



# PRESS REVIEW

John Paul II Justice and Peace Centre

*"Faith Doing Justice"*

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Plot 2468 Nsereko Road-Nsambya  
P.O. Box 31853, Kampala-Uganda  
Tel: +256414267372  
Mobile: 0783673588  
Email: [jp2justice.director@gmail.com](mailto:jp2justice.director@gmail.com)  
[Joshua.mutebe@jp2jpc.org](mailto:Joshua.mutebe@jp2jpc.org)  
Website: [www.jp2jpc.org](http://www.jp2jpc.org)

## THEMATIC AREAS

- Christian Reflection
- Education
- Environment
- Health
- Economy
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- Politics
- Youth

## CHRISTIAN REFLECTION

### **"Connecting People to Nature"**

Torture of our fellow citizens by the police personnel reported about in these last months shocked many of us! Moreover, the silence over it now is as much disturbing! We should not keep quiet. We should add our voices to those who continue to condemn it and demand for investigations and immediate prosecution of police officers and other individuals involved in these tortures.

Yet, there is another victim of torture in our country and this is our *Mother Earth*! The torturers this time are not the 'police personnel' but you and me! All of us should be alarmed by the sad news concerning the destruction of our forests and wetlands! Statistics show that Uganda's forest cover, which stood at five million hectares in 1990, greatly dwindled to about three million hectares in 2005! It further shows that the country loses 90, 000 hectares of forest cover every year to meet especially fuel needs. For the wetlands, statistics show that its coverage drastically reduced from 16.6 hectares in 1994 to 8.2 hectares in 2016! The recent report on the 'mining sector' in Uganda and its threat to the environment is as much alarming as the above statistics!

The theme for 2017 World Day of Environment is: **Connecting People to Nature**. This is just the opposite of what we are doing now to the *Pearl of Africa*. Our respective cultures and religions have profound values and wisdom which could help us in our reflections on this theme. Let us delve into this wisdom not only to save our *Mother Earth*, but also to save ourselves and those to come after us.

## EDUCATION

**Museveni advocates for skills-oriented education.** President Yoweri Museveni has said the government is determined to transform the education system into a skills-oriented education as opposed to what he described as theoretical training inherited from colonialists.

**ICT ministry wants partnerships with technology students.** The ministry of information, communications & technology has embarked on a campaign to partner with students doing IT-related courses in universities. The partnership will help the ministry and its experts prepare students for the specific skills needed in the job market which is fast growing.

**Quality education key to prosperity said first lady.** The first lady and minister of education and sports, has asked district education officers and inspectors of schools to ensure that the country has effective and efficient teaching standards. The state minister for higher education thanked the first lady for bridging the gap between the teachers and the ministry.

**Government to rehabilitate primary and secondary schools.** The government has committed to rehabilitate a long list of dilapidated primary and secondary schools with tertiary institutions across the country under a drive to improve the quality of education.

**Experts want fees increased.** Education experts want the government to stop blocking tuition fees increments in public universities. The deputy governor of Bank of Uganda advanced the urgency of increasing tuition fees in Uganda's public universities, arguing that the current fees structure cannot deliver quality education.

**Opendi calls on parents to value girl's education.** Sarah Achieng Opendi, the health minister for general duties, has called on parents to value girl's education and stop sending them into early marriages

## ENVIRONMENT

**Uganda's forest and wetlands have borne the brunt of destruction despite existing laws.** The status of the environment in Uganda presents a great challenge as people have continually destroyed the country's key ecosystems.

**NEMA orders institute to vacate wetland.** The National Environmental Management Authority (NEMA) has directed Uganda Christian Institute (UCI) in Lira to vacate and demolish part of the institute that is said to have been extended into a wetland.

**Over 150,000 cattle die in Ntoroko due to drought.** Pastoralists in Ntoroko district are in panic following the death of over 150,000 heads of cattle due to the prolonged drought which hit the district.

**Wetland encroachers must vacate by July, says govt.** all people who have encroached on wetlands in the country have been given up to July to voluntarily vacate them or be evicted. "it is a presidential directive that must be taken as a policy and there is no compromise on that," the state minister for environment, said.

**Tororo launches tree-planting campaign.** The water ministry has launched a tree planting campaign in Tororo to restore depleted forests. The Chief Administrative Officer said the programme was timely and will play a significant role in adding beauty to the district.

**NEMA shifts goalposts on plastic carrier bags.** The National Environment Management Authority (NEMA) has stopped enforcing the law banning plastic bags and instead resorted to creating public awareness. The deputy executive director of ACODE said there is provision of incentives to manufacturers of paper bags so that they are not more expensive than the plastic bags.

## HEALTH

**Circumcision not solution to HIV/AIDS.** The state minister for health has blasted the way men are jostling to undergo nationwide safe male circumcision (SMC), which she said is not the permanent, lasting solution to HIV/AIDSs

**Public health facilities poorly managed-experts.** According to the Red Cross cluster manager, there is poor service delivery in most health centres characterised by poor infrastructure and irregular drug supplies.

**Midwives want training to handle complications.** Senior midwives at Mulago referral hospital want training in handling emergencies and other complicated conditions related to pregnancy and childbirth.

**Mothers warned against traditional birth attendants.** The medical director of Nyenga hospital said over the years, they have been struggling with pregnant mothers who preferred going to traditional birth attendants instead of qualified midwives. He therefore discouraged pregnant mothers in Buikwe district from giving birth in the hands of traditional birth attendants

**Uganda on high alert over Ebola.** The government is on alert to prevent any possible outbreak of the Ebola haemorrhagic fever. According to the ministry of health spokesperson, the government has tightened surveillance along the border with the DR Congo.

**Govt to stop funding poorly performing health centres.** The government will stop funding health centres that perform poorly in service delivery, the permanent secretary in the ministry of health has said.

**Trump increases HIV/Aids funding to Uganda.** The United States (US) government has increased its assistance to HIV treatment and prevention in Uganda by about shs40b from last year. The increment comes at a time when cabinet has just proposed to allocate two per cent of collections from taxes on alcoholic and beverages to finance the Aids Trust Fund (ATF).

**Kadaga opposes charging patients from Mulago hospital.** Speaker of parliament Rebecca Kadaga has opposed a proposal by government to have citizens pay for services at the refurbished Mulago National Referral hospital saying the move will sentence majority poor to death.

## ECONOMY

**Coffee, tea prices to fall this year-world bank.** Coffee, tea and cocoa prices could fall by more than six per cent this year due to greater supply according to the World Bank

**Districts to get sh557b road equipment soon.** The government is to distribute new road construction equipment, purchased under a grant from Japan to 115 districts countrywide. Workers minister said the new road equipment will be used by districts and other government agencies for road maintenance works.

**Govt to support local ICT innovations.** The government has pledged to promote the 'Buy Uganda build Uganda' policy, by supporting local innovations in the information and communication technology (ICT) sector.

**Govt scraps power connection fees.** The government has scrapped power connection fees, making it easy for Ugandans to access electricity in their households, commercial enterprise and industries.

**Government told to put in place an agricultural finance policy.** Government has been urged to urgently put in place an agricultural finance policy to help farmers transform subsistence farming to commercial agriculture. The Uganda agribusiness alliance chairperson, said access to agricultural finance remains a major challenge in Uganda.

**Sh60b set for coffee seedlings.** The government has set aside sh60b in the next financial year for the purchase of coffee seedlings. The move was revealed by the director of budget in the finance ministry.

**Savings schemes get 10-year tax exemption.** Christmas came early for small-scale saving schemes, when parliament waived taxes on Savings and Credit Co-operative Organisations (SACCOS) for the next 10 years. The MPs say since SACCOS are the life link of household growth, they should not be taxed so as to bolster the saving culture.

## RELIGION AND SOCIETY

**Christians raise shs20m for Teso hunger victims.** Christians in Kampala raised shs20m in cash and four tonnes of maize flour in the first of many relief efforts for famine ravaged families in Teso sub-region.

**Police give emergency helplines for Namugongo martyrs.** The police have released emergency helpline to medical teams and security officers in case of emergency throughout the entire martyr's day. The Kampala metropolitan police commander, issued police helplines 999 or 112 for pilgrims and others for easy and quick response to emergency.

**Religious leaders call for probe into police torture.** Religious leaders have called for investigations and immediate prosecution of police officers and other individuals involved in torturing suspects across the country. The clerics also appealed to government to consider reviving and strengthening local councils.

**Tree planting should be precondition for marriage, Kadaga tells clerics.** Religious leaders should start asking couples to present proof of having planted at least 15 trees on their wedding day before they are confirmed as husband and wife.

**Bishop decries crime.** The bishop of Mityana Anglican diocese has condemned the rising cases of crime in the diocese. Kazimba blamed the increase in crime on lazy people who do not want to work hard and yet they want to live a good life.

**Donations will not compromise our faith-bishop.** Madi and west Nile bishop Charles Collins Andaku has said vehicle donations to bishops by the state will not compromise the work of church leaders in the country.

## POLITICS

**Ugandans calls for smaller parliament.** Out of the 1,200 Ugandans interviewed on proposals to improve parliament and elections in the country, 82% said they want the number of MPs reduced to lessen the financial burden on the taxpayers.

**MPs' gratuity used to buy cars.** The parliamentary commission members came under fire for reportedly diverting MPs gratuity to pay for their cars. The committee chairperson, also faulted the commission for diverting the funds yet the cars were supposed to be provided by the government.

**Parliamentary committee uncovers rot in UTL.** Despite owning 31% in Uganda Telecom Limited (UTL), the government of Uganda has never received any dividend from its shares. Parliamentary investigations into UTL followed a November 17, 2016 statement to parliament by the Budairi East MP who presented a report to parliament.

**MPs want SIM card registration extended.** Parliament has urged government to consider extending the deadline for the verification and validation of telephone SIM Cards for up to one year. The UCC executive director had issued a directive to telecommunication service providers to verify all SIM card subscribers.

**Stop giving free seeds to famers, MPs tell govt.** Members of parliament have asked the government to stop supplying farmers free farm inputs under the Operation Wealth Creation (OWC) project, saying this encourages dependency and is not sustainable.

**FDC demands list of jailed criminals.** The police spokesperson, has lashed out at activists agitating to get the list of suspects in police custody. The senior police officer explained that when someone has been arrested, he or she is still a suspect, undergoing investigation and therefore society will tag them as criminals.

**Muntu, Mafabi declare interest in FDC presidency.** Three people, including the outgoing Forum for Democratic Change (FDC) president have confirmed their interest to compete for the top seat of the FDC party. The party's deputy publicist said the doors are still open to all those who have interest in the position.

**Democratic Party to recruit more women.** The Democratic Party's (DP) National Executive Committee (NEC) is in the process of completing its 2016-2021 strategic plan, where party's constitution will assign the DP women organisation two main roles. These will be to mobilise the women for the party's activities and also to recruit other women into the party.

**Kadaga rejects MPs demands for increase in allowances.** Demand by chairpersons of parliament committees to motivate their work by increasing their allowances has been roundly rejected by speaker of parliament. She said demands for motivation are not possible because the parliament commission allocated a hefty budget to facilitate committee work.

## YOUTH

**Bureaucracy hinders access to youth development funds.** Youth who had gathered at Bbunga Adventists church in Kampala decried the many requirements and prolonged process of acquiring development funds. The assistant commissioner in charge of youth affairs at the gender ministry said the process is long due to the need to ascertain the rightful beneficiaries.

**Youth to learn about Europe, scholarships at EU conference.** Ugandans who aspire to study in Europe on the Erasmus Mundus scholarship have got an opportunity to know more about the programme and listen to some of the beneficiaries sharing their experiences. According to Schmidt the EU ambassador, the programme is not only intended to equip students in other countries with global expertise, but also to know each others cultures.

**Centenary bank to administer shs12.5b youth fund.** The government has signed a memorandum of understanding with centenary bank to administer funds worth shs12.5b to the youth beginning this financial year. The new fund will cater for youth seeking to borrow money on an individual basis instead of groups as it has been the case.

**Youth MPs want fund for exportation of labour.** Youth MPs are pushing for the enactment of a law for the establishment of the labour export fund to solve challenges associated with labour exportation

**Embrace technology, youth entrepreneurs told.** Youth nursing ambitions of becoming entrepreneurs should embrace and incorporate technology into every facet of their ventures if they are to make any headway in this technologically savvy market. The DOT Uganda country programme manager, advised start-up entrepreneurs to ensure that their businesses have social impact lest they risk wasting their capital after the market fails to respond.

**Ugandan youth to benefit from East Africa youth programme.** Over 15,000 youth between the age of 15 and 24 will be equipped with skills to start agriculture-related businesses under the East African Youth Inclusion Programme (EAYIP)

**1,000 youth to benefit from shs16b EU employment fund.** This European Union (EU) funded project will benefit 1,000 youth and implemented in the slums of Kisenyi, Katwe and Kabalagala by the International Organisation for Migration (IOM).