



Press Release – For Immediate Release
Rubavu | 23 March 2017

Queen’s Baton joins Tree Planting initiative in Sebeya buffer zone

Rubavu, 23rd, March, 2017-The Ministry of Natural Resources (MINIRENA) and its Rwanda Water and Forests Authority (RWFA) in partnership with the Rwanda Olympic and Sports Committee (RNOSC), Water for Growth Rwanda (W4GR), the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), District of Rubavu on Thursday, March, 23rd 2017, extends the festivity of the National water, forests and meteorology days to Rubavu District in Sebeya river catchment.

The celebration is part of the two-weeklong activities that started from 13th March to end on 25th March, 2017 under the Kinyarwanda theme “*Amazi ni ubuzima, tuyabungabunge, dutunganya ayakoreshejwe, dutera amashyamba, dukoresha amakuru y’iteganyagihe.*” which encompasses the message on the interdependence between the protection and sustainable development of water resources, planting trees and role of using weather forecast information to improve decision making.

In this context, the Ministry and its partners have joined residents in Sebeya catchment today to raise more awareness on importance of Sebeya river towards economic, social and ecosystem development and call for planting more trees in the buffer zone of the river “bearing in mind that we are protecting the river which plays a crucial role in the socio-economic development for the catchment inhabitants as well as playing our role in the conservation of Nature to bolster the cooperation of nature, environmental, leisure, sport and tourism”.

Apart from the tree planting for the common cause, the event also featured an exciting marathon alongside with the warm welcome of Queen’s Baton Relay to Rwanda in Rubavu District as part of its continued relay around the Commonwealth member states in the run-up to the 2018 Commonwealth Games that will be held on Gold Coast in Queensland, Australia on April 4-15.

Vincent de Paul Kabalisa, Head of the Integrated Water Resources Management Department of RWFA says “*This is a worthy occasion to ask the catchment communities including local population, private companies, miners, inhabitants and local administration to play an active role in the sustainable management of the Sebeya catchment by protecting the river banks from erosion.*”

Charles Karangwa, country representative of the IUCN adds “*We are very happy that the Olympic committee together with the commonwealth brought the Olympic torch here today as we build the Rwanda restoration champions. This means a lot to our efforts to invest in sustainable*



management of the catchment ecosystem and the entire landscapes, green leisure and Tourism. It also continues to harness the efforts of Ministry of Natural Resources in restoring degraded lands and forest thus achieve the Bonn challenge targets to restore 2 million hectares of degraded lands and forests by 2020”

In 2016 the International Olympic committee signed an agreement with the IUCN to support the Candidate Cities for the 2024 Olympic Games on sustainability and conservation matters related to their candidatures.

Karangwa says: *“This is a very important landmark towards the fulfillment of the conservation agreement we signed with the Olympic committee in 2016.”*

To this point, Louise Martin, the head of the Queen Baton Relay which arrived in Rwanda on 22nd March, revealed *“We have chosen to bring the Queen’s baton in this catchment, especially here in Rubavu, to appreciate your effort in providing nature based solutions to green Rwanda and show our commitment in integrating the biodiversity and conservation of nature”*

Sebeya Catchment is blessed with rich natural resources and abundant rainfall. Despite the risks that the rains pose through flooding, soil erosion, and landslides, the positive impact of the high rainfall is that agriculture and natural ecosystems are very productive.

Moreover, the river Sebeya provides good opportunities for hydropower, water supply to households, farms and industries

Ebel Smidt, Team leader of Water for Growth Rwanda states: *“Bringing together the population and different organizations in protecting the river sebeya and its catchments is the core of successful watershed and landscape restoration. This event shows that we can do it. Dufatanye mu mihigo”*

Water for Growth Rwanda is currently implementing a project to combat erosion and flooding through coordinated planning in the Sebeya catchment.

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