



International Day of Zero Tolerance for Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting

Speech by Resident Coordinator of United Nations

Commemorated in Uganda on 2nd March 2018, Amudat District

Theme: *“Ending Female Genital Mutilation is a Political Decision”*

- The Rt. Hon Speaker of Parliament of the Republic of Uganda, Hon. Rebecca Kadaga,
- Honourable Minister
- Hon. Members of Parliament present,
- Resident District Commissioner (RDC/s),
- LC5 Chairperson/s,
- Officials from all districts,
- Religious and cultural leaders,
- Representatives from Ministries, Departments, Agencies and CSOs
- UN Colleagues,
- Girls and Women,
- Invited Guests,

Let me start by thanking everyone involved in organizing and participating in this event. It is great to be part of this global movement to end Female Genital Mutilation (FGM).

FGM is a violent practice that scars women and girls for life, endangering their health, depriving them of their fundamental human rights and the chance to reach their full potential.

If we do not unite urgently to take action, 54 million girls could be subjected to FGM by 2030. Over 200 million girls and women alive today have experienced female genital mutilation in 30 countries concentrated in parts of Africa, the Middle East and Indonesia. FGM is closely linked to other forms of gender inequality and harmful practices against women and girls such as child and forced marriages.

This year's theme: ***“Ending Female Genital Mutilation is a Political Decision”*** adopted from the global perspective resonates well at all levels.

Commemoration of the International Zero Tolerance day on **February or March 6** every year is a global call provided for by UN General Assembly Resolution on ***“Intensifying global efforts for the elimination of female genital mutilations” adopted*** in December 2012. Article 21 of the resolution calls upon States, the United Nations system and all stakeholders to observe and use the day to enhance awareness raising campaigns and to take concrete action against female genital mutilation.

This was reinforced at the United Nations Sustainable Development Summit by 193 States including Uganda in September 2015 who unanimously agreed to a new global target of eliminating FGM by 2030. ***“These are political decisions at higher level”.***

Uganda therefore is fulfilling her obligations as part of the global movement to mark the sixth year of commemorating this day in 2018.

I acknowledge progress made in FGM abandonment in Uganda that can, to a great extent, be attributed to the political will by the President H.E. Yoweri Kaguta Museveni, and the Speaker of Parliament, Rt. Hon. Rebecca Kadaga both of whom have individually championed ending the practice.

Hon. Speaker, I am aware that you and H.E. the President have not only committed resources and created awareness, but have personally participated in almost all the Zero Tolerance and the Cultural days related to FGM abandonment in the country.

We acknowledge the role played by the Hon. Ministers especially of Gender, Members of Parliament, district leaders (RDCS, LC V Chairpersons, CAOs and technical staff from all the districts), Civil Society, Faith based and religious leaders including the Archbishop of the Church of Uganda and the Mufti.

The theme of this year therefore makes a lot of sense to the Ugandan context.

UN support for Government of Uganda Efforts to End FGM/Cutting

The UN in Uganda complements Government efforts to end FGM mainly through the UNFPA-UNICEF Joint Programme on accelerating FGM abandonment and other

programmes supported by other UN agencies as stipulated in the The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and UN Development framework (UNDAF). Ensuring coherence by using the UN 'Delivering as One' approach, contributions from the UN in Uganda are coordinated by Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development (MGLSD). We use a human rights-based, culturally sensitive approach that supports national and community efforts to end FGM in practicing communities mainly in Karamoja and Sebei regions.

We acknowledge the achievements toward FGM abandonment by the Government of Uganda and partners including the enactment of laws and policies on enforcement, integration into Government frameworks including NDPII and Vision 2040, awareness, service delivery to survivors and the noticeable social norm change reflected in over 95% people not supporting FGM. These actions have led to a decrease in the prevalence from between 50 and 95 percent to 27% in Karamoja and Sebei regions (FGM Study UBOS, 2016).

It is critical to accelerate efforts to eradicate FGM from Uganda completely before or by 2030 (Global target under Phase III of the Joint programme). For this:

- We need to build on the positive change by communities including women groups, youth groups (girls and boys), elders, cultural and religious groups, former cutters, civil society and the media who are coming out to publically denounce and/or make public declarations on FGM abandonment.
- It is essential that these declarations are honored by ensuring that girls and women are effectively kept uncut.
- The contribution from service providers, especially health workers and police, education, community services and the judiciary remains critical in providing prevention, care and protection to survivors.

- It is also critical that coordination mechanisms and budgeting for FGM abandonment and related factors/effects including child and forced marriage, teenage pregnancy, maternal health and keeping girls at school become part of key political decisions to accelerate ending FGM by 2030.
- It takes a political decision to ensure that no woman or girls suffers from or dies from FGM effects and therefore the decision to address the sexual and reproductive health needs of women and girls who suffer from its consequences.

As I conclude: I want to reiterate my appreciation:

- To His Excellency the President and the Hon. Speaker of Parliament for their personal commitments to end FGM and to empower the women and girls; and
- To the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development and Local Governments for the progress made in the region to end FGM.

Let's all strive for a future where every girl will grow up able to experience her inherent dignity, human rights and equality.

The UN in Uganda is proud to be part of this event and commits to continue supporting national efforts to end FGM.

Ladies and Gentlemen it is a political and shared responsibility to ensure that FGM is eliminated from Uganda by 2030.

Thank you