



**THE REPUBLIC OF UGANDA**

**SPEECH**

**BY**

**HON MUTUZO PEACE REGIS**

**MINISTER OF STATE FOR GENDER AND CULTURE AFFAIRS/  
HOLDING PORTFOLIO OF MINISTER OF GENDER, LABOUR AND SOCIAL  
DEVELOPMENT**

**AT THE AT THE CLOSURE OF THE NATIONAL DIALOGUE ON LANDMINE  
VICTIM ASSISTANCE**

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**VENUE: MUNYONYO COMMONWEALTH RESORT HOTEL**

**Hon. Ministers;**

**You're Excellences the Ambassadors and the Head of the European Union**

**Hon. Members of Parliament;**

**Development Partners;**

**Representatives of Civil Society Organisations;**

**Ladies and Gentlemen**

I welcome all of you and congratulate you upon the successful completion this two day National Dialogue on Landmine Victim Assistance under the theme: “**building on the progress**”. This theme in essence implies that there was already some activities on going in support of the landmine survivors.

Many of you will recall that Persons with Disabilities have historically suffered injustices and barriers that are socially constructed on the basis of societal ignorance and negative attitudes towards disabilities.

In many parts of the world and indeed in Uganda, being a person with disabilities is highly discriminated and stigmatized. Furthermore, because of the predominantly patriarchal nature of the African society, women with disabilities and mothers of children with disabilities are often discriminated against and always abandoned.

Thus the Government of Uganda has always been at the fore front of fighting for the rights of all Persons with Disabilities, including those disabled by landmines to ensure that the enormous barriers that undermine the ability of Persons with disabilities to exploit their full potential are done away with. The interventions to tackle this have been done through the following, laws, policies and plans:

In line with the Constitution of 1995 which is the supreme of the land, the Government of Uganda has put in place a set of laws and policies to promote rights of Persons with Disabilities in all spheres of life. Some of these laws include: Persons with Disabilities

Act, the Mental Health Act, and National Policy on Persons with Disabilities among others.

At the International scene, Uganda ratified the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban convention in 1999 and UN Convention on Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) in 2008. All these we ratified to ensure that the rights of all Persons with Disabilities including those disabled by the landmines are upheld.

With support from the Implementation Support Unit of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention, Uganda developed two Comprehensive Plans of Action on Victim Assistance in 2007 and another one for 2010-2012, with an aim of responding to the needs of landmine survivors and other Persons with Disabilities.

In the same spirit of empowering Persons with Disabilities, Uganda became the first country in Africa to have Members of Parliament representing Persons with Disabilities in Parliament. In addition, we created structures for mobilizing and empowering all Persons with Disabilities right from the village to national level to participate into the development initiatives, by having representatives of Persons with Disabilities at all those levels of administration.

More recently, at the first ever International Disability Summit which took place in the United Kingdom, the Government of Uganda committed to further disability inclusion through revision of laws, revitalizing the Community Based Rehabilitation (CBR) Program, increasing the inclusive schools, tackling stigma and discrimination, increasing the special grant for Persons with Disability so as to create more income generation activities for them, as well as increasing awareness creation on the needs and rights of all Persons with disabilities.

The Government has also revised the Persons with Disability Act of 2006 and it is in the final stages of completion. This law aims at guiding all interventions towards serving Persons with Disabilities, including the landmine survivors.

The revision of the Act was similarly intended to pay attention to the two conventions (Anti-Personnel Mine Ban and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with

Disabilities), while also considering the intents of inclusion and “leaving no one behind”, as advocated for by the SDGs, as well as the aspirations of the NDP (II).

Furthermore, in order to enhance informed participation for PWDs in the public policy process, the government has undertaken a number of measures to equip PWDs with academic and vocational skills. Some of these include:

- i. Introduction of Universal Primary Education;
- ii. Introduction Universal Secondary Education;
- iii. Giving financial subventions to special needs schools;
- iv. Ensuring that all new schools being constructed by the Ministry of Education and Sports must now have ramps to facilitate accessibility of our children with disabilities.
- v. The introduction of the University Admissions Quota of 65 students every year, which has benefited over 1,300 students with disabilities , since its inception in 1997 who graduated in various fields under the same programme.
- vi. Commencement of the renovation of Vocational Rehabilitation Centres with the view of enhancing their capacity to provide employability skills to Young Persons with Disabilities.

I am aware that despite these interventions, there are still challenges facing Persons with Disabilities especially in the area of health services which is one of the major problems that landmine survivors face.

There are also challenges with data for Persons with disabilities, especially the numbers of landmine survivors, as well as the specific the insufficient funding in the community based program to properly implement the interventions targeting the landmine victims.

However these challenges notwithstanding, our interventions have an all disability inclusive approach where all government disability interventions target all Persons with Disabilities in the development agenda.

The government will therefore continue supporting measures that lead to the creation of empowerment of all Persons with Disabilities through:

- i. Reducing the cost of doing business by expanding the road network and increasing the generation of electricity. For example by 2021 we shall have expanded the tarmac road network from the current about 4000 to 6000 kilometres.
- ii. We are also going to increase electricity generation from the current 900 megawatts to 2600 megawatts by the year 2021. With cheap electricity and better roads we shall be able to encourage the growth of many industries and this will create jobs for our young people.
- iii. To enhance access to work by Persons with Disabilities, we might consider introducing employment quotas in both the public service and the private sector.

I am aware that most public buildings now have ramps for accessibility purposes but some of them are barriers in themselves because they are sometimes very steep or narrow and hence do not serve the purpose. Therefore, we will enforce the accessibility standards to ensure that proper measures are employed in all constructions. However, much more is required beyond a ramp and an elevator to create a barrier free workplace environment, by having appropriate assistive devices available to all that need them.

Furthermore, we shall continue to improve access to low cost credit through programs like the Youth Livelihood Program, the Women Entrepreneurship Program as well no cost funds such as the Special Grant for Persons with Disabilities.

Finally, I would like to reiterate that work is the only way to get out of poverty. I therefore, wish to repeat my appeal against laziness by urging all Ugandans to develop a positive attitude towards work.

I once again welcome all those people who are in Uganda for the first time and urge you to visit the different beautiful tourist sites in this pearl of Africa.

**For God and my country.**