

# INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS DAY 10TH DECMEBER 2016

## Theme: **Stands up for Someone's Rights today**



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**A**s the rest of the World commemorates the International Human Rights Day, the United Nations in Uganda also “Stands up for someone’s Rights today”.

Uganda has ratified several key Regional treaties that speak to human rights promotion, protection and fulfilment. To mention a few: the African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights; The African Charter on Rights and Welfare of the Child; and the Africa Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa (Kampala convention)

At a global level, the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action (1993) underscores human rights as the ground rule for development and development programming. A Human Rights Based Approach to development is indeed one of the surest means of achieving inclusive national and human development in which no one is left behind. This requires all nations to place the human person as the central subject of development – national development should focus on the dignity of the human person regardless of race, religion, ethnicity, gender, etc.

It is important to recognize that Uganda’s Constitution underscores the centrality of human rights and calls for human rights protection and promotion. Similarly, the National Vision 2040 through the second National Development Plan, in chapter 14, provides direction for integrating human rights into development by underscoring that in order to ensure inclusive development, all Sectors, Ministries, Departments and Agencies and Local Governments are expected to adopt a Human Rights Based Approach in their policies, legislations, programmes and plans. Implementing this national directive calls for deliberate efforts by the duty bearers to link their work to human rights instruments and principles such as equality and equity, accountability, empowerment, participation, non-discrimination and attention to vulnerable

groups. It is equally important to recognize that rights’ holders also have an obligation for civic duty. According to the Constitution of Uganda, the citizens have about 38 rights and duties, let me mention a few of them:

- To respect the rights and freedoms of others
- To promote unity and harmony in the community
- To observe the rule of law in the community by being a law abiding citizens
- To promote democracy and the rule of law
- To participate in the governance of the their community and the country
- To engage in lawful employment for individual, community and national benefit
- To respect and protect the rights of children and vulnerable persons
- To fight corruption and misuse of public resources
- To preserve and protect the environment

Therefore a mutual partnership of trust, commitment, communication and complementarity can yield dividends for the fulfillment of human rights and sustainable development in Uganda. A close look at Uganda’s cultural values also conveys the universal values of human rights and its importance for development and improving the quality of life of citizens and their communities.

*The call for action “Gwanga Mujje” among the Buganda of Central Uganda, speaks to this. It calls for inclusive participation but also reinforces the right to a clean environment, Right to clean water, duty to engage in gainful employment but also duty to serve the country.*

*The Langi of Northern Uganda underscore Human Rights in their language as expressed through phrases such as “tweru adano pi dogo lobo kun cakere kede kwan, yot kom” which speaks to the fact that development starts from basic rights such as education, health and food*

*From western Uganda the Batooro commonly use the phrase “kanga baija” which recognizes human rights. It is a call for help by the community. It’s contextual meaning is inclusive participation for safety and an expression of the right to life.*

This is the Uganda who presided over the United Nations General Assembly as its 69th President and led the world towards the adoption of a new rights based development approach known as Agenda 2030 and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals. Goals 16 and 17 on Peace and Justice, Strong Institutions and Partnerships for the Goals, respectively, are cornerstones that inform all action by the State to ensure Uganda develops while protecting both its people and its landscape. The SDGs provide for the responsible management of natural resources including water, life below water, life on land as well as the responsible consumption and production (of minerals, etc).

Quality education, good health and wellbeing, gender equality and zero hunger are some of the Sustainable Development Goals we need to collectively address through our plans, programmes and initiatives. Decent work, Industry-Innovation and Infrastructure, Sustainable Cities and Communities as well as Affordable and Clean Energy are SDGs that can easily be linked to

current development and economic transformation initiatives by the Government. Successful implementation will require all Ugandans to have the space to contribute constructively to creating the Uganda you want.

The successful implementation of a rights based development vision, requires periodic reviews to make adjustments, recognize progress and to define roadmaps to overcome challenges. In November 2016, Uganda underwent its Universal Periodic Review (UPR) in Geneva.

During this session, Uganda and peers highlighted successes made in the promotion and protection of human rights and conveyed areas where challenges in the implementation of certain human rights related laws and policies could be overcome. Some of the achievements recognized include Uganda’s establishment of institutions such as the Uganda Human Rights Commission, the Equal Opportunity Commission, the Inter-ministerial Committee on Human Rights, as well as the designation of Human Rights Focal Points in seven line Ministries Departments and Agencies including in the Uganda Peoples Defense Force, Chief Military Intelligence, Uganda Police Force and the Directorate of Public Prosecutions. Uganda was also recognized for creating an enabling framework for its robust Civil Society Organizations.

Areas in which progress could be done focused on service delivery level where more can be done to uplift economic, social and cultural rights to a similar level as civil and political rights. A partnership of trust between the citizens and the State can accelerate service delivery in this area by focusing on communities in regions with the lowest human development indicators. Implementing a rights based economic transformation is a national agenda in which everyone has a role to play and partners stand ready to support.

#### United Nations in Uganda and Human Rights

The United Nations Charter stipulates that all member states should promote universal respect for, and observance of, human rights and fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language, or religion. In Uganda, the United Nations has been working with the Government over the years on a number of interventions intended to improve the state of human rights promotion, respect and fulfillment across the country.

Based on development frameworks like the Second National Development Plan (II), the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) and the 2030 Global Agenda, UN agencies in Uganda are working to ensure that national and global commitments to human rights are transformed into reality for the people of Uganda as part of the Government’s transformational development vision and the Constitution.

The Office of the High Commissioner of Human Rights (OHCHR) in Uganda is taking lead to deliver the UNDAF Outcome 1.2 on Human Rights and Gender Equality. Other contributing agencies include United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Children’s Education Fund (UNICEF), United Nations Population Fund

(UNFPA), UN Women, UNAIDS, UN HABITAT – United Nations Human Settlement Programme and the International Labor Organization (ILO).

Anchoring on the mandates, comparative advantage and resources of the respective UN agencies our support includes: capacity development for Human Rights Institutions, awareness raising and support for enacting and implementing human rights compliant laws. This partnership also supports the enactment of laws and policies that facilitate gender equality, women empowerment, are responsive to the girl-child, which facilitate the engagement and participation of non-state actors in key developmental issues. The United Nations also provides support for ratification, domestication and monitoring progress of international treaties on human rights.

All the above interventions are intended to support Uganda attain its national Vision 2040 as well as Agenda 2030 and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals and the African Union vision 2063. These are all fundamental to meeting the basic human rights of all Ugandans and enabling the nation to attain its middle income status.

In alignment with the United Nations Charter, the UN in Uganda hereby reaffirms its faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small and thus stand with Uganda in its pursuit for sustainable development by putting a human face to development.

The United Nations observes the progress by the Government of Uganda towards drafting a National Human Rights Action Plan, we look forward to seeing the plan launched and implemented. This will go a long way in addressing the human rights challenges, such as those identified in the UPR. The United Nations remains a committed partner in supporting Uganda’s pursuit for the fulfillment of human rights. We are after all here for everyone in Uganda.

#### Important links that could be useful for policy formulation, planning and implementation:

1. On Human Rights Fact Sheets, Policy and methodological materials; - <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/PublicationsResources/Pages/Publications.aspx>
2. National Human Development Report (this has just won the award of the 2016 Awards for Excellence in Human Development Reporting on 6th November in New York): [http://www.ug.undp.org/content/uganda/en/home/library/human\\_development/UgandaHumanDevelopmentReportHDR2015/](http://www.ug.undp.org/content/uganda/en/home/library/human_development/UgandaHumanDevelopmentReportHDR2015/)
3. On Transforming Children’s Lives: <https://www.unicef.org/publications/>
4. On Progress of women, Transforming Economies, realizing rights: <http://progress.unwomen.org/en/2015/>
5. On HIV/AIDS Estimates in Uganda: [http://www.unaids.org/sites/default/files/country/documents/UGA\\_narrative\\_report\\_2015.pdf](http://www.unaids.org/sites/default/files/country/documents/UGA_narrative_report_2015.pdf)