Remarks at the Launch of the National Integrated Food Security Phase Classification Assessment

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The Right Honourable Dr. Ruhakana Rugunda, Prime Minister of the Republic of Uganda;
Hon. Hillary Onek, Minister of Disaster Preparedness and Refugees;
Hon. Vincent Ssempijja, Minister of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries;
Honourable Musa Ecweru, State Minister for Relief and Disaster Preparedness;
Your Excellency, Mr. Zheng Zhuqiang, Ambassador of the Peoples Republic of China;
Honourable Members of Parliament;
Members of the Diplomatic Corps;
World Bank Regional Representative;
Ladies and Gentlemen

Good Morning

Known as the ‘Pearl of Africa’, Uganda is endowed with fertile soil and conditions conducive to significant agricultural production. Indeed, Uganda derives much of its economic base from natural resources to sustain its growth and livelihoods, with over 25 per cent of the country’s GDP and 70 per cent of total labour force employment directly related to the agriculture sector, the majority of whom are women.
However, with this economic base comes is being threatened and requires urgent action by all of us to manage the risks and reinforce this key sector. We are witnessing an agriculture sector that is highly vulnerable to the impacts of natural hazards and climate change, and by extension so too are the communities’ dependent on their crops.

In the last decade alone, Uganda has experienced over 2,500 disaster events, of which 70 per cent were related to extreme hydro-meteorological events, resulting in death, destruction and lost opportunities.

Recognising this risk, the Government of Uganda in its second National Development Plan for 2016-2020, and in line with Vision 2040, has prioritised investment in five areas, including agriculture, infrastructure and human capital development.

Targeting an average growth rate of 6 percent per year over the next five years, the Government’s draft Agriculture Sector Strategic Plan 2015/16-2019/20, sets out four sector priorities: (1) increasing production and productivity; (2) increasing access to critical inputs; (3) improving access to markets and value addition; and (4) strengthening an enabling environment. Of critical importance is that the plan also seeks to ensure household food security along the entire commodity value chain. This will only be achieved is we work together through
public-private partnerships to invest more in human capital development including access to health and education, climate smart agri-business and in environment friendly infrastructure.

Ladies and Gentlemen:
Agenda 2030 and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals recognize that ending poverty must go hand-in-hand with strategies that build economic growth and address a range of social needs including achieving food security, improving health outcomes, strengthening social protection, and creating job opportunities, all while tackling climate change and ensuring environmental protection.

Building on Uganda’s commitment to the SDGs, the United Nations in Uganda partners with the Government and people to end hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition, promote sustainable agriculture and achieve risk-informed development.

Ladies and Gentlemen: I will now share an overview of support provided by the UN System in Uganda as part of efforts to help address and mitigate food insecurity: Support to the National Emergency Coordination and Operations Centre, Support to Uganda’s Nutrition Action Plan Secretariat and Support to Food Security interventions in Refugee Hosting Districts.
Joint UN Support to the National Emergency Coordination and Operations Centre (NECOC)

An example of this collaboration resulted in the establishment of the National Emergency Coordination and Operations Centre (NECOC) in 2014. The UN’s support, led by UNDP, was guided by the principle of ‘Delivering as One’. UNDP provided the core technical and financial inputs required for the Centre’s establishment and operationalization, while WFP provided the ‘GeoNetcast’ ground station equipment to enable real-time to nearly-real time satellite data acquisition, as well as the linking of data from its vulnerability assessment and monitoring platform to feed into the National Early Warning System. UNICEF placed an interface of its U-Report mobile phone-based SMS system to integrate real-time on-site data gathering from a massive network of volunteers within communities.

The end result is clear. Uganda now has the capacity to monitor risk and make evidence-based decisions. Today’s launch of the National Food Security Assessment is testament to this ongoing partnership. Congratulations!!!

The United Nations in Uganda remains committed to strengthening and expanding our partnership as Uganda continues to address the multiple challenges associated with this current drought. I am pleased
to note that UNDP is now supporting the development of a national risk atlas. This works builds on the hazard, risk and vulnerability profiles previously supported for all districts, and will provide the necessary evidence to mitigate, manage and reduce risk across sectors. Rt Honorable Prime Minister, once the national risk atlas is complete we will be seeking for your leadership to launch it and to encourage decision makers across the nation to use it as a tool to inform their measures at all levels on how to mitigate and reduce risks in their communities, districts and regions.

Ladies and Gentlemen:
The food security situation faced by many Ugandans exacerbates underlying vulnerabilities including limited access to basic social services, low literacy, significant numbers of women and youth in need of social protection and jobs, high levels of SGBV including domestic violence, and the rising numbers of HIV/AIDS infections.

In addition to these social-economic development challenges, Uganda is also facing severe environmental degradation, particularly related to its wetlands, accelerated by population growth and unplanned human activities. According to the Uganda Wetlands Atlas 2016, the country has lost over 30 percent (500 square kilometres every year) of its wetlands between 1994 and 2016, with central and eastern regions registering the biggest loss. In Kampala alone, 14% of the wetlands
areas has been lost between since 1995 and the Lake Nakuwa wetland system is estimated to have lost about 40% of its original wetland area posing a threat to the Lake Nakuwa Ramsar site.

Hundreds of thousands of Ugandans have invaded the wetlands across the nation causing severe damage to the environment and in some cases affecting access to water and long established livelihoods. In order to ensure the sustainable relocation of communities currently in protected areas, it is important to ensure that a two pronged approach is followed that includes (a) sustained investment in protection and conservation of Wetlands and forests as well as (b) a focus on improving the quality of life of vulnerable people affected by the relocation.

If relocated communities are to stay in their new areas we will need to mobilize resources, volunteers and talent to ensure that they are clearly identified and profiled, that relocation areas address their needs in terms of access to basic social services and that the community is assisted to develop and build new environment friendly infrastructure where they can pursue their livelihoods.

**Joint UN Support to the Uganda Nutrition Action Plan Secretariat**

WFP, FAO and UNICEF are supporting the Uganda Nutrition Action Plan Secretariat in the Office of the Prime Minister to advocate for multi-sectoral actions to address food and nutrition security at national and sub-national levels. This support has contributed to the
finalization of the food and nutrition security policy and the provision of technical assistance to support the functions of the Secretariat.

The three UN Agencies have a long term commitment with nutrition in most vulnerable areas like Karamoja, where a joint UN program aims to increase resilience at family and community levels. In addition, WFP continues to support persons living with HIV/AIDS identified with moderate acute malnutrition with supplementary feeding through existing community based supplementary feeding programmes in Karamoja.

In Uganda’s Cattle Corridor, FAO with financial support from the European Union and the Royal Kingdom of Belgium is providing critical support to 40,000 men and women farmers in the six districts of the Central Cattle Corridor: Nakasongola, Mubende, Luwero, Nakaseke, Kiboga, and Sembabule to increase their resilience to climatic shocks. This support includes the dissemination of drought tolerant crop and pasture varieties, diversification of food production in agro-pastoral communities, establishment of community and household based irrigation systems for year round production of crops; provision of water for production through 15 valley tanks each with a capacity of ten million litres that have been constructed in 6 districts to enable year round access of livestock to water. The support also includes
promoting pasture conservation practices among farmers so as to store livestock feed for dry season feeding.

Now last but definitely not least.

**UN Support to Food Security in Refugee Hosting Districts**

In Refugee hosting Districts, several UN Agencies are supporting the protection mandate of the UNHCR by providing adequate food intake to refugees and supporting local governments to expand access to social services for both national and refugee communities.

The bulk of UNICEF’s support is in supporting the scale up of direct nutrition interventions mainly implemented through the health sector nationally and with specific focus in the 23 priority districts including refugee hosting areas and Karamoja. Currently, UNICEF supports the Integrated Management of Acute malnutrition (IMAM) program with an annual caseload estimated at 52,000 people (27% of national caseload); UNICEF provides technical, financial and material support through Therapeutic feeds, anthropometric equipment, as well as Monitoring & Evaluation tools in over 650 Health Centres across the nation.
If Uganda is to achieve its vision of transforming to a prosperous middle income country, it needs to build the resilience of the economy to shocks by promoting approaches that comprehensively manage risks, build resilience and enhance sustainable development through economic diversification and environment protection.

Ladies and Gentlemen:
I conclude with a word of thanks to Uganda and Ugandans for providing a safe haven to more than 1 million refugees from countries in the region, in particular South Sudan. We recognize your leadership and are committed to reinforcing efforts to mobilize support for you to sustain this approach. If we are to maintain a conducive asylum environment in Uganda it is urgent that we mobilize emergency funding to receive refugees and investment to ensure safe conditions for refugees and Ugandans to cohabitate together.

In order to accelerate this, the United Nations is honoured to co-convene the Uganda Solidarity Summit with the Government of Uganda. The Summit aims to mobilize support to scale up on-going efforts to save lives of refugees, to promote solidarity for Ugandans support to host these victims of violence and to ensure Uganda has the help it needs to continue to transform into a middle income country.
This requires a shift. Away from the business-as-usual, north-south, sector-focused, donor-recipient relationship. It is undoubtedly happening. But more needs to be done. The vision and strategy exist.

Allow me to conclude by reiterating the United Nation’s continued partnership with the Government and People of Uganda in support of Uganda’s commitment to leaving no one behind.

Thank you.