Remarks at National Labour Day Commemoration 2018
Theme: Promoting the Public Spirit in the Public Sector

By Ms. Rosa Malango

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Your Excellency, President Yoweri Museveni

Your Excellency, the Vice President

The Right Honourable Speaker of Parliament

His Lordship the Chief Justice

The Right Honourable Prime Minister

 Honourable Ministers

 Members of Parliament

 Members of the Diplomatic Corps
Development Partners

District Chairpersons

Representatives of the Private Sector

Representatives of the Civil Society

Ladies and Gentlemen

I am pleased to be here with you today to commemorate the International Labor Day. This day is celebrated every year in honour of the contribution of workers to national development.

With the theme – “Promoting the Public Spirit in the Public Sector”, today reminds us of what is needed in most developing countries including Uganda. More and better jobs, decent working conditions and right at work but also better work culture.

However, there is no greater virtue to be found in a good citizen than public spirit. That is why it is very important for every individual to identify themselves with the interests of the nation, organization, business and community they are serving.

Your Excellency,

I would like to draw your attention to the fact that universal value principles such as ethics, which are deeply ingrained in all cultures including African culture are based on time tested wisdom and can be an example to us all to rekindle our virtue of public interest.

In Southern Africa, ‘Ubuntu’ is a widely cherished and practiced indigenous cultural philosophy based on the notion that ‘a universal bond of sharing connects all
humanity’. That ‘my humanity is connected and is inextricably bound up with yours.’

Similarly, in Uganda, we have ‘Obuntu bulamu’ an expression of ‘healthy humanness.’ This connotes ‘the possession of courtesy, compassion, good breeding and being cultured. A related cultural value in Uganda is ‘Bulungi bwansi" literally translated ‘service or for the good of the community’ -‘public spirit’ - which promotes volunteerism based on good ethics.

These values, which are enshrined in the National Ethical Values Policy, promote development. The thread of bulungi bwansi runs central in the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), a Triple-P plan of action for the “People, Planet and Prosperity,” whose focus is to end their poverty and hunger in all forms and to ensure that all human beings can live a dignified life, in a healthy environment. When we talk about saving the planet for the future generations, that’s bulungi bwansi; when we talk about protecting wetlands, that’s bulungi bwansi! – public spirit.

The 2030 Agenda the SDGs is reflection of the global public spirit. The agenda was developed through a bottom up intensive consultative process of the citizens of the World between 2011 and 2015. The consultation was about ‘the World We Want’ which resulted in the global consensus of the 2030 Agenda and SDGs, which World Leaders signed at the UN General Assembly, which Your Excellency presided over in New York in September in 2015.
Indeed, the United Nations was founded on ideals of promoting the public spirit. The preamble of the UN Charter states that, ‘We the people of the United Nations determined ..... to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom .... to employ international machinery for the promotion of the economic and social advancement of all peoples;’ which is promoting public spirit.

The staff of the United Nations are international civil servants promoting the public spirit enshrined in the UN Charter and the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs. In Uganda the United Nations Systems supports the Government of Uganda to achieve the countries development objectives outlined in Vision 2040 and the Second National Development Plan (NDPII) through the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF), which is implemented by 18 UN agencies.

Your Excellency,

Allow me to highlight one of the key challenges that the United Nations System in Uganda is supporting the Government of Uganda address in public spirit. That is the problem of youth unemployment.

**Job creation and poverty reduction**

Uganda is faced with persistent employment challenges especially amongst youths. 78% of the population in Uganda is below 30 years making it one of the countries with the youngest population in the world. Youth in Uganda’s access to decent jobs is hindered by lack of soft and technical skills demanded by the labour market and a low employment productivity of the economy. Youth transition from school to work face many obstacles because most education institutions in Uganda do not
equip graduates with skills and know-how to match the labour market’s needs coupled with moral decay in society.

At the heart of the 2030 Agenda is a shared ambition to develop opportunities for sustainable job creation and inclusive growth. The importance of decent work in achieving sustainable development is highlighted by Goal 8, which aims to “promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all”.

The UN System in Uganda through UNDP in collaboration with the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development (MGLSD) have developed a Project, “Uganda Graduate Volunteer Scheme” to contribute aim to provide young graduates, (below 30 years) leaving institutions of higher learning access to work spaces to gain employability skills as one of the efforts of addressing persistent employment challenges faced by Ugandan young graduates.

Call to Action

Transition from Policy to Practice – Uganda is widely recognized for producing a wide range of excellent policies on social, economic and development issues. Indeed, the United Nations System in Uganda has supported the Government to produce many these good policies. There is now also widely recognized that although Uganda has good policies it is not good at implementing them. The UN System in Uganda stands ready to support the Government of Uganda in the transition from good policies to good practices so that the public sector can effectively fulfil the public spirit.

Revitalization of the Local Government System – Uganda’s Local Government System has in the past also be widely acclaimed for fulfilling the public spirit.
However, it is now widely recognized that local government system is not functioning as properly as it should. There are numerous efforts by various development partners to support the government to address these challenges. Most of these efforts are around capacity building to address challenges such as absorption capacity. Given that these capacity building efforts have been ongoing for a while, without significant results. Therefore, there is a need to re-examine what is needed to revitalize the Local Government System given that it is the branch of the Public sector to most citizens engage with directly. The United Nations System in Uganda is committed to engaging in this process to revitalize Local Government System in Uganda so that it responds better to the needs of citizens in public spirit.

Thank you.