

**UN Uganda Statement on International Peace Day 2020**  
**By H.E. Ms. Rosa Malango, United Nations Resident Coordinator**

The UN Charter Preamble begins by stating, “We the peoples of the United Nations determined: to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, which twice in our lifetime has brought untold sorrow to mankind; to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small; to establish conditions under which justice and respect for the obligations arising from treaties and other sources of international law can be maintained; and to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom,....” Promoting international peace and security as well as sustainable development, inclusive economic growth and dignified humanitarian assistance have been at the core of the United Nations since its establishment 75 years ago.

On 21 September, we join the rest of the world in celebrating the International Day of Peace, which was first established in 1981 by the UN General Assembly. This year, 2020, as we reflect on how we can contribute to peace and security in our homes, communities and nation, the world finds itself working to develop solutions to threats to peace from new sources. COVID-19, climate induced disasters, violent extremism, cross-border tensions and rising levels of gender-based violence are creating new victims who require our collective support to survive, regain their dignity and thrive in a new world. This International Day of Peace theme is “**Shaping Peace Together.**” This allows us to recognize the 20th Anniversary of the UN Resolution on the Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace. The UN in Uganda has partnered with five cultural institutions under the Obuntubulamu approach led by the Nnagabereka Foundation including Buganda, Bunyoro, Busoga, Acholi and Alur, to promote the Sustainable Development Goals, including a culture of peace, tolerance and constructive citizenship. Beyond these, we are also working in Rwenzori with Toro, Obusinga Bwa Rwenzururu and Obudhinga Bwa Bwamba cultural institutions.

African people are largely peaceful. A quick overview of Uganda history reveals that sustaining peace has been at the heart of governance from time immemorial. The modalities to ensure the dispensation of justice and the promotion of law and order may have evolved over time, yet the principles remain unchanged. Among the Acholi, Rwot Awich (Great Grand Father to Rwot Onen Acana) fought for the protection of his people from foreign domination and slavery. He was later exiled in a place called "Kololo" in present day Kampala which is an Acholi word symbolising exile. The current Rwot Onen Acana played an active role in the LRA peace process that ended the over two decade insurgency. Other kings who fought for liberation of their people include Kabaka Mwangi who is remembered for availing land to resettle Nubian community in Bombo, , King Chwa II- Kabalega of Bunyoro Kingdom. Our partnership centered around Obuntubulamu – the African concept of our shared humanity – hopes to inspire an inter-generational transfer of knowledge to promote social cohesion, self-esteem as well as a catalog of values centered around the people, sustaining peace, the environment and shared prosperity through partnerships.

**Luganda:** *Omulirwano gwokya bbiri* (a neighbour’s problem should be shared by you).

**Acholi:** *Kuc obedo tic pa wan ducu* (Peace is a shared responsibility)

**Lunyoro:** Obusinge buli bujunanizibwa bwa boona (It is the responsibility of all to keep peace).

Like several countries around the world, Uganda is currently fighting on several fronts to sustain peace and protect livelihoods, the global COVID-19 pandemic, a common enemy and tireless virus that threatens our health, security and way of life has captured our collective attention. A recent joint study by the United Nations in Uganda on the socio-economic impact of COVID-19 highlighted the disproportionate impact of preventive measures on women and youth, especially those in the informal economic sectors. At the time of our socio-economic impact analysis of COVID-19, close to two million people were estimated to have fallen into poverty as a result of the preventive measures while five million people were estimated to have lost their jobs. For the refugee community, the number of households who do not have an income earner increased from 31 per cent to 72 per cent. This means almost all of the 1.4 million refugees became increasingly vulnerable during this period. Our response in support of the Government must tackle poverty and access to income if we are to reverse these negative trends. Critical sectors such as agriculture, services, education and health have been severely impacted. An investment in strengthened resilience across all sectors is critical if we are to sustain peace and continue on the journey sustainable development. COVID 19 also represents an opportunity for Uganda and other nations around the world to redefine the social contract between citizens and the State, to transform national journeys towards industrialization and modernization by emphasizing local production, innovation and delivery capabilities. In Uganda, Rwenzori is a good example of a former hotspot for violence which is now becoming a hub for social-economic transformation and investment. Informed by the AGRI-LED approach, we are working with local communities, cultural institutions and the Government to develop pathways for private sector investment to jump start this new inclusive approach. It is our hope that this investment in development will also help to sustain peace. We invite you to log into our UN Uganda YouTube channel to see some of the videos depicting the opportunities in Rwenzori region.

The COVID-19 pandemic in Uganda has created unrest and emerging conflicts ranging from stigma and discrimination against people with COVID-19 or suspected of having had the disease; hate speech, mob justice and evictions by landlords of those suspected of having the disease. Other forms of hate include an increase in incidents of domestic violence, early marriage of the girl child, child sacrifices, increased sexual violence against teenagers especially girls. The only solution to this new threat is for us to take preventive measures to mitigate against its spread – washing hands frequently, wearing a mask, keeping physical distance. We must adopt new behaviors if we are to mitigate the spread of COVID-19, like Uganda did successfully with HIV, and find new ways to promote sustainable development and peace.

Uganda's current roadmap towards sustainable development and peace includes the National Vision 2040 of becoming a modern society, the National Development Plan III which outlines 18 catalytic programs to achieve this vision as well as the newly launched United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework 2021-2025 which outlines how the UN in Uganda will work in collaboration with the Government, civil society, leaders of industry, development partners as well as society's influencers to build resilient institutions, support indigenous

dialogues, facilitate constructive civil engagement and help ensure that no one is left behind during this journey towards ensuring lasting and sustainable peace. The UN reform, initiated in 2019, calls on all UN teams in countries to support the implementation and monitoring of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In Uganda, the UN support has included facilitating the establishment of the National SDG Secretariat, the national SDG roadmap, contributions to the National Development Plan III, alignment of our Cooperation Framework as well as several special initiatives geared around eliminating poverty, engaging the youth, empowering women, promoting cross-border peace and development as well as supporting inclusive environment friendly economic growth. We have anchored our contributions on SDG 16, which aims to “promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels” and SDG 17 which aims to revitalize inclusive partnerships. The UN’s partners now reflect a cross section of Ugandan society as well as the diverse partners investing in the Pearl of Africa.

The UN in Uganda as a trusted partner of this nation, will continue to invest in supporting indigenous capacities to address emerging and existing challenges. Priorities for us in this regard include women, girls and the youth. Youth involvement in peace building is critical for ensuring stability in Uganda. As we commemorate International Peace Day, I would like to highlight a few ongoing initiatives, through UNDP we support innovative formal and informal community peacebuilding mechanisms to promote social cohesion and invest in strengthening institutions such as the Electoral Commission at the heart of the national democratic journey. This helps to bring forth ancient conflict resolution mechanisms and update them to provide the first line of peace informed by positive local values and the rule of law. Our partnerships have led to tangible results including the creation of relevant legislation such as the draft National Peace Building and Conflict Transformation Policy, the Transitional Justice Policy, the Immigrations Policy, and the Small Arms and Light Weapons Bill. UNWOMEN has supported the Ministry of Gender, Labor and Social Development to develop a National Action Plan on UN Security Council Resolution 1325 which addresses peace and security. Through the localization strategy, District Local Governments have been supported to develop Local Action Plans that address the specific peace and conflict issues within their context. UNWOMEN continues to work with civil society organizations to ensure women’s participation in decision-making processes related to conflict prevention and as a result women’s meaningful participation in formal and informal peace negotiations is increased. This is fully aligned with national strategies and policies.

We commend the Government and people of Uganda for your efforts to conduct free and fair elections in 2021 during these unprecedented COVID-19 times, and we call upon all stakeholders to practice tolerance and promote the principles of Obuntubulamu and human rights while adhering to the Standard Operating procedures to prevent the spread of COVID 19 during this process. The UN remains committed to working with the Government and people of Uganda to continue supporting peace initiatives, policies and institutional mechanisms that also combat corruption, improve social wellbeing for all. We will sustain our close partnership with local actors, religious and cultural leaders as well as international partners to deliver on this promise. In this context, we call for the approval of the draft Peace policy as well as the operationalization of the National Initiative on Civic Education for Uganda.

On behalf of the United Nations in Uganda, I want to thank all the youth, women, men, NGOs, religious and cultural leaders, leaders of industry, members of the Government and Parliament as well as development partners and staff of the UN family for your commitment to peace, security and development. On this International Day of Peace, I invite you to take action to help our families and communities, including refugees and migrants, to live a dignified life. Together we must keep the concept of Ubuntu – our shared humanity- alive by promoting peaceful co-existence, nurturing dialogue and encouraging tolerance.

The UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres in his message to the world calls upon all people to stand together for peace. He notes that, “Our world faces a common enemy: a deadly virus that is causing immense suffering, destroying livelihoods, contributing to international tensions and exacerbating already formidable peace and security challenges. In that spirit, and to mark our seventy-fifth anniversary, the United Nations is bringing people together for a global conversation about shaping our future and forging peace in trying times. In these days of physical distancing, we may not be able to stand next to one another. But we must still stand together for peace. And, together, I know we can — and will — build a more just, sustainable and equitable world.” Please add your voice by taking our survey [www.un75.online](http://www.un75.online) and help define the focus of the UN in the future.

*“More than ever before in human history, we share a common destiny. We can master it only if we face it together...”*. Late Koffi Annan, Former UN Secretary-General.

**Join me and be a champion for Goal 16 – for peace and justice in Uganda**

