

The Ministry of Environment, Rwanda Environment Management Authority and Rwanda Water Resources Board are encouraging all Rwandans, especially the private sector, to protect and conserve the country's wetlands to ensure they fulfil their role in flood mitigation, water storage, carbon sequestration, and can provide a habitat for rich biodiversity and space for people to connect with nature. The call comes as Rwanda joins the rest of the world to celebrate World Wetlands Day.

The theme for this year's World Wetlands Day is *Wetlands and Water*, drawing attention to the vital role and value of wetlands in sustaining water resources. Not only do wetlands store water, they also filter pollutants leaving fresh water that is safe to drink. Wetlands are valuable ecosystems on which more than one billion people rely for income generating activities and where 40% of the world's species live and breed.

*"Wetlands are source of wealth for all Rwandans. Whether we rely on wetlands for water, recreation or agriculture, we each have a role to play in their protection. Let's all be water wise users by reporting illegal activities, applying environment friendly fertilisers and pesticides in wetlands and ensuring all commercial users have a valid water permit for the water they extract. Together, we can ensure our wetlands are healthy and full of life,"* said Dr Jeanne d'Arc Mujawamariya, Minister of Environment.

Rwanda is marking World Wetlands Day with a virtual public discussion on *Wetlands and Water*. The event brings together experts to share the country's success in rehabilitating wetlands, water resources management challenges, the role of solutions drawn from nature and how the private sector can contribute to wetland restoration and be responsible water users.

The webinar will also feature a presentation on the Rwanda Urban Development Project II (RUDPII) that is intended to restore urban wetlands in the City of Kigali, such as the former industrial park in Gikondo. The project is part of the Global Environment Facility's Sustainable Cities Impact programme which supports cities pursuing integrated urban planning that delivers global benefits. The project will improve flood control and management in Kigali, protect biodiversity and natural capital through vegetated surfaces and urban wetland management, increase carbon stocks and additional sequestration from restored and rehabilitated wetlands, accelerate Kigali's vision of becoming a green, sustainable city, and encourage private ecotourism investments.

On World Wetlands Day, private sector water users are requested to apply for water permits to ensure they are in compliance with the law determining the use and management of water resources in Rwanda.