

THE 15TH ANNUAL JUDGES' CONFERENCE, RECOMMENDATIONS AND RESOLUTIONS, 2013

The 15th Annual Judges' Conference held from 14th-17th January, 2013 at Hotel Africana, under the theme: “*Managing a Modern and Responsive Judiciary*” was opened by the Vice President of Uganda, His Excellency Edward Sekandi.

The objective was to review the performance of the Judiciary during 2012 and set strategies for 2013. The conference reviewed the business of the courts in the previous year and discussed strategies on how to modernize internal systems in order to respond to the public that uses the courts.

At the end of the conference, the participants made the following *recommendations* and *resolutions*.

PUBLIC IMAGE

1. The Judiciary should establish a directorate of Public Relations managed by professional staff to educate and respond to the public about issues concerning the Courts. This directorate should be decentralized across the Country.(CJ)

2. The Judiciary should revive the system of open court days so that courts may explain to the public the process cases go through from filing through trial up to completion. The Courts should put in place user friendly facilities(**CJ,DCJ,PJ,CR,SJ**)

3. The Judiciary should set up an effective complaints handling system across the country to receive and process complaints with the obligation to give feedback.(**JIC**)

INFRASTRUCTURE

4. Court buildings should have facilities for use by persons who are physically challenged to ease their access(**SJ**)

5. Courts should be located in premises that are exclusive for conducting Court business. It is recommended that the Chief Justice sets up a Committee on Estates to monitor the suitability of premises for Courts.(**CJ**)

6. The Government should set up a functional Industrial Court to handle labour disputes which are currently clogging the Civil Division.(**MGLS**)

HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

7. Judges serving outside the judiciary should be replaced by acting Judges and Justices to manage the workload during the absence of substantive holders.**(CJ,JSC)**
8. The Principal Judge should re-deploy Judges in the Divisions basing on workloads to balance the available human resource.**(PJ)**
9. The Judiciary should cause the establishment of a cadre of transcribers to manage the recording equipment in Courts. Courts without recording equipment should be equipped to facilitate their work.**(SJ,MPS)**

COURT ORDERS

10. The practice of the police in purporting to “approve” Orders of Courts before they enforce them is not only illegal but undermines the Authority and Independence of the Courts and should be stopped.**(CJ,MOJ,AG)**
11. Due to the increasing cases of forgeries of Court orders, judgments being posted on the intranet should be in PDF to avoid tampering.**(LAW REPORTING)**

12. The Courts should be facilitated to monitor and enforce grants to holders of Letters of Administration to ensure that they are not abused.**(SJ)**

JUDICIAL ADMINISTRATION

13. The use and function of Assessors in Courts during trials should be reviewed.**(MOJ)**

14. Before embarking on Civil Sessions to clear backlog, it is recommended that preparatory meetings be held so that common strategies are adopted for better results.**(PJ)**

15. There should be a clear mechanism to curb the filing of multiple suits in different courts by unscrupulous litigants with the intention of defeating justice. **(ICT)**

ADMINISTRATION BILL

16. The Judiciary Administration Bill should be processed, debated and passed as a matter of urgency so that the Judiciary may manage its mandate efficiently and effectively.**(CJ,MOJ)**

BUDGET

17. The Judiciary as an Arm of the State should have a reasonable percentage of the National budget to enable it to discharge its constitutional mandate.**(MOF)**

TRAINING

18. The Judiciary should conduct continuous ICT/CCAS Training for both judicial and non judicial officers so that they embrace information technology to enable them perform better including electronic filing of cases. **(JSI)**

CORRUPTION AND INDISCIPLINE

19. Registrars in consultation with the Judges should manage the fixture of cases in Courts to minimize cases of corruption**(DIV. HEADS & RJs)**
20. The slow and secret nature of the disciplinary process by the Judiciary and the Judicial Service Commission against errant officers be reviewed and replaced with a system that is faster and transparent.**(JSC & JUD. DISC. COMM.)**

GENERAL MATTERS

21. In future conferences, the Ministry of Public Service officials should be invited to respond to issues that fall within their Jurisdiction.**(JTC)**

