



The United Kingdom has suspended all aid to Uganda with immediate effect

We should take the President's advice on environment seriously



Edwin Muhumuza

On November 3, President Yoweri Museveni invited members of Youth Go Green Campaign for a one-day meeting at State House Entebbe. The President presented a paper on environmental degradation on the case of Uganda. The meeting was also attended by environmental experts and the environment minister who shared ideas and forged a way forward for protecting Uganda's environment.

The President said Uganda faces categories of environmental threats and they include, global threats created by greed of developed countries that generate greenhouse gases such as water vapour methane, regional threats as a result of drying of wetlands by converting swamps into rice fields and threats involving destruction of vegetation. These result into silting of lakes and rivers and cause flooding, for example in the Teso region. Lack of electricity may also lead to environmental degradation. With inadequate

electricity, the population uses too much wood for fuel.

« How would you feel if you were kept in a box without air?

Uganda is currently using 41 million cubic metres of wood per annum. This is estimated to be about 45,000 megawatts of electricity. Therefore, to save the biomass,

Uganda has to be fully industrialised. If not, the population will keep on encroaching on forests and wetlands.

Increasing environmental challenges have caused a rise in concerns and efforts to lessen the adverse effects of human activities on the environment. The rise in sea level, deforestation and reducing natural resources are the most visible examples. How would you feel if you were kept in a box without air? The earth has been living like this for years. And the sad part is, day by day it keeps getting worse. As if air pollution was not enough, we have impurities that pollute our water.

Deforestation further adds to the problem. We are the ones who are responsible for this mess. However, it is never too late to repair the damage.

The positive side is that more people today are emphasising the need to go green and help save the environment. The cause has been taken up by corporate giants as a part of their corporate-social responsibility programmes.

This has increased public awareness about the environment. It is time to undertake measures that are effective in saving the environment.

The writer is an Environmentalist

Getting along in the divided States of America

She was conversational and likable and from Ohio and we sat and talked about the culture wars in the Divided States of America.

She told me how hard it was to pull into her Ohio church parking lot and see all the bumper-stickers for US president Barack Obama. "And you just knew who these people are," she told me before she said - I suspect for the sake of her own faith and peace of mind - that "You just have to leave it at the door."

He was also a good conversationalist, also from Ohio and, like the woman I had previously listened to, he also had views. And although they were different from hers, he too had a certain exasperation and frustration in his voice.

The problem, or at least one of them, he told me, is our fragmented postmodern times. Americans are among those who can choose their church, or lack of, or favourite sports team or television show as easily as their favourite icecream, and then live in a bubble of like-minded people who simply reinforce what they already believe to be right or wrong or of any value.

The result, especially in a political system with just two parties, is that more and more Americans simply cannot be bothered to listen to one another. "The view is that if your opinion isn't set in stone, then there's something wrong with you," he told me.

Of course there is more to it, more nuance and complexity, and in recent times I've listened to several other American expatriates in Uganda reflect on what one called the new "concern and hysteria"



Thomas Froese

in his homeland since its November 6 election. But it is these two from Ohio, a state with a sort of poli-cultural Berlin Wall running through it, that spoke to something deeper in me, something deeper, maybe, in all of us, including

« Americans can look past the divisiveness of guns and taxes

Africans who have seen their own share of pain from the drawing of difficult boundaries. No, choosing to live in suspicion with your doors locked and curtains

pulled is hardly an American phenomena. It is just another form of tribalism, another symptom of fallen human nature.

So now we all watch these Divided States, not just to see if their president will go coatless in the winter cold or say poetic words in his second inauguration. We wait for after all of that to see if Americans can look past the divisiveness of guns and taxes and immigration and healthcare and you name the blue or red anger, to see if they can recreate themselves in their historic values. Because if America ever had greatness, if it ever was a unique republic to emulate, it's largely because it has been a nation united with rather different peoples and regions and perspectives.

It did not build that with clichéd rhetoric and meaningless labels: black or white, right or left, religious or secular to name a few. It did it by recognising something more relevant, that any person has a deep need for both freedom and love, something divinely placed in anyone as far back as Eden.

Abraham Lincoln, the great emancipator of a far bloodier American civil war, the one that got him martyred on Good Friday, would say something similar. Getting along is not only the great political challenge of his time, or this time. It is the great personal challenge of any time. No, Americans, like any of us, do not have any high calling to agreement. Just to peace.

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