA) estimates that about 30 per cent of the original wetlands have been converted to other uses.¹² The reasons for wide spread encroachment includes rice cultivation, dairy farming, industrial development, urban settlement, brick-making, sugar-cane plantation, floriculture and horticulture.¹³ Although there are some Government efforts to conserve the wetlands, the speed of developments in and conversion of Uganda's wetlands is higher than that of conservation.¹⁴ This has serious implications.



⁸ UBOS, 2014.

⁹ *Ibid.* See also the National Forest Plan, *supra*, note 6, p. vii.

¹⁰ Republic of Uganda (2015), *Greening Uganda's Economy through Tree Planting and Sustainable Forest Management*, Forestry Sector Support Department, Ministry of Water and Environment, Kampala, p. vii.

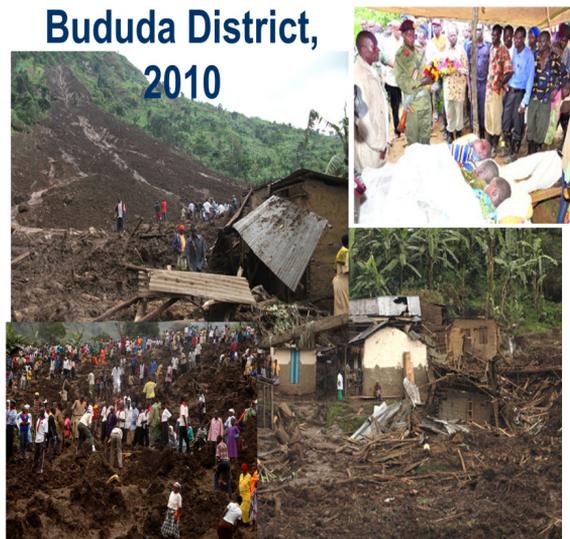
¹¹ Aryamanya-Mugisha H (2011). "20 years of Wetlands Conservation in Uganda – Have Uganda's Wetlands become Wastelands Again?" Paper presented in Kampala on 2 Feb 2011 in commemoration of the World Wetlands Day.

¹² See The Republic of Uganda (2010). *State of the Environment Report for Uganda*. National Environment Management Authority, Kampala, p.80.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

Unfortunately, climate, one of Uganda's most valuable natural resource has also not over the years received the attention it deserves.¹⁵ It is always taken for granted. As a result, the hitherto known beautiful climate is changing and deteriorating in many ways. Climate change and deterioration in Uganda is manifested through the raising temperatures; heat waves; frequent and prolonged droughts; erratic and violent rains; and frequent floods and landslides.¹⁶ The felt effects of climate change so far have included death of people and domestic animals like cattle; displacement of people like what happened in Bududa in 2010; decline in agricultural production and increased food prices; and the decline in hydro-electricity production with its attendant negative consequences to the economy.



Over the years, the levels and quality of Uganda's surface and ground water resources have also been going downward.¹⁷ Some of the main issues leading to the decline in the levels and quality of the water resources include changes in land use, climate variability; land degradation, upstream deforestation, poor watershed management and pollution through waste disposal.¹⁸ Generation of too much waste (from industries and human settlement) and its poor disposal is compromising the quality of the environment further. Waste generation in Uganda today is believed to be higher than the environment can cope with.¹⁹

Overall, the cost of environmental degradation is threatening to outweigh the contribution of the ENR sector to the economy. In 2002, the cost of environmental degradation in Uganda was estimated to be between 4-12 percent of the Gross National Income (GNI).²⁰ Given the high rate of environmental degradation that

¹⁵ Republic of Uganda (2007), Uganda National Adaptation Programmes of Action, Ministry of Water and Environment, Kampala, p. xiii

¹⁶ *Ibid*, pp.11-14.

¹⁷ See State of the Environment Report for Uganda, *Supra*, note 12, pp. 71-77.

¹⁸ *Ibid*, p. 77.

¹⁹ *Ibid*, p.10.

²⁰ Moyini Y, (2002), *supra*, note 5.

has happened in the last two decades, this cost could have doubled by now. Table 1 below shows some examples of the estimated cost of environmental degradation at the macro-economic level in 1999.

Table 1

1	Biodiversity loss	US\$ 506 billion/year
2	Degradation of soil resources	US\$ 225 billion/year
3	Rangeland degradation	US\$ 815 million/year
4	Wetlands encroachment	US\$ 2 billion/year
5	Water hyacinth pollution	US\$ 870 million/year
6	Contamination of water systems	US\$ 38 - 61 billion/year

Source: Emerton and Muramira, 1999

The rate at which Uganda's environmental and natural resources assets are being destroyed and degraded has serious implications for the economy and peoples' welfare. It is associated with loss of biodiversity; loss of economic opportunities especially for the rural poor; decline in agricultural production; insecurity of all forms; displacement of people; and increased costs of certain services (e.g., hydro-electricity and domestic water supply). The degradation and destruction of Uganda's environment and natural resources also threatens the productivity of all the other sectors of the economy. It is therefore important that all Ugandans should do everything in their power to ensure that Uganda's environment and natural resources are conserved and sustainably managed to continue supporting the present and future generations. Unfortunately, Uganda's political parties and political leaders do not often clearly articulate and adequately address ENR issues in their manifestos.²¹ Moving towards the 2016 general elections, this briefing paper is intended to support political parties and other actors to address the major ENR issues in their manifestoes.

²¹ Bainomugisha, A., (2006). 'Political Parties, Political Change and Environmental Governance in Uganda: A Review of Political Parties Manifestos,' ACODE Policy Research Series, No.16, p.2.

3. The Key ENR Issues to Address in the Manifestoes

This section highlights the major issues that political parties and other actors should address in their manifestoes to promote the conservation and sustainable management of Uganda's environment and natural resources. The section also provides some measures that the political parties can take in addressing some of the issues highlighted. As will be noted, many of the issues highlighted in this section and/or their causes are related but for emphasis, they are analysed as separate issues.²²

3.1. More Budgetary Resource Allocation to the ENR Sector

Despite its importance to national growth and peoples' welfare, the ENR sector continues to receive one of the lowest budgetary resource allocations. Marginalisation of the ENR sector with respect to budgetary resource allocation happens at all levels. Poor funding has affected the sector's potential to deliver on many aspects. It has compromised service delivery and is one of the major factors affecting the effective implementation of policies in the sector. Perhaps the best example to illustrate the issue of poor funding of the ENR sector and how it is affecting service delivery resulting into further degradation and destruction of the environment and natural resources is the state of District Forestry Services (DFS).

Under the decentralization policy, many functions and responsibilities with respect to management of the forest resources were devolved to district local governments. In the district local governments, these functions and responsibilities are essentially performed by the DFS.²³ DFS manage about 5000 hectares of local forest reserves and oversee the forests on private lands, which constitute about 60 per cent of Uganda's forests (previously 70%).²⁴ DFS have many functions and responsibilities. These include: managing Local Forest Reserves (LFRs); providing and/or supervision of forestry advisory services; developing supportive bye-laws; collecting of forestry taxes; supporting and/or developing of forest management plans for LFRs, Community and Private Forests; and developing District Forestry Development Plans (DFDP).²⁵ DFS are also charged with the mandate of mainstreaming DFDP in the District Development Plans (DDP); clarifying the role of local governments in management of forest resources on government and private land and building their capacity for the

²² In the main, most of the issues are governance related.

²³ Section 48 of the National Forestry and Tree Planting Act 2003.

²⁴ See National Forest Plan, *supra*, note 6, p. ix.

²⁵ Republic of Uganda, District Forestry Services Handbook, Forestry Sector Support Department, Ministry of Water and Environment, p.2.

management of LFRs; encouraging local governments to devolve responsibility of forest management down to local communities; and promoting innovative approaches to forestry development in planning management and regulation of forestry practices.²⁶ DFS also have the responsibility of growing trees in sensitive areas (such as hillsides, riverbanks and watersheds); and re-investing of forest revenues in the sector.²⁷

Unfortunately, DFS are almost non-functional in the many districts due to poor funding. They are poorly facilitated with respect to operational funds and lack adequate facilities and human resources to effectively execute their mandate. In many districts, several positions in the DFS remain vacant because of lack of funds to recruit personnel. For instance, at the time of preparing this paper, Manafwa has neither forest rangers nor forest guards.²⁸ Many DFOs do not have means of transport and other operational facilities to enable them carry out their mandates effectively. For instance, in Kyenjojo, Lira and Manafwa, DFOs have neither vehicles nor motor cycles. In Mbarara, where the DFS has a vehicle and two motor cycles, they are not used due to lack of funds for fuel and maintenance. Many DFOs rightly complain that without means of transport and operational funds, carrying out their work like supervision and monitoring becomes extremely difficult.²⁹ With the current state of affairs, the DFOs cannot therefore operate effectively. It is therefore not surprising that the performance of DFOs is considered by many stakeholders to be below average.³⁰ This dismal performance by the DFOs has a direct coloration with the current rate of deforestation and forest degradation.

To ensure the conservation and sustainable management of Uganda's environment and natural resources, political parties and actors should therefore commit to improve funding of the ENR sector at all levels. Adequate resources should be provided to the district natural resources departments to effectively carry out their mandates. Adequate resources are also needed for climate change financing and restoration of forests, wetlands and other degraded ecosystems. Enough resources are also needed to fund policy research and data collection to generate the necessary information to inform policy debate and design; and guide planning, implementation, monitoring and measurement of impacts of the different interventions. Adequate funds are also needed to support scientific research to generate appropriate technologies and other innovations to promote the conservation and sustainable management of the environment and natural

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ Informal interview with Michael Mwangale, DFO, Manafwa district (22/10/2015).

²⁹ See Reports of the Forest Governance Fora organized by ACODE in Fort-portal and Masindi in 2014 and 2015 respectively.

³⁰ See National Forest Plan, *supra*, note 6, p.22.

resources. Without adequate funding, important initiatives such as the recently adopted “Greening Uganda’s Economy through massive tree planting and sustainable forest management” are all bound to fail.

3.2. Strategy to Improve Governance of the ENR Sector

Although there is some noticeable improvement in the governance of the ENR sector, there is still a lot that needs to be done to ensure transparency, accountability, effective public participation, efficiency and quality administration in the Sector. Weak governance is still one of the most pressing challenges facing Uganda’s ENR sector.³¹ Poor governance of Uganda’s ENR sector is manifested in many ways including limited access to information;³² institutional mandate overlaps; poor institutional coordination between and among the Ministry of Water and Environment (MWE), Lead Agencies and Local Governments;³³ lack of transparency in allocation of land for tree planting in forest reserves; and political interference and influence peddling.

Weak governance of the ENR Sector is accelerating the degradation and depletion of Uganda’s natural resources thus threatening the lives and livelihood security of many Ugandans. Any serious political party or actor seeking power in the forthcoming elections should therefore have a clear strategy on how to address the governance issues confronting the ENR sector. It is recommended that part of this strategy should include harmonization of the roles and mandate of the different ENR institutions, development of indicators for assessing governance in the ENR sector, and commitment for Uganda to subscribe to and implement the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI).

3.3. Strategy to Address the Rampant Environmental Crimes and Illegalities

Another critical issue that political parties need to address is the rampant crimes and illegalities in the ENR sector. Despite Government efforts, the last two decades have witnessed unprecedented increase in the number of crimes and illegalities in the ENR sector. These crimes and illegalities have accelerated the degradation and depletion of Uganda’s environmental assets and natural resources including forests, wetlands and fisheries. Crimes and illegalities in the ENR sector are perhaps most pronounced in the forest sub-sector. Some of the major crimes and illegalities in this sub-sector include: corruption and embezzlement; illegal degazetment of forest reserves; encroachment on forest reserve land; illegal timber trade and smuggling; and charcoal burning and trade

³¹ See ENR Sector Good Governance Action Plan 2012-2015. See also generally the National Development Plans I and II.

³² For example Government’s reluctance to disclose the oil production sharing agreements.

³³ A recent example of this challenge is when NEMA set out to enforce the ban on polythene bags and the MWE stopped it in a questionable manner.

without following the legal procedures. The increase in crimes and illegalities in the ENR sector is mainly as a result of corruption, inadequate capacity of forest management institutions resulting in poor supervision and monitoring, weak inter-agency collaboration and the near break-down of law enforcement in the sector.

Political parties and other political actors should therefore provide clear measures they intend to undertake to address the challenge of rampant crimes and illegalities. One of the measures that political parties should consider taking is to institute legal reforms aimed at increasing penalties for the different ENR crimes. Most penalties for committing ENR crimes are not strong enough. As the authors of the 2001 State of World's Forests report rightly argue, penalties can only act as deterrents if they are heavy enough and commensurate with the economic value of the offence.³⁴ Additionally, political parties should consider instituting reward mechanisms for persons and communities that fight/ report ENR crimes and illegalities. It is also highly recommended that political parties should commit to strengthen the Environmental Protection Police Unit (EPPU) for effective monitoring and detection of crimes and illegalities in the sector. The EPPU should be strengthened in terms of human resource, equipment, training and operational funds.

3.4. Strategy to Promote Local Participation and Equitable Sharing of Benefits

Participation in and equitable sharing of benefits is internationally recognised as key in ensuring the conservation and sustainable management of the environment and natural resources. If transparently and equitably shared in a participatory manner, the benefits from the conservation efforts provide incentives to local communities and other actors to conserve and sustainably manage the natural resources. Local participation and equitable sharing of benefits is also important in preventing and minimizing potential conflicts in the ENR sector.

To-date, Uganda does not have a comprehensive policy on benefit sharing in the ENR sector. Neither does it have a clear mechanism for rewarding persons that maintain and manage environmental assets on their private land that benefit a larger community. Although there are some benefit-sharing mechanisms in the ENR sector e.g., under the Collaborative Forest Management regime, many of them are not effective and do not address new developments such as benefits under REDD+. Participation and benefit-sharing in other ENR sub-sectors like mining remains highly contested. The draft local content policy which is supposed to govern issues of local participation in the oil and gas sector

³⁴ FAO (2001) State of the World's Forests, Rome, available on <http://www.fao.org/docrep/003/y0900e/y0900e08.htm> accessed on 27/05/2015

is yet to be completed. Although under corporate social responsibility the oil companies are implementing some projects to benefit the local communities, the communities are missing out on the meaningful benefits that they would get through meaningful participation in the industry.

It is therefore important that political parties and other actors vying for power provide a clear strategy on local participation and benefit-sharing in the ENR sector. The strategy should clearly identify all possible benefits in the ENR sub sectors; the eligible beneficiaries; and provide for clear and transparent benefit-sharing arrangements that ensure equity. The institutional framework to ensure that the benefits are equitably shared and only among the rightful stakeholders at the right time should also be clearly spelt out.

3.5. Strategy to Prevent and Manage Conflicts in the ENR Sector

The last two decades have witnessed heightened conflicts in Uganda's ENR Sector that threaten to diminish the country's ENR and their contribution to national growth, development and poverty reduction. Conflicts in Uganda's ENR sector include conflicts over water resources due to water scarcity; conflicts connected with encroachment on forest reserves, wetlands and national parks; land conflicts between individuals and between individuals and the state etc. Many of these conflicts are partly as a result of increased population pressure which has caused greater competition for the diminishing resources. It is predicated that the discovery and exploitation of oil and high-value minerals is most likely to trigger new or escalate existing conflicts.

Although Government has put in place some conflict management mechanisms in the ENR sector, they are not effective, at least as seen from the increase in the nature and number of disputes in the sector. Moreover new developments in the ENR Sector such as REDD+ and carbon credits are also likely to lead to new types of conflicts altogether that could not be effectively handled by existing conflict resolution mechanisms. Political parties and actors vying for power in the coming elections are therefore urged to develop a holistic and integrated strategy for preventing and managing conflicts in the ENR sector. The strategy should promote alternative dispute settlement and provide effective remedies.

3.6. Strategy to Restore Uganda's Degraded Ecosystems

As earlier mentioned, the last two decades have witnessed perhaps the worst degradation and destruction of Uganda's environment and natural resources especially the forests, wetlands and water resources. This has resulted in the loss of economic opportunities especially for the rural poor; destruction of biodiversity habitats and associated ecological processes; increased soil erosion and siltation of the water bodies which has affected their ecological, social and

economic functions; and the adverse effects of climate change characterized by raising temperature; frequent and prolonged droughts; erratic rains; and frequent floods and landslides. The felt effects of climate change so far have included death of people and domestic animals like cattle; displacement of people; decline in agricultural production and increased food insecurity; and the decline in hydro-electricity production with its attendant consequences.



It is therefore important that political parties and other actors seeking power in the 2016 general elections provide a clear strategy on restoring Uganda's degraded ecosystems. Some of the key ecosystems that require restoration include wetlands, forests, lake shores, and river banks. Although the current Government has taken some measures and is implementing some initiatives aimed at restoring the degraded ecosystems, its strategy is not clear and it is slow at enforcing its decisions in this area e.g., the decision to nullify all land titles in wetlands issued in the last ten years. The end result is that the rate of restoration of the degraded ecosystems is not satisfactory.

The strategy for ecosystems restoration should build on the current initiatives like Greening Uganda's Economy through Tree Planting and Sustainable Management of Forests. It should have clear and realistic targets for the short and long term

and should have a robust monitoring and evaluation framework. Some of the measures to include in this strategy include opening up of the boundaries of wetlands and forest reserves; demarcating new wetlands and forest reserves; and nullification of all land titles in forest reserves, wetlands, river banks and lake shores.

3.7. Development and Effective Implementation of ENR Laws and Policies

Another yet biggest challenge facing the ENR sector is the very slow pace at which policies and laws aimed at ensuring the conservation and sustainable management of the environment and natural resources are developed and implemented. Good governance of the ENR sector requires Government to develop and effectively implement progressive policies, laws and other measures within reasonable time. The more time Government takes developing and/ or implementing the progressive legal and policy measures, the more Uganda's environmental assets get degraded and depleted.

Regrettably, in many cases, Government is very slow in developing and implementing ENR laws and policies. Two examples will suffice to illustrate this point. The first example is about the unreasonable time Government has taken to develop regulations for the effective implementation of the National Forestry and Tree Planting Act. Almost 12 years now since its enactment, the major regulations supposed to guide the implementation of the National Forestry and Tree Planting Act have never been put in place. As a result, a number of progressive provisions in that legal instrument e.g., Section 40 which establishes the Tree Fund have never been implemented. The second example is about the Soils policy. To address issues affecting the quality of Uganda's soils, Government commendably decided to develop a soils policy. Over a decade now, the process of developing this policy is still on-going.

As we move towards the 2016 elections, it is important that political parties and other actors commit to fast-track the finalisation and implementation of ENR policies, laws and regulations. Among the policies and laws that need to be fast-tracked include the local content policy, the soils policy, the forestry and tree planting regulations.

4. Conclusion

Although Government has put in place different measures to ensure the conservation and sustainable use of our environment and natural resources, a lot remains to be done to address the current challenges. The 2016 general elections provide opportunity for the current Government, political parties in opposition, and other actors to rethink their policies and strategies concerning the environment and natural resources in light of current challenges and new developments. For the enormous contribution that the ENR Sector makes to national growth and development, and to poverty reduction and peoples' welfare, the National Resistance Movement (NRM), opposition political parties and actor political actors should prioritize and adequately address ENR issues in their manifestoes. This policy briefing paper has highlighted some of major issues in the ENR sector that need to be addressed and provided some recommendations on how some of them can be addressed in the manifestoes of the different actors. It remains to be seen how the manifestoes will address the issues highlighted in this paper.

**May the political party and political leaders with
the best measures to address ENR issues win.**

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