



REPUBLIC OF UGANDA

ADDRESS

BY

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**PERMANENT SECRETARY
MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS**

AT

**THE 2ND CONVENTION OF THE CONFEDERATION OF UGANDANS
IN SOUTHERN AFRICA**

VILLA AFRICA BOUTIQUE HOTEL

PRETORIA, SOUTH AFRICA

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[Please check against delivery]

Hon. Henry Musasizi, Minister of State for Finance, Planning and Economic Development in charge of General Duties,

Hon. Dennis Hamson Obua, Government Chief Whip,

Your Excellency, Paul Amoru, High Commissioner of Uganda to South Africa,

Respected Leaders in the Confederation of Ugandans in Southern Africa,

Distinguished members of the Diaspora,

Staff of the High Commission,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good Morning!

I am pleased to be here today and for the opportunity to share ideas and engage on matters of interest to you the Ugandans in the Diaspora.

As you may know, Foreign Policy is informed by Domestic Policy. Domestic Policies are determined by the ruling/sitting Government and applied through the three (3) arms of Government namely; the Executive, Legislature and the Judiciary.

Our Foreign Policy therefore, which includes the Diaspora is informed by our history as a Country. In the past; (60s, 70s, 80, and part of the 90's), we had Ugandans leaving the Country to go to exile. The domestic situation at the time dictated or necessitated that some individuals or even their entire families went to exile in other Countries for their safety. Today, people leave the Country not because of persecution but to look for greener pastures and that is consistent with the concept of Globalization.

As Government, we acknowledge the need to increase the employment opportunities in the Economy but also recognize that Ugandans have become competitive and are exporting their skills, knowledge and talents elsewhere. That explains why we have a shortage of Doctors who have trained in Makerere but are plying their trade all over the world including Southern Africa.

To elaborate the Government interventions to broaden the economy, we need to examine our economic trajectory.

For those of you who may not deeply appreciate Uganda's history, the 62 years have not been without trials and tribulations. Before the NRM took power, Uganda was synonymous with political instability, chaos, dictatorship, socio-economic stagnation, civil wars, human rights abuses, unconstitutional changes of government, state-inspired violence and a traumatized population. These conditions forced many of our productive people to flee into exile, and a number of them have remained there. Our country, which is currently a beacon for hosting refugees from neighbouring countries, was a conveyor for refugees, mostly to Europe, North America and the neighbouring countries of Kenya and Tanzania.

During the first ten years, since the current government took power, the major pre-occupation of Government was to ensure political, monetary and economic stabilization, through a series of reforms, including ensuring protection of person and property.

At a political level, the Government undertook reform and re-organization of administrative units at all levels, and ensured political participation at grassroots level, through the introduction of "Resistance Council" (now referred to as "Local Councils", starting at village level to the district. This reform alone, ensured democratic participation of a broad base of Ugandans – which still exists today, but also provided a framework for security at the lowest levels.

Most importantly, the first ten years focused on a return to constitutionalism in Uganda. Democratically elected people's representatives formed a Constituent Assembly, which formulated Uganda's new constitution. This Constitution was promulgated in 1995, and has continued to guide Uganda's legal formwork.

It is important to note, however, that while these positive developments took place, parts of Uganda remained insecure due to containing rebel movements in the North and the Eastern part of the country. Most notably, was the insurgency led by Joseph Kony's Lord's Resistance Army. These insurgent activities were costly and exhausting, specially to a government and people that were trying to reorganize society.

At the economic, monetary and fiscal levels, a number of developments took place in the first ten years, aimed at economic stabilization, and ensuring fiscal and monetary discipline. These started with the Currency Reform of 1987, followed by the establishment of Uganda Revenue Authority in 1991. These developments were important first steps towards rebuilding of the national economy and reversing decades of economic stagnation.

Meanwhile, in the midst of the above, the HIV/AIDS scourge was wreaking havoc on Ugandans and required a robust government intervention.

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

With the initial political and economic reforms carried out, the next ten year-period (1996 – 2006) witnessed the broadening of economic reforms, including continuation of structural adjustment programmes of liberalization of the economy and privatization of Government parastatals. While we can debate whether or not privatization was a beneficial and wonderful thing to do, liberalization of the economy has no doubt made a positive contribution. In parallel, the government also embarked on broad macro-economic policies to propel the economy, including through efforts to expand the energy base, and rehabilitation of some critical infrastructure.

Politically, the government continued with efforts towards further democratization and pacification of the country. In terms of the democratic processes, participation of the people in electing their leaders was enhanced, and affirmative action was provided for, wherein groups such as women, youths, persons with disabilities, are provided for at all Local Council administrative units. These also have representation in the Parliament of Uganda, including the UPDF. At the same time, professionalization of the army continued, which had started with transformation of the National Resistance Army (NRA) to the Uganda People Defence Forces (UPDF), in accordance with the 1995 Constitution.

This period was also significant in two other ways. First, 1996 is the year many Ugandans participated in a nation-wide democratic process of directly electing a President, in a free, fair and transparent process. It is also during this process that Universal Primary Education was introduced

in the country, particularly targeting Ugandans who would otherwise not afford to take their children to school.

In terms of cooperation with African countries, this period marked the revival of the East African Community. For Uganda, as a land locked developing country, the East African Community is of vital interest, as a regional organization for cooperation and integration. It is central to our foreign policy, and is a major engine for supporting Uganda's socio-economic development and transformation.

Over the next ten years (2006-2016), while major challenges remained, the country had realized a certain degree to stability and maturity, at political, social and economic levels. The focus, therefore, was consolidation of the gains, and embarking on long-term strategic national planning. This, we realized through the development of Vision 2040, the primary national development framework.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Vision, whose objective is to transform Uganda from a peasant society, to a modern and prosperous country by 2040, seeks to address a number bottlenecks to Uganda's socio-economic development and transformation. These include: a weak private sector; limited industrialization and value addition; limited government investment in strategic and emerging industries; underdeveloped agriculture; low competitiveness of Ugandan goods and services; poor and limited infrastructure; high cost of doing business due to insufficient energy; etc.

Addressing these bottlenecks would require, among other things:

- mechanization of agriculture, through setting up large scale irrigation schemes in different parts of the country;
- improving transport infrastructure, to facilitate quicker movement of goods and services, and reducing the cost of doing business;
- investing in developing and improving skills of the Ugandan people;
- invest in harnessing our natural resources, such as oil and gas, land and water, to propel further growth; and

- accelerating industrialization and value addition.

As you may have noticed, these issues have been, and will continue to form the basis of our Diaspora engagements. Emphasis is on infrastructure projects that have a transformative effect on the economy, including on production and industrialization. We have also placed emphasis on expanding private sector investment, including through FDI; development of industrial parks; development of the oil and gas sector; and value addition.

Beyond Vision 2040, this period also witnessed Uganda's enhanced involvement in regional peace and security arrangements. Most notably, in 2007, Uganda deployed troops to support our brothers and sisters in Somalia in the fight against the Al-Shabab, and try to support the stabilization of the country in line with Uganda's Foreign Policy which is anchored on Peace, Security and Stability in the Ring States. Along the way, we have cooperated with many Governments to achieve the progress in that country. Albeit all the challenges in the region, as of 2021, Uganda had registered growth in its export earnings from the neighbouring countries such as DRC (US\$ 339.41 Million), Kenya (US\$ 525.57 Million), Rwanda (US\$ 1.69 Million), South Sudan (US\$ 483.89 Million) and Tanzania (US\$ 108.86 Million). This can be attributed to peace and stability dividend arising from our efforts to fight terrorism in the region.

Currently, (2016 – to present) we are coming to the end of the five-year Third National Development Plan of Vision 2040, and expect to roll out the Fourth Plan next Financial Year, for the period 2025/26 – 2029/30. This comes at a time when the Government launched a ten-fold strategy for rapid economic growth, to expand Uganda's GDP from about US\$50bn in FY 2022/23, to US\$500bn before 2040.

The strategy particularly targets: Agro-based manufacturing (agro-industrialization); Tourism; Mineral-based manufacturing and petroleum products; and Technology and Innovation (ATMS). It aims, among other things, to:

- Double GDP every five years, from NDP-IV through NDP-VI; and

- Support a fast and significant increase in annual FDI inflows, from US\$2.9 billion in 2022, to US\$50bn.

Meanwhile, all other positive political and socio-economic programmes will be sustained.

At a regional and international level, Uganda is currently involved with the promotion of peace and security, as a member of the African Union Peace and Security Council. We are also the Chair of the Non-Aligned Movement (until 2027) and the Group of 77 and China (for 2024). We look forward to continue contributing to the cause of humanity.

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

As I come to the conclusion of my remarks, I wish to commend and thank all of you for the support and cooperation that you have rendered to Uganda in different ways, which has supported Uganda's socio-economic development efforts, and pledge my Ministry's readiness to continue to support these efforts.

I am aware there may be challenges and weaknesses, but we shall work together to address them.

I thank you.

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