



Remarks at the National Commemoration of International Women’s Day 2019

By Ms. Rosa Malango, United Nations Resident Coordinator

8th March 2019, Bunyangabu District

Your Excellency, the President of the Republic of Uganda,

The First Lady,

Your Excellency, the Vice President of the Republic of Uganda,

The Right Honourable Speaker of Parliament,

The Right Honourable Prime Minister,

The Minister of Gender Labour and Social Development,

Cabinet Ministers,

Members of Diplomatic Corps,

Members of Parliament

Women and Men of the Armed Forces,

Young Women

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Thank you Bunyangabu for the warm welcome!!!

The United Nations in Uganda is pleased to join the People of Uganda in celebrating the 2019 International Women’s Day, which is running under the international theme of **“Think Equal, Build Smart, and Innovate for Change”** and the national theme **“Empowering Women through innovative approaches to social protection: a pre-requisite to sustainable development”**

Your Excellency,

Today we celebrate International Women's Day focusing on innovations for social protection to ensure inclusion of women and girls in social protection programmes and initiatives. Unless specific attention is paid to understanding what makes women and girls vulnerable throughout their life cycle, social protection programmes will fail to contribute towards reducing poverty sustainably.

On behalf of the United Nations in Uganda, I would like to congratulate you, your Excellency the President and the People of Uganda on your achievements in advancing social protection in Uganda. We welcome the Social Protection Policy (2015), its Gender Implementation Strategy (2017), programmes such as the Social Assistance Grants for Empowerment, the Uganda Women Entrepreneurship Programme and the Youth Livelihoods Programme as examples of your Government's commitment.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Social protection is a human right. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights is clear: the realization of this human right is vital to guaranteeing each member of our global society the dignity and the free development of his or her personality. In **"A life of dignity for all"** The United Nations identifies social protection as one of the success-factors in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. Social protection can also be found in local values that need to be revisited, updated and recognized. In this context, I look forward to the upcoming launch of the National Initiative on Civic Education for Uganda as a safe space to promote positive behavior and the revival of the African concept of Ubuntu=our shared humanity.

Ladies and Gentlemen: there is an erosion of traditional social protection systems in Uganda that must be reversed. The life-cycle of a woman is fraught with vulnerability. As a baby she is in some societies unwanted, because a son would have been preferred. As a girl she is often denied the right to education, exposed to defilement, Female Genital Mutilation, child marriage, teenage pregnancy and HIV infection. As an adult woman she often has no independent financial security, no ownership of productive assets including land to use as collateral for business loans, is unable to properly access sexual and reproductive health services, experiences domestic violence and is exposed to HIV infection. For the woman who is fortunate to have a formal job, there are vulnerabilities for her too. These include sexual harassment in the workplace, gender discrimination that deny her opportunities for promotion,

denial of maternity rights protection especially if she is in the private sector; and absence of child care facilities in most workplaces, which denies her the ability to balance her dual reproductive and productive roles successfully. As an elderly woman she often has no independent financial means of her own, she is often caring for orphaned grandchildren no health insurance to help her cope and no peace of mind that she will have a decent funeral when she dies. The same vulnerabilities apply to widows and divorced women.

Your Excellency, before I conclude allow me to note that the starting next week, about 4,000 delegates from UN Member States including Uganda will convene in New York to discuss this issue of inclusive social protection for women and girls. The priority theme of the 63rd Commission on the Status of Women is to share ideas on establishing gender sensitive social protection systems, access to public services and sustainable infrastructure for gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls.

The Ugandan delegation will be sharing with the international community through a side event national good practices for providing social protection to women in the informal sector through infrastructure. I want to use this opportunity to recognize the Minister of Gender, Labour and Social Development for her leadership in developing and promoting solutions. I also want to recognize the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry who is a He for She Champion. Allow me to recognize all women leaders today in their different capacities, First Lady of the Republic of Uganda, Speaker of Parliament, Women Members of Parliament and in security.

Your Excellency allow me to conclude by sharing a few recommendations for future actions:

1. We need to design social protection interventions that reach most **women in the informal sector**, women in low paying jobs and women refugees.
2. We must strengthen **social protection interventions in the agricultural sector**. We need Agriculture insurance schemes that are gender responsive can help in securing women's livelihoods and improving food security.
3. It is important to expand access to health care and **especially maternal care for vulnerable women** such as women with disabilities and women in rural areas.
4. We need to strengthen financing and accountability for the prevention and response to **violence against women and girls. Gender Based Violence must be eliminated.**
5. we also need to have a **gender and youth responsive Public Procurement law** and guidelines to create sustainable jobs for the women and youth of Uganda.
6. Lat but not least, we need to address time poverty that is experienced by women **through investments in time saving technologies and infrastructure** that will ensure that domestic and unpaid care work is recognized, reduced and redistributed.

I would like to thank our partners for working with us, especially the women groups and associations. I also want to thank UN Women for helping the UN Country Team to effectively support the Government in implementing policies.

Your Excellency, I conclude by pledging on behalf of the UN in Uganda our steadfast commitment to walk with Government and the people of Uganda in this Journey, ensuring no one is left behind. In this vein, allow me Your Excellency to approach you with the UN Women Country Representative to hand over a 8 March Call of Action developed Jointly by all stakeholders and take a photo as evidence.

I thank you.