



INTERNATIONAL YOUTH DAY

Theme: *“Youth Building Peace”*

Remarks by:

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Your Excellency, President of the Republic of Uganda

Honorable Ministers,

Permanent Secretaries,

Distinguished Guests,

Representative of Private Sector,

Representatives of Civil Society Organizations,

Representative of Youth led organizations,

Youth present here,

Colleagues from the UN,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It's a great honour to join you today in the beautiful mountainside of Bundibugyo to celebrate International Youth Day. In 1999 the United Nations General Assembly

designated 12 August as the day to reflect on youth issues worldwide every year. This year, the theme is *“Youth Building Peace.”* We cannot achieve sustainable development, job creation, environment protection and stability without the active participation of the youth. We cannot transfer indigenous knowledge or protect national heritage without the youth. This year’s theme gives us an opportunity to recognize that youth can also contribute to conflict prevention and transformation as well as to sustainable peace in communities.

Today Africa is the continent with the youngest population in the world with 200 million people aged 15 to 24. This figure will double by 2045. In Uganda, about 78% of the population is below 30 years of age. We can work together to make sure that these youth are part of the solutions in the country.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It has now been two years since world leaders adopted Agenda 2030 and the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which resulted from an inclusive and people-centered process. SDG 16 specifically commits Member States to “promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all, and build effective, accountable, and inclusive institutions at all levels”.

Uganda is a perfect example of how peace has led to development by communities and the government working together. Some of Uganda’s most effective champions for peace and development on the global stage are among the 1.8 million internally displaced people who were able to return home after the end of the insurgency in the North. Today Northern Uganda is a region ready for investments and transformation.

In 2016, through the UN Electoral support, civil society actors including the Elders Forum of Uganda (TEFU) and the Inter Religious Council of Uganda (IRCU), engaged youth leaders in their efforts to address post-election violence in the Rwenzori sub-region. This is an example of the benefits of inter-generational collaboration in Uganda. I congratulate the youth who are working with their elders, religious and cultural leaders across the nation to contribute to peace and development.

Uganda has a history of supporting peace mediation and peacekeeping efforts in Africa. Its reputation as a safe haven has made it home to over one million refugees, making it the largest refugee hosting country in Africa in addition to being home for over 35.5 million Ugandans. In late June, the world came to Uganda for the Solidarity Summit to recognize its progressive refugee model which enables refugees to contribute to Uganda's development. Participants also identified opportunities to invest in job creation and infrastructure development in the country. Many discovered the Pearl of Africa as a tourist destination. Many of the 1 million refugees are young people from South Sudan, Democratic Republic of Congo and Burundi among others. Supporting these young people at the most vulnerable point in their lives promotes peacebuilding enabling them to become peace ambassadors and job creators in the future for Uganda and their home countries.

Ladies and Gentlemen, Mr. President,

In 2015 you signed the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) 2016-2020 that determines our contribution to the second National Development Plan (NDP II) and the SDGs. Within this framework, the UN in Uganda continues to

work with the Government, civil society, women's groups, development partners and the youth to promote green growth, sustainable development and peace building.

It's my great pleasure to inform you that the UN system in Uganda has developed the *Adolescents and Youth Strategy 2017-2020* to support Government efforts. It recognizes the role of adolescents and youth as contributors to the growth and transformation of Uganda. As part of this strategy, we have put in place various initiatives including:

- **YouthConnekt**, a platform initiated in 2012 in Rwanda and adopted this year by the African Union that has yielded enormous success for young people by connecting them to economic opportunities. In Uganda, YouthConnekt was launched in June this year and will serve as a platform to connect youth to role models, peers, resources, skills and economic opportunities.
- **Youth to Youth fund model** which allows youth in Uganda to develop innovative ideas that can be scaled up with ILO funding. An example is the production of re-usable sanitary pads in Oyam, Mukono, Mpigi, and Lira districts. This has helped girls to stay in school and has now been scaled up nationwide by UNICEF.
- **The UpAccelerate** , a UNFPA supported programme taps into networks of young entrepreneurs providing them with seed funding, mentorship and technical support to develop scalable and sustainable solutions to population and socio-economic challenges. The UNFPA **Youth Enterprise Model** supports youth in Small and Medium Enterprises and Vocational Training Institutions. The **Better Life for Girls'** programme focuses on improving education and socio-economic opportunities for young girls.

- The ***Adjumani design challenge*** in which UNDP engaged youth from both refugee and host communities and enabled them to work together to identify pragmatic solutions to challenges in their communities. This is part of the UN Refugee and Host community empowerment strategy ReHOPE.
- UNDP has also partnered with Outbox, a youth innovation hub to develop an ***online youth innovators platform*** that allows youth to share their innovative ideas and links them to role models and funding institutions which can help them develop their ideas further.

These are a few examples of our contributions. Our hope is that these initiatives will give youth space to innovate and contribute to Uganda's development, reducing youth unemployment and consolidating peace and stability.

As I conclude, I would like to reiterate the commitment of the UN family to partner with the Government and people of Uganda to advance the empowerment of youth in the Pearl of Africa. I call upon the youth gathered here today to remember that you are the champions of Uganda's peace, prosperity and sustainable development. You have an opportunity to become agriculture entrepreneurs, solar energy business leaders or ICT developers. Use your knowledge, skills and talents to contribute to attaining the Sustainable Development Goals, supporting peace and ensuring that Uganda reaches middle income status. You are Uganda's present and future.

Thank you for listening!