

## United Nations Uganda Statement on the International Day of Democracy

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**KAMPALA-UGANDA**, 15 September 2020 – Democracy is known to be a form of government in which the common people hold political power through elected representatives. On the occasion of the International Day of Democracy, the United Nations (UN) in Uganda wishes to highlight the importance of ensuring that strengthening democracy, protection of human rights, and fostering of civic space are not affected negatively by the novel COVID-19 pandemic.

In addition to being a member of the United Nations, Uganda is also a member of the African Union whose 2002 Declaration on the Principles Governing Democratic Elections in Africa underlines the importance of peaceful elections. Article F calls on Member States to “take all necessary measures and precautions to prevent the perpetration of fraud, rigging or any other illegal practices throughout the whole electoral process, in order to maintain peace and security”. The principles of peaceful assembly and association have their roots in articles 20 and 21 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, a principle also enshrined in Charters, constitutions and treaties worldwide. This year, as Uganda conducts its 2020/2021 elections while also managing the COVID19 response, accelerating development, keeping people alive and pursuing its democratic journey, I invite everyone to observe the spirit of *Ubuntu* -shared humanity.

UN Secretary-General, António Guterres in his message for International Day of Democracy stated, “As the world confronts COVID-19, democracy is crucial in ensuring the free flow of information, participation in decision-making and accountability for the response to the pandemic”. As Uganda moves forward with the 2020/2021 electoral process while sustaining robust prevention measures against COVID-19, focusing on ensuring the free flow of information on how to implement each step of the electoral process in this context will be important. We need to factor in the impact of the use of technology on keeping people safe and enabling the democratic process to continue. The Sustainable Development Goal 3 includes a focus on strengthening the capacity of all countries, in particular developing countries, for early warning, risk reduction and management of national and global health risks. We must scale up investments in the health systems while we also mobilize financing for access to learning, civic education and livelihoods.

As the country moves forward with general elections preparations and other relevant processes to ensure human development and social stability, it is also important to sustain efforts from national institutions, civil society, and international partners, among others, to ensure that all steps taken are undertaken in a peaceful environment so as to sustain development gains. This International Day of Democracy provides us with an opportunity to reflect on Uganda’s journey, its achievements, the bottlenecks as well as the important action required to strengthen inclusive participation as critical building blocks for peace, good governance and sustainable development.

We encourage members of the public and stakeholders in the electoral process to regularly and thoroughly clean your hands with an alcohol-based rub or wash them with soap and water; avoid going to crowded places; keep a safe distance when in public; please avoid touching eyes, nose and mouth; and

keep up to date on the latest information from trusted sources, such as WHO or Ministry of Health representatives. As political stakeholders campaign and voters cast their trust, please stay safe.

The 2030 Agenda including its 17 Sustainable Development Goals, require every nation to put people first, protect the planet, ensure inclusive prosperity and sustainable peace for all. In this context, under the new UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework for 2021-2025 launched by His Excellency President Yoweri Museveni on 9th September 2020, the UN system in Uganda will sustain its work with the Government and people of Uganda to build resilient institutions, support indigenous dialogues, facilitate constructive civil engagement and help ensure that no one is left behind during this national journey towards inclusive development and governance. Every nation on Earth has a turbulent history as well as the opportunity do things better while managing COVID19. As the Government, private sector, partners and citizens mobilize resources to increase the national capacity to prevent and manage the spread of COVID19, a similar call will have to made across the social spectrum to ensure the same whole of society cooperation informs efforts to implement a free, fair and safe electoral process informed by positive values.

The UN system stands beside the citizens of Uganda and will continue supporting democracy, development and peace in partnership with the Ugandan government, local state and non-state actors and international partners.

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