



MINISTRY OF TOURISM, WILDLIFE AND ANTIQUITIES

PRESS STATEMENT BY THE MINISTER OF TOURISM, WILDLIFE AND ANTIQUITIES ON SUSPECTED FRAUD USING THE GORILLA AND CHIMPANZEE PERMIT BOOKING SYSTEM AT UGANDA WILDLIFE AUTHORITY (UWA)

In recent days, the media has been awash with news regarding suspected fraud in using the gorilla and chimpanzee permit booking system at Uganda Wildlife Authority (UWA). UWA is a statutory agency under the Ministry of Tourism, Wildlife and Antiquities (MTWA). MTWA has legal obligation of providing overall oversight and supervision of UWA as enshrined under sections 4 and 5(4) of the Uganda Wildlife Act 2019.

As a supervisory entity, MTWA is greatly concerned about the alleged fraud and the negative publicity it has generated. The Ministry would like to inform the general public that, the alleged fraud was internally detected by UWA. Consequently, the Executive Director commissioned an internal audit. The audit covered the period between June and August 2023 and generated important insights and preliminary findings pointing to possible fraud orchestrated by some staff from Departments of Reservations, Finance and Information Technology at Head Office, with possible connivance of some field staff. It is not clear how much has been lost. However, preliminary audit findings indicate a possible loss of about UGX 500m.

Following the findings, UWA commissioned a second detailed investigation comprising members of staff from the Investigations Unit and Uganda Police Force. The investigations are still ongoing and findings will inform the next course of action.

In the meantime, 14 suspected staff have been suspended to pave way for investigations. Preliminary observations indicate that, some Tour Companies may have been involved in the reported fraud, further investigations are ongoing to

identify their role in the suspected fraud. Those implicated will be prosecuted in courts of law.

My Ministry has further requested the Office of the Auditor General (AG) to undertake a comprehensive Forensic Audit covering the period between July 2020 and September 2023. The Audit will cover gorilla and chimpanzee bookings at Bwindi, Mgahinga and Kibale National Parks as well as Kyambura Gorge (Queen Elizabeth National Park). The AG's findings will be submitted to the Ministry. We will certainly work with other relevant Ministries, Departments and Agencies to execute the investigation and audit.

I therefore appeal to members of the general public to provide any relevant information to this investigation to me, the Police or the Auditor General. Your information will be treated with utmost confidence as we strive to rid UWA and the entire tourism industry of the fraudsters.

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