

Makerere launches centre for environmental research

By Agnes Nantambi

Added 21st September 2019 08:57 PM

The center will be overseen by Sweden's EfD secretariat under a special unit at the School of business, economics and law at the University of Gothenburg Sweden.



L-R Prof Jonny Mugisha the Dean of the college of agriculture and environmental sciences giving information to the deputy Vice chancellor Makerere University in charge of academics Umar Kakumba while the Kenyana counterpart is looking on after the launch of the centre at Makerere. Photo by Agnes Nantambi

ENVIRONMENT

KAMPALA - Makerere University has launched an Environment for Development Initiative Centre (EfD) to

promote research in environment-related issues.

With funding from the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA, the centre is being coordinated under the college of Business and Management Sciences (COBMS) together with the College of Agriculture and Environmental Sciences (CAES)

The center will be overseen by Sweden's EFD secretariat under a special unit at the School of Business, economics and law at the University of Gothenburg Sweden.

The centre Director Prof. Edward Baale during its launch at Makerere stressed that environmental challenges in Uganda are responsible for climate change which has translated into food production issues with no research being conducted.

The centre he said will also act as centre of excellence for improved environmental-related researches which will help the government to come up with policies that will guide the different strategies for intervention.

“Its vision is to become a hub for quality training, research and policy engagement in environmental economics and development in Africa and beyond, “he said.

It will also provide high-quality policy-relevant research, graduate training support, policy engagement and outreach in the realm of environment and developmental management and natural resource utilization for sustainable development.

“Environment is holding all the production process of the country. Agriculture and other production processes of the economy

depends on the environment, therefore we need to design policies that are going to preserve the environment for a long time so that livelihood is being supported by the environment. Without the environment the livelihood is also a waste, “he stated.

Among the priority areas the centre will be looking at include, agriculture for sustainable development, climate change and research for innovative approaches to uphold sustainable development.

He said that through collaboration with other centers, the university will form a critical mass of researches to engage in answering critical environmental and natural resources related questions.

The deputy vice-chancellor Academics Prof.Umar Kakumba said the centre is a great milestone that Makerere has registered.

“There is a great role that has to be played by universities as centers of research because we can cease to exist if we don’t address environmental challenges in our country, “he said.

He observed that Uganda being the 15th country globally to host the centre, it will help in promoting collaboration between the other universities where the centre already exists.

Pro Kakumba believes that the centre will be very pertinent in promoting issues of tourism and livelihood development.

Prof Jonny Mugisha the dean school of Agriculture said that in sub-Saharan Africa, Environmental challenges are blamed on poor agricultural practices.

“We have destroyed all the habitats for natural organisms; we have polluted all the water sources which has worsened governance of natural resources, “he said.

He said the centre will help to uplift the deteriorating environment once policy direction has been boosted.

Ronald Kagwa the Manager production Trade and tourism at the National Planning Authority NPA congratulated Makerere over being selected as one of the 15 centers to host EfD in the world.

“Your selection attests to the quality and improved image of the university, ‘he said.

He reiterated that the centre has the potential to help NPA to contribute to addressing some of the research gaps in the environment and natural resource planning and sustainable development in general.

He revealed that a midterm review of the NDP11 indicated poor performance on sustainability indicators, for example, the national forest cover declined from 14% in 2015/16 to 9.5% in 2018/19 against the NDP 11 target of 18% and a vision target of 24% by 2040 while the wetland cover fell to 10% in the same period against the ND11 target of 15%.

This he said implies that economic growth was obtained through unsustainable exploitation of our natural resources base.

“As Uganda transitions to a green economy as alluded in its green growth development strategy, the role of applied research, science,

technology, and innovation cannot be overstated, “he added

He said that as they roll out the NDP 111 whose strategic focus is on natural resource led industrialization, a few questions will have to be answered through research.