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For Immediate Release:

Statement on the National Cleaning Days Initiative

African Initiative on Food Security and Environment (AIFE Uganda), a youth-led non-profit organization dedicated to foster biodiversity conservation, climate change resilience, sustainable natural resource management, and the protection of environmental human rights, wish to offer a statement in regard to Government's National Cleaning Days Initiative announced by the Rt. Hon. Prime Minister Robinah Nabbanja on 23th/07/2026.

First and foremost, we fully support the objective and spirit in which the initiative was developed. A cleaner Uganda is indeed everyone's responsibility. Poor sanitation, waste mismanagement, and environmental degradation continue to exacerbate the disease burden in our country and undermine climate resilience efforts. Mobilizing citizens to address waste accumulation, clogged drainage systems, and environmental filth is a noble and necessary goal.

For years, AIFE Uganda has worked with communities to promote environmental stewardship and we commend the government's effort to foster a culture of cleanliness and collective responsibility.

However, we strongly urge the Government to reconsider the rushed and mandatory implementation of this directive. The launch scheduled for this Saturday, 25th July 2026, with compulsory participation of all citizens every last Saturday of the month from 7:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m., raises significant concerns regarding human rights, public health, cultural rights, equity, and practical feasibility. Good intentions must be supported by proper planning, infrastructure, and inclusivity if they are to deliver sustainable results.

Firstly, the extremely short notice is highly problematic. Although the initiative was approved by Cabinet in 2025, nationwide sensitization has been inadequate. Many Ugandans, especially in rural areas and among populations with lower literacy levels, remain unaware of the mandatory requirement. Lasting behavioural change in environmental management demands continuous public education and community engagement not abrupt enforcement that could breed resentment and non-compliance.

Secondly, the directive poses direct risks to vulnerable populations. Pregnant women (Using boda bodas) for delivery, persons with chronic illnesses, the elderly, and individuals with disabilities may face serious health complications from mandatory participation or movement restrictions. While emergency services are exempted, there is no clear framework for case-by-case exemptions. This approach contradicts public health principles and the duty to protect the most vulnerable members of society.

Besides, the initiative threatens cultural rights and social cohesion. For instance, weddings are important cultural milestones in Uganda involving months of preparation and significant investment. Many families struggle to prepare and some have already finalized irreversible arrangements for ceremonies this Saturday, 25th July 2026, including events starting as early as 9:00 a.m. Reverends, brides, grooms, and guests currently lack clear exemptions. Similar disruptions will repeatedly affect funerals, religious gatherings, and traditional ceremonies. National programs must respect Uganda's rich cultural diversity.

In addition, critical gaps in waste management infrastructure continue to exist making the exercise dead on arrival. Kampala alone continues to grapple with inadequate public dustbins coupled with the few being privately owned. Many residents struggle to pay for privatized garbage collection services, leading to accumulation of waste due to irregular pickups. Nationally, there is an acute shortage of functional garbage trucks, designated disposal sites, and supporting infrastructure. Without substantial investment in additional dustbins and collection vehicles, the monthly cleaning drives risk generating new illegal dumpsites, open burning, and uncollected waste that will worsen pollution and disease transmission.

Finally, the human rights and livelihood implications are concerning. Restrictions on movement and business operations will disproportionately impact small businesses, boda boda operators, market vendors, and daily wage earners. Any enforcement must strictly adhere to principles of proportionality, non discrimination, and the right to livelihood.

We therefore call upon the Government to:

- Postpone the nationwide mandatory rollout to allow comprehensive sensitization and broad stakeholder consultations.
- Develop and publicize clear exemption guidelines for vulnerable groups, medical cases, pre-planned weddings, cultural events, and religious leaders.
- Urgently invest in public dustbins, garbage collection fleets, and sustainable disposal infrastructure.
- Partner with civil society organizations, local communities, and faith-based groups to co-design inclusive strategies.
- Pilot the initiative in selected areas to test and improve implementation before national scale up.

Issued by: African Initiative on Food Security and Environment (AIFE Uganda)

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