Hon. Peter Lokeris, Minister of State for Energy,
The Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Energy and Mineral Development,
The Chairperson, Uganda Chamber of Mines & Petroleum,
Members of the Diplomatic Corps,
Members of the Private Sector,
Civil Society Representatives,
Colleagues from the UN System,
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen.

I am honoured to join you today for the Oil and Gas Convention organised by the Uganda Chamber of Mines and Petroleum. This is the most suitable platform to highlight issues pertinent to the Development Oil and Gas sub-sector and its potential contribution to inclusive economic development in Uganda.
The United Nations and UNDP in particular support nations to ensure that natural wealth translates into real improvement in people’s lives. In December 2012, UNDP developed and launched the Strategy for Supporting Sustainable and Equitable Management of the Extractive Industries - making UNDP a strong ally in tackling challenges within the sector.

The Convention theme, “Regional collaboration for first Oil,” echoes our firm belief that Uganda needs to team up with other countries under the East Africa Community, the Great Lakes and other African regions to successfully harness her oil. The cooperation will deliver several dividends in terms of joint exploration, collective infrastructure, shared costs, bigger market, comprehensive security programmes, research, skilled professionals and simultaneous transformation of the quality of life of inhabitants. Shared understanding in this sector could also contribute to efforts to develop a continental free trade zone.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Africa’s mining, oil and gas sectors are thriving, thanks to high commodity prices and improved exploration technologies that have led to important discoveries. Nineteen out of 46 countries in Sub-Saharan Africa have important reserves of hydrocarbons oil, gas, coal, high value minerals and development minerals. Some countries endowed with mineral resources are faced with a number of challenges, including creating local technically fit for purpose human resources, limited participation by women, minorities and youth in the sector; and conflict over land and resources including environmental degradation.

As stakeholders in the Oil and Gas sector we invite you to engage communities and incorporate development considerations into your exploration, production
and distribution activities. We also need you to contribute to fiscally responsible behaviour that help Government efforts to reduce inequalities and improve environmental protection.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

The Albertine Graben where Uganda has discovered her huge deposits of oil and gas is also known for its high biodiversity which are part of the backbone of Uganda’s tourism industry. Therefore, care should be taken to ensure that exploitation of oil resources is done without compromising the quality and quantity of other renewable natural resources. I would like to take this opportunity to recognize Uganda’s **National Oil and Gas policy (2008)** which provides a basis to improve the conservation of natural resources (Forests, Lakes, River Banks and Wetlands), while also improving infrastructure, access to energy and education etc in communities close to sources of exploration or mining. I invite you to read the policy if you haven’t already. I also want to recognize the Petroleum (exploitation, development and production) Bill 2012 which provides guidance for local content.

UNDP has supported Uganda’s conservation efforts and the responsible development of her minerals sector. In the past three years we have spent close to $8 million supporting climate change, environment protection and reforestation projects in Uganda. We are also working with African Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) group of Countries on a European Union funded Development Minerals Programme. This three-year 13.1 million Euro project focuses on how to improve the management of these minerals. We have also mobilized over $24 million for Wetlands management and are advocating for additional funding to help promote alternative livelihoods for affected communities as part of a Presidential Initiative
on Wetlands. This is because of our firm belief in Uganda’s efforts to attain the Sustainable Development Goals as part of their National Vision 2040.

I have witnessed the diversity of Uganda’s potential including its wildlife, natural resource capital including the Nile, flora, fauna and mountains among others. In February this year, I visited West Nile, Acholi region and parts of Bunyoro region, where I saw how sites for investments in tourism and environment protection co-exist with areas where oil has been discovered, especially around the Murchison Bay Wetland System. I identified potential areas to enhance collaboration between projects aimed at protecting the environment, enhancing livelihoods and promoting responsible management of natural resources.

I invite you as stakeholders in Oil and Gas to join us in identifying ways to contribute proactively to Uganda’s Green Growth pathway. “Green growth means fostering economic growth and development while ensuring that natural assets continue to provide the resources and environmental services on which our well-being relies.”

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Allow me to briefly link this sector to the SDGs. Nations endowed with oil and gas can create good jobs and spur economic growth (SDG 8) when they invest in good infrastructure (SDG 9). This, coupled with responsible consumption (SDG12) and care for the environment (SDG13) would lead to elimination of poverty (SDG 1) and reduced inequalities (SDG 10). This will enable Uganda, and indeed the region to have sustainable cities and communities (SDG 11) through transformative partnerships (SDG 17).
As I conclude

I would like to thank the Uganda Chamber of Mines and Petroleum for organising the Oil and Gas Convention. This annual event provides us with space to reflect on progress and identify solutions for challenges ahead. I believe that the extractives sector provides huge opportunities for sustainable development and inclusive economic growth if properly managed with the right mix of policies.

I also welcome the establishment of the National Oil Company as a critical institution for this sector and encourage the Government of Uganda to ensure that this body remains an effective and robust national institution to manage oil resources in accordance with your national vision 2040.

Ladies and Gentlemen, development should not be at the expense of the environment and certainly, oil must be a blessing. In this regard, I would like to encourage the Government to use the legislation and polices developed in the oil sector as a guide for the development of minerals sub-sector in Uganda. This is an opportunity for national benchmarking and enhancing the legal framework for this sub-sector by learning from oil and gas.

The United Nations System in Uganda remains committed to working with the Government and all partners to ensure that natural resources work for all people in Uganda. Together we can create an environment that will lead to a more inclusive, sustainable and transformative development in the country.

Thank you for your attention.