



## NATIONAL COMMEMORATION OF INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY AND LAUNCH OF SPOTLIGHT INITIATIVE

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**Remarks by the UN Resident Coordinator and Designated Official for Security,  
Ms. Rosa Malango**

**Venue: Malukhu Grounds, Mbale**

**Date: 8 March 2020**

*Acknowledgements:*

Your Excellency the President of the Republic of Uganda,  
Your Excellency the Vice President of the Republic of Uganda,  
Rt. Honourable Speaker of Parliament of the Republic of Uganda,  
Your Lordship the Chief Justice of the Republic of Uganda,  
Rt. Honourable Deputy Speaker of Parliament of the Republic of Uganda,  
Rt. Honourable Prime Minister of the Republic of Uganda,  
Rt. Honourable Deputy Prime Ministers,  
The Secretary General of the National Resistance Movement,  
The Leader of Opposition in Parliament,  
Religious Leaders,  
Honourable Ministers,  
Your Excellences Ambassadors and High Commissioners,  
Honourable Members of Parliament,  
Distinguished Guests,  
All Women and Girls of Uganda,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the United Nations in Uganda, I am delighted to be with you today at the national commemoration of the International Women's Day as Uganda celebrates 25 years of the 1995 Constitution reflecting on gender equality and women's empowerment, with the theme: *'I am Generation Equality: Realizing Women's Rights'*. This year's theme recognizes the centrality of gender equality and women's rights to the achievement of the 2030 Development Agenda. Indeed, gender inequality is not just a women's issue but also bears serious socio-economic significance and is essential for economies and communities to thrive. In the words of the UNDSG Amina Mohammed, *"Let us all renew our commitment to ensure that no woman dies because she is a woman and that no woman or girl experiences violence in her lifetime."*\*

The 1995 Constitution, under Article 33(3) provides for the protection of women and their rights, taking into account their unique contributions to society in the form of unpaid care work and, where applicable, their status as care-givers in the community. The Government has established mechanisms to improve the social and economic status of women while eliminating violence and other harmful practices including child marriages and female genital mutilation. Congratulations! It is for this reason that Uganda is one of eight countries in Africa and the only country in East Africa that was selected to benefit from the Global Spotlight Initiative to Eliminate Violence Against Women and Girls governed by the UN Deputy Secretary-General and the Vice President of the EU Commission.

Your Excellency, Globally, Spotlight has deployed targeted, large-scale investments aimed at making significant improvements in the lives of women and girls in Asia, Latin America, the Pacific, and the Caribbean. Now it is investing in Africa. It is a transformational initiative funded by the European Union and the United Nations which conveys our shared commitment to support the Government and people of Uganda in combating violence against women and girls. Spotlight supports Uganda's advancement towards its Vision 2040 and the

Sustainable Development Goals. The Spotlight Initiative in Uganda is a collaborative and innovative partnership between the Government of Uganda, represented by 20 Ministries, Departments and Agencies and seven district local governments; the European Union; the United Nations, civil society, the private sector, religious and cultural leaders, academia and women's groups. Advancing gender equality and women's empowerment requires action from all of us . I am therefore honored that we have with us representatives of these groups who are champions in their communities and influencers of efforts to end violence. Can the champions please stand for recognition. I am also here with the Heads of six UN Agencies that are leading in the implementation of the Spotlight Initiative in Uganda: UN Women, UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), UN Population Fund (UNFPA), UN Development Programme (UNDP), the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR).

Violence against women and girls is one of the most ancient, widespread and devastating human rights violations in the world. It is a major obstacle to the achievement of prosperity, the Sustainable Development Goals and Uganda's Vision 2040. According to the Uganda Demographic Household Survey 2016, 56% of women have experienced spousal violence and 22% sexual violence. Harmful practices such as child marriage and female genital mutilation still prevail in many parts of Uganda. To address these statistics, we must work together, urgently.

Your Excellency, as we commemorate International Women's day today, the world is also marking 25 years since UN Member States signed up to the most visionary and progressive blue print for women and girls' rights - the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action as well as 20 years since the adoption of UN Security Council Resolution 1325, which aims to increase participation, decision making and leadership of women in peace and security efforts including increasing the number of women in uniform and peace building processes. We applaud the progress made in Uganda in the implementation of these very

important women's rights instruments! To mark the 25th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the UN is launching a new campaign, "Generation Equality—Realizing women's rights and an equal future". The campaign demands equal pay, equal sharing of unpaid care and domestic work, an end to sexual harassment and all forms of violence against women and girls, health-care services that respond to their needs, and equal participation of women in political life and decision-making in all areas of life.

Your Excellency, ladies and gentlemen, on the 28th of February, 2020, the UN in partnership with the Office of the AU Special Envoy on Women, Peace and Security, the Federal Republic of Germany and the European Union, supported the launch of the Ugandan chapter of the African Women Leaders Network (AWLN). This network aims to enhance the leadership of women in the transformation of Africa, in line with Aspiration 6 of Africa Agenda 2063 and SDG 5 of the Sustainable Development Goals. As we continue to work to "Leave No One Behind", AWLN is uniquely positioned to bring together women from all walks of life to change the narrative around women's equal participation in leadership, not only in Uganda but across the African Continent.

Before I conclude, we cannot celebrate our achievements without paying homage to the women on whose shoulders we stand today. Allow me to salute Honourable Rhodha Kalema, Ms. Joyce Mpanga, Florence Lubega and Frances Akello who served on the legislative council. The women in the constituent Assembly influenced Uganda's current Constitution which is globally recognized as highly gender responsive. We also applaud women in the business sector, who participated in the liberation struggle as well as pioneers in politics and education. Allow me to congratulate Ms. Anne Juuko, who was appointed as the new Chief Executive Officer for Stanbic Bank Uganda on the 25th February, 2020. Ms. Juuko becomes only the second female leader of an international Bank in Uganda. Stanbic Bank is one of the companies that signed up to the UNDP Gender Seal

and the UN Women Empowerment Principles to promote women empowerment at the workplace. Let's also recognize the Speaker of Parliament, Rt Hon Rebecca Kadaga, Uganda's first female Vice President Dr Spaciousa, Elizabeth Lwanga, Maggi Kigozi, and Miriam Matamba. Thank you for your sacrifice. I also invite you to join me to recognize a new generation of women leaders like Vanessa Nakate the climate change activist and Victo Nalule founder of Tunaweza Foundation who demonstrates that you can lead as a person with different abilities.

Your Excellency, I would like to commend the Government for the great strides recorded in the advancement of women's rights in Uganda, many African nations are learning from Uganda on several fronts. To keep up the momentum, we call on the Government to continue to support gender responsive legislations by prioritizing the passage into Law of key pending bills including the legal aid bill, the sex offenses bill, the minimum wage bill, the succession amendment bill as well as the Marriage and Divorce bill. In addition, we offer our support to the Government of Uganda to ratify a key instrument that provides for the protection of women, within the formal and informal sector, the International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention 190 on violence and harassment in the world of work. We also look forward to the financing and full implementation of the upcoming National Action Plan on UN Security Council Resolution 1325. These actions will go a long way to protect women and girls from gender-based violence, enhance their productivity and transform Uganda into a center of excellence.

Your Excellency, on behalf of the United Nations, I would like to commend the Chairperson of the National Planning Authority Pamela Mbabazi for leading an inclusive and highly consultative process for the third National Development Plan-NDP III. We are working on our first UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework which will inform how we contribute to Uganda's development journey. It is our hope that the Spotlight Initiative launched today will become part

of both the NDP III and our forthcoming UN Cooperation Framework. Only together can we achieve sustainable prosperity for all, protect the environment and support transformation into a modern society. In this regard, given the critical role that Civil Society plays in complementing government in the provision of services and upholding values, we request for your support Mr. President to facilitate a more conducive environment for CSO engagement at all levels of Uganda's progress.

I want to personally thank the Hon. Minister of Gender Labour and Social Development, Hon. Frank Tumwebaze, the Permanent Secretary, and the technical team at the Ministry for their commitment and determination to achieve a stronger partnership that reflects the priorities of the people and Government of Uganda.

I will conclude with a short message from UN Secretary-General António Guterres:

*“Gender equality is fundamentally a question of power. Transforming the balance of power is essential, not only as a question of human rights, personal development, health and wellbeing. It is critical to solving some of the most damaging and intractable problems of our age. Women's participation improves institutions. The 21st century must be the century of women's equality. Let us all play our part in making it so.”*

Thank you.