



## **Statement at 2018 International Women's Day Celebrations**

By Ms. Rosa Malango

United Nations Resident Coordinator

UNDP Resident Representative

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**His Excellency, the President of the Republic of Uganda,**

**The First Lady,**

**His Excellency, the Vice President of the Republic of Uganda,**

**Rt. Hon. Speaker of Parliament,**

**Rt. Hon. Prime Minister,**

**The Minister of Gender Labour and Social Development,**

**Cabinet Ministers,**

**Members of Diplomatic Corps,**

**Members of UN Country Team,**

**Members of Parliament present,**

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

I want to begin by thanking the people of Mityana for the warm welcome as we celebrate the International Women's Day.

Today is the time to celebrate women's achievements, take stock of progress, recognize challenges, and focus greater attention on what remains to be done to achieve full gender equality and empowerment of women. It is also a time to mobilize everyone to play their part in creating a gender just society where women and girls are treated with dignity and respect.

Thank you all for helping to realize these achievements for women and demonstrating that when we work together, we demonstrate our shared humanity.

Your Excellency,

Today we celebrate International Women's Day, three years since the adoption of Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals and the launch of Uganda's second National Development Plan. Agenda 2030 envisages a "world in which every woman and girl enjoys full gender equality and all legal, social and economic barriers to their empowerment have been removed". This year the focus is on rural women and our collective responsibility to help ensure that rural women are not left behind as development goals are achieved.

On behalf of the United Nations in Uganda, I would like to congratulate you, your Excellency the President and the people of Uganda for what you have achieved in advancing the empowerment of women and girls. We applaud the Government of Uganda for honoring the contributions that women make daily to the development of Uganda. The fact that the 8<sup>th</sup> of March is a public holiday in Uganda speaks loudly about the commitment that the Government has for gender equality and empowerment of women.

I would like to use this opportunity to highlight some of the initiatives that are milestones of progress in this area:

- We celebrate the mechanisms put in place by government for empowering women economically to contribute to economic development of Uganda.
- We believe that the Uganda Women Entrepreneurship and Youth Livelihood programmes will provide opportunities for women to adopt roles as producers, managers, promoters and sellers of goods and services. I would like to thank the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development for providing leadership in ensuring that women, especially rural women, benefit from these programmes.

- We also commend GoU for putting in place an enabling policy and legal environment for the prevention and protection of women and children in particular, from all forms of violence. The Domestic Violence Act, (2010), the FGM Act, the Trafficking in Persons Act and the National Policy for prevention and responding to GBV are laws that, if properly implemented, can go a long way in making women safer in Uganda.
- In addition, mandatory gender budgeting by Government Ministries Departments and Agencies, as required by the Public Finance Management Act (2015), makes Uganda one of the very few countries in the world to demonstrate its commitment to addressing the practical needs of women through proper financing. Congratulations!
- We also welcome the fact that the maternal mortality ratio has reduced by 24% in five years from 438 to 336 per 100,000 live births according to the Uganda Demographic and Health Survey 2016. We are also aware that HIV prevalence has gone down from 7.3 percent to 6.3 percent in the last five years although it remains higher among women.
- We commend the deliberate efforts to enhance women's political participation. Uganda has the 6<sup>th</sup> highest number of women in

parliament. 154 out of 449 members of parliament are women, representing 34.3% of the total number of MPs. Uganda is also among the few countries in Africa, inclusive of Rwanda, South Africa, Equatorial Guinea and Gabon that have a Female speaker of Parliament. It must also be noted that women represent 36.7% of cabinet members; 11 out of 30 Cabinet members are women. At the district level and sub-county levels, there's near equal representation for women and men with 41.6% women at the district level and 46.5% of women representatives at Sub-county level

- Your Excellency, we also appreciate Government of Uganda for its commitment to the Comprehensive Refugees Response Framework. As you are aware most refugees are women and children. On International Women's Day we appreciate the work done by all stakeholders in ensuring that refugee women and girls lead meaningful lives and are free from all forms of violence and discrimination.

As we celebrate these achievements, we need to take stock of the unfinished agenda especially for rural women who are the focus of this year's celebrations. Allow me, Your Excellency to highlight some priority areas for attention:

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The United Nations in Uganda, through the United Nations Development assistance framework aims at working with government and partners to address barriers that prevent women and girls from achieving their full potential. A study conducted in Uganda, Malawi and Tanzania in 2015 by UNDP, UN Women and the World Bank revealed that gender inequalities cost Uganda \$64 million USD in agricultural productivity alone. Some key factors behind these losses include lack of access to land titles, credit, extension services and other facilities that would improve their productivity. There is a need to have a land tenure system that guarantees women's full engagement in agricultural production as this would increase the long-term viability of farming and rural development. There is also need to pass the amendments to the Succession Act that would bring greater and unambiguous security to inheritance rights for widows, especially related to land use and ownership. Women's burden of unpaid care work is a big challenge to their participation in the formal economy and limits their ability to contribute to improving the socio-economic conditions of their families and communities. Rural African women allocate a considerable amount of time to fetching water, collecting firewood and providing care to the children and elderly. Evidence has found that found that women in Sub-

Saharan Africa spend about 40 billion hours a year collecting water. In many countries, evidence has found that a reduction of women's unpaid care work yields a 10 per cent point increase in women's labour force participation.

In this context, we must invest more in technologies that will reduce the care burden of rural women to help them benefit from time-saving technologies such as grain-grinders, fuel-efficient stoves, solar energy and decent infrastructure.

Child marriage remains a major problem in Uganda, with 49 per cent of 20-49-year-old women, representing nearly 3 million women in Uganda married by the age of 18 this is a serious issue across Uganda. Another 900,000 women are married by the age of 15. As we celebrate this important day, we need to remind ourselves that child marriage is a harmful practice that violates, abuses or impairs human rights and has direct linkages to school dropout, limited life skills that inhibit the ability of children to generate future economic opportunities, teenage pregnancy, and increased health risks that lead to a higher likelihood of mortality for girls and their new-borns.

I would like to recognize the leadership of the First Lady of Uganda and Minister of Education who has traveled across the country to encourage parents to protect their girls and keep them in school. By

ending child marriage and teenage pregnancy, we reduce Uganda's population growth by 0.17% and increase earning in adulthood for women by 15%. This means we improve the ability of women and girls to contribute to Uganda's sustainable development.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

At this crucial moment for women's rights, it is time for men to stand with women. We want men and boys, especially leaders, to champion gender equality and the empowerment of women. Men everywhere need to take an active role, by recognizing women based on their capacities, speaking up when abuse occurs and holding other men – and themselves – accountable. We cannot move backwards, we must keep moving forward.

I would like to end by sharing a quote from UN Secretary-General António Guterres in his message for International Women's Day today.

“We at the United Nations stand with women around the world as they fight to overcome the injustices they face – whether they are rural women dealing with wage discrimination, urban women organizing for change, women refugees at risk of exploitation and abuse, or women who experience intersecting forms of discrimination: widows,

indigenous women, women with disabilities and women who do not conform to gender norms.”

Today let’s commit to make every day International Women’s Day. Let us individually and collectively pledge to do all we can to promote and protect women’s rights so that every girl and woman can live free of violence and discrimination in their society. Our heritage – UbuntuMlamu and shared humanity demand it.

Thank you for your attention.