



ADDRESS

BY

**HON. ALFONSE CHIGAMOY OWINY – DOLLO
CHIEF JUSTICE OF UGANDA**

AT THE

**LAUNCH OF THE JUDICIARY ANNUAL
PERFORMANCE REPORT FOR FY 2022/2023**

JUDICIARY HEADQUARTERS

20th OCTOBER, 2023

PRESENTATION OF THE ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT FOR FY 2022/2023

It is my honour to welcome you all today to the launch of the Judiciary Annual Performance Report for FY 2022/23. I acknowledge, with boundless gratitude, the dedication and hard work demonstrated by the staff of the Judiciary throughout the Financial Year.

This Report represents our commitment to enhancing access to justice to the people of Uganda. It provides valuable insights into the outcomes we have achieved, the progress we have made, and the areas which we will undertake to make further improvements.

The Report provides information concerning all activities of the Judiciary during the Financial Year 2022/23. The strategic objectives, interventions, outputs, indicators and associated targets set out in the **Judiciary Strategic Plan V (FY 2020/21 – FY 2024/25)** are used as the framework for analysis of our performance. The seven imperative strategic objectives are:

- (a) Enhancing equitable access to Judiciary services;
- (b) Improving court processes and case management;
- (c) Strengthening the use of information and communication technology in the administration of justice;
- (d) Developing and supporting the judiciary workforce and institutional capacity;
- (e) Improving coordination, partnerships and accountability;
- (f) improving public awareness and the image of the judiciary; and
- (g) Enhancing resource mobilisation and management.

This report also provides comparison of performance with previous Financial Years for some areas.

1.0 FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE

1.1 Government of Uganda funding

Over the last three Financial Years, the Judiciary received an increment in its budget allocation from **199.0 Bn** for FY 2020/21 to **UGX 376.9 Bn** for the FY 2021/2022 and to **UGX 381.6 Bn** for the FY 2022/2023. During the budget execution, a supplementary budget of **UGX 1.6 Bn** was received leading to a revised budget of **UGX 383.2 Bn**. The Judiciary also received a cumulative release of **UGX 7 Bn** from

2.0 ENHANCING HUMAN CAPITAL DEVELOPMENT

2.1 Recruitment

In line with our Transformation Agenda, and supported by the increase in funding, the Judiciary was able to enhance on its human resource capacity as shown in table A below.

Table A: Staff Recruitment for the last two Financial Years

	Judicial Officers	Administrative Staff	Total
FY 2021/22	288	118	406
FY 2022/23	122	215	337
Total	410	333	743

Over the previous two Financial Years, the Judiciary received a total of **743** personnel into the Judiciary Service, including new staff and those appointed on promotion to bridge the staffing gaps and improve service delivery.

During FY 2022/23, the Judiciary received a total of **337** personnel (**122** Judicial Officers and **215** Administrative Staff). Key among the recruitments were the three Justices of the Supreme Court: Hon. Mr. Justice Madrama Izama Christopher, Hon. Lady Justice Elizabeth Musoke and Hon. Mr. Justice Stephen Musota.

Table B shows the number of Judicial Officers we had in 2021 compared to the ones in post today.

Table B: Current Number of Judicial Officers in Post

	STAFF CATEGORY	No. of Judicial Officers in post on 30/06/2021	No. of Judicial Officers in post today
1.	Justices of Supreme Court	10	09
2.	Justices of Court of Appeal	14	12
3.	Judges of High Court `	59	81
4.	Chief Registrar	01	01
5.	Registrars	09	10
6.	Deputy Registrars	23	38
7.	Assistant Registrars	13	24
8.	Chief Magistrates	51	92
9.	Senior Principal Magistrates Grade I	00	10
10.	Principal Magistrates Grade I	02	20
11.	Senior Magistrates Grade I	04	32
12.	Magistrates Grade I	164	301
13.	Magistrates Grade II	26	19
	TOTAL	376	649

We started the FY 2021/2022¹ with very few staff, comprising of only **376** Judicial Officers. Some Chief Magistrates were caretaking between 2 and 6 Chief Magisterial Areas, with the Fort Portal Chief Magistrate operating 6 Magisterial areas while the ones of Soroti and Lira were each running 05 Chief Magisterial Areas.

I am pleased to report that today we have a total of **649 Judicial Officers**² all strategically deployed. The Judicial Officer to population ratio has therefore improved to **1: 70,203** in 2023 from **1: 81,724** in 2022 and **1: 114,362** in 2020. The impact of this enhanced staff number will be explained shortly.

¹ See: The Judiciary Annual Performance Report, 2020/2021, p. 31

² See:

<http://judiciary.go.ug/files/downloads/JUDICIAL%20OFFICERS%20LIST%20as%20at%20August%2030%202023%20-%20Amended.pdf>

2.2 Enhancing Human Resource capacity

I am glad to report that most of the newly recruited or promoted staff have been duly inducted and given sufficient orientation and requisite skills to effectively execute judicial work.

The Judiciary continues to conduct trainings to enhance the capacity of Judicial Officers to handle cases in key emerging areas. The trainings conducted during the F/Y mainly targeted: Adjudication of Communication Related Offences, Information Technology and Tax Systems, Asset Recovery, Trafficking in Persons, Survivor Support and Management of Victims of GBV Cases, Cyber Crime and Electronic Evidence, Disability Rights, Amendments in the Electricity Regulatory Act, Insolvency Law and Climate Justice.

As a result of the improved capacity of the Judiciary, the following achievements were registered:

3.0 CASE MANAGEMENT

3.1 Case disposal

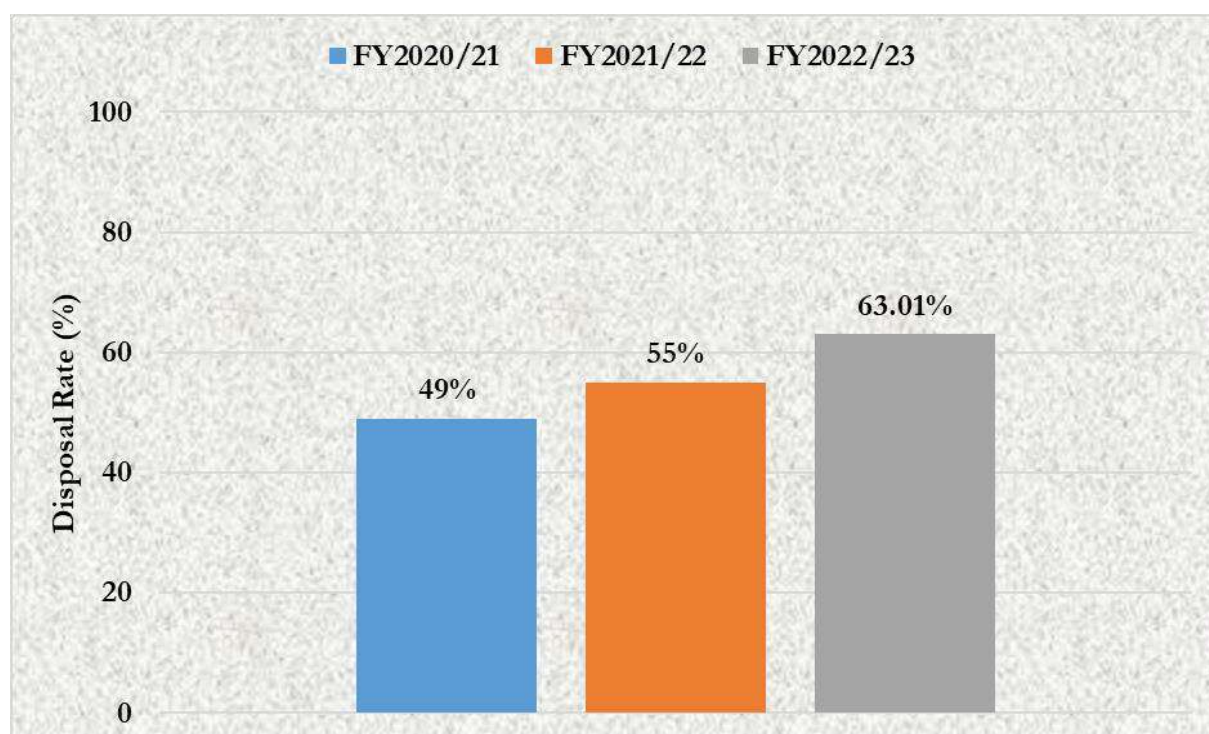
The Judiciary has experienced steady growth in the number of completed cases up to **266,323** cases in FY 2022/23 from **205,967** cases in FY 2021/22 and **156,875** cases in FY 2020/21 as shown in Figure C below.

Table C: Completed cases for three last Financial Years

	Cases Registered	Cases completed	Pending cases
FY 2022/23	294,020	266,323	156,349
FY 2021/22	229,375	205,967	168,007
FY 2020/21	165,347	156,875	161,054

There was improvement in the speed of disposal of cases i.e. a disposal rate of **63.01%** in FY 2022/23 was achieved as compared to **55%** in FY 2021/22 and **49%** in FY 2020/21 as shown in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1: Overall Disposal Rates for the last Three Financial Years



As a result of the improvement in the disposal of cases, the average time taken (in days) from filing to disposal of cases has also reduced. The Courts completed cases faster, by 3 weeks in FY 2022/23 as opposed to previous years.

Because of this good performance, the percentage of court users rating confidence in courts has increased from 61% to 71% according to a survey done by Avocats Sans Frontieres, 2023³.

3.2 Case disposal by Court level

The Judiciary completed a total of **266,323** out of a total caseload of **422,672** cases. The case load comprised of **128,652** cases brought forward from FY 2021/22 and **294,020** of the freshly registered cases in FY 2022/23. The details are shown in Tables **D** and **E** below.

³ Avocats Sans Frontieres (2023), A survey on Knowledge, Attitudes, and Practices on Pre-Trial detention.

Table D: Overall performance of Courts in FY 2022/23

Court Level	Brought forward from FY 2021/22	Registered	Caseload	Completed	Pending cases as at 30/6/23
Supreme Court	614	143	757	62	695
Court of Appeal	7,661	1,636	9,297	1,099	8,198
High Courts	38,360	84,141	122,501	62,702	59,799
Chief Magistrates' Courts	63,080	133,997	197,077	132,753	64,324
Magistrate Grade I Courts	18,452	72,132	90,584	68,021	22,563
Magistrate Grade II Courts	485	1,971	2,456	1,686	770
Grand Total	128,652	294,020	422,672	266,323	156,349

Source: Court Case Performance Report for FY 2022/23

Table E: Performance of Magistrates

Performance of Magistrates by Rank for FY 2022/23				
Rank of Judicial Officer	Brought Forward	Registered	Completed	Pending
Chief Magistrates	22492	34061	35,108	21445
Magistrates Grade I	65606	129536	134,583	60559
Magistrates Grade II	2431	7276	7329	2378
Total	90,529	170,873	177,020	84,382

During the reporting period, the Magistrates Grade One recorded the highest disposal of **134,583 cases** followed by Chief Magistrates with **35,108 cases**.

This can be attributed to the Magistrates Grade I having the highest staffing level (292) as compared to Chief Magistrates (77) and Magistrates Grade II (22) as of 30th June 2023. As a result of the increased staffing at various court levels, there was a visible increase in productivity, especially at High Court and Magistrate Courts level.

3.3 Case disposal by Case profile

Criminal cases were the most registered cases, and also the most completed. The rise of criminal cases can be attributed to population growth and urbanisation, which set challenges for unemployment and survival instincts, giving rise to a higher crime rate. On the other hand, international crimes were the least registered and completed. **Table F** shows the case load profile by case type in FY 2022/23.

Table F: Overall caseload profile for FY 2022/23 by case type

Case Type	Brought forward from FY 2021/22	Registered in FY 2022/23	Caseload	Completed	Pending as at 30/6/23
Criminal	57,489	148,755	206,244	139,768	66,476
Civil	29,913	60,725	90,638	52,017	38,621
Land	25,106	36,906	62,012	30,687	31,325
Commercial	5,507	20,878	26,385	18,946	7,439
Family	10,408	26,368	36,776	24,550	12,226
Anti-corruption	222	252	474	277	197
International Crimes	7	136	143	78	65
Grand Total	128,652	294,020	422,672	266,323	156,349

Source: Court Case Performance Report for FY 2022/23

3.4 Case backlog management

Overall, courts closed with a pending case load of **156,349** cases, of which **42,960** were backlog. This accounted for **27.48%** of cases as backlog from **32%** in FY 2020/21 which translates into 4.52% reduction in backlog.

The age of uncompleted cases in the courts has declined over the last 3 financial years, with only **14.25%** of uncompleted cases ageing **5 years and older** as of the end of June 2023, compared to **16.73%** as of the end of June 2022. **Table F** below shows the case age analysis for last three Financial Years.

Table G: Case Age Analysis for the last 3 Financial Years

Percentage case age distribution for the last 3 Financial Years						
S/No	End of Financial Year	under 1 year (%)	Greater than 1 but Less than 2 years (%)	Between 2 and 5 years (%)	Between 5 and 10 years (%)	above 10 years (%)
1	June 2023	34.79	20.25	30.72	10.64	3.61
2	June 2022	28.22	21.56	33.48	11.58	5.15
3	June 2021	34.55	18.40	30.73	12.43	3.90

Source: Court Case Performance Reports for FY 2020/21, FY 2021/22 and FY 2022/23

The enhanced performance in case disposal has contributed to the reduction in case backlog. This has been achieved through various initiatives put in place to speed up the completion of cases. These include:

a) **Plea Bargaining Programme**

A total of **2,857 cases** were completed through plea bargaining at the High Court level, while **1,160 cases** were completed through the day-to-day hearing of cases and **1,697 cases** through Plea Bargaining Camps. A total of **2,389** other cases were completed through Plea Bargaining Camps in the various Magisterial Areas. This reflects an **88.12%** clearance rate with the average lead time of less than one day.

b) **Small Claims Procedure (SCP)**

Currently SCP is rolled out to **178 courts** across the country. The expansion of the SCP courts and the growing number of cases registered reflects a largely user-friendly and demand-driven initiative. A total number of **22,092 cases** were completed through SCP recovering claims of a total value of **UGX 16.4 Bn** as compared to **UGX 11.1 Bn** realized in FY 2020/21.

c) **Mediation**

During the Financial Year, a total of **1,250 cases** were mediated to conclusion out of the **2,210 cases** enrolled under the mediation scheme.

d) **Monitoring and evaluation of case backlog**

The Case Backlog Reduction Committee chaired by the Hon. Deputy Chief Justice was able to interact with various Heads and Deputy Heads of High Court Divisions and Circuits to establish, inter alia, the true causes of case backlog and workable interventions that can help curb the pandemic of case backlog. These interventions have helped the Judiciary to implement tailor made solutions against case backlog with commendable success.

e) **Daily hearing of cases under the Criminal Division**

The Judiciary came up with the idea of changing from criminal session system to daily hearings, and the Criminal Division being central to the criminal justice at High Court level, was selected to develop and pilot the concept in October 2021.

Overtime, the Pilot Project has registered quicker disposal of cases at the Criminal Division. Before the shifting from the session system in 2021, the Division case load went as far back as 2016. Following the commencement of the Pilot Project, the Division was able to complete all the cases committed in 2019, and was set to begin on those committed in 2020.

The reduction in the average lead times was by 250 days, from the 863 days recorded in the 7 months prior to the start of the Pilot Project, to 613 days recorded in the last 7 months of FY 2022/23 under the Pilot Project.

f) **Special sessions on Gender Based Violence (GBV) related cases**

With support from UNFPA, the Judiciary organised GBV criminal sessions at Tororo, Kamuli, Kamwenge, Nebbi and Bushenyi as well as the Chief Magistrates Courts of Pader and Kayunga. These courts disposed of **319 cases** out of the **359 cases** cause listed, thereby recording a clearance rate of **88.86%**.

g) **Juvenile criminal sessions**

The Judiciary conducted four (4) juvenile Criminal Sessions at Naguru Remand Home completing an average of 20 cases per sitting. As we speak, there are no backlog cases at the Naguru Remand Home.

4.0 ENHANCING ACCESS TO JUSTICE

4.1 Operationalisation of six High Court Circuits

During the financial year, significant efforts were made to improve access to justice services and combat case backlog in Uganda by operationalising six High Court Circuits, which had been non-operational since their establishment in 2016. Six (6) New High Court Circuits at Luwero, Iganga, Tororo, Rukungiri, Moroto and Hoima were officially launched bringing the total number of High Court Circuits to twenty (20).

The importance of these new Circuits in enhancing access to justice for residents in these regions was stressed during the launch. The Judiciary promises transparent, fair and efficient legal process that guarantees trust and confidence in the judicial system. The Judicature (High Court Circuits) Instrument, 2016 is under review with the aim of creating additional High Court Circuits to enhance service proximity and alleviate the burden of case backlog.

4.2 Strengthening the Legal and Regulatory Framework

The Judiciary continued its efforts toward strengthening its legal and regulatory framework provided under Chapter 8 of the Constitution of Uganda. The focus was on fast-tracking the operationalisation of the AJA and reviewing Rules and Practice Directions to strengthen the independence of the Judiciary and to improve access to justice and public trust in Judiciary services.

The following laws are being reviewed to enhance efficiency in the administration of justice and delivery of judiciary services:

- a) The Judicature (Amendment) Bill, 2023
- b) The Judicature (Court Fees) Rules, 2023
- c) The Magistrates Courts (Amendment) Bill, 2023
- d) The Judicature (Supreme Court) (Amendment) Rules, 2023
- e) The Judicature (Court of Appeal) (Amendment) Rules, 2023
- f) The Judicature (Cases of Persons with Disabilities), Rules, 2023
- g) The Judicature (Management of Exhibits) (Practice) Directions, 2023
- h) The Judicature (Electronic Filing, Service and Virtual Proceedings) Rules, 2023
- i) The Administration of the Judiciary (Judicial Training Institute) Regulations, 2023
- j) The Administration of the Judiciary (Judiciary Service) Regulations, 2023
- k) The Constitution (High Court Environment and Infrastructure Division) (Practice) Directions, 2023

4.3 Creation of Magisterial Areas and High Court Circuits

In line with the Judiciary Transformation Agenda, the *Magisterial Areas Instrument* is being revised to, *inter alia*, establish a Chief Magistrate's Court for every district in Uganda and at least one Magistrate Grade One Court for each county constituency. This effort is geared towards enhancing access to Court services across the country by reducing distances to the courts and consequently cutting down the cost of justice and unwarranted case backlog.

The *Magistrates Courts (Magisterial Areas and Magistrates Courts) Instrument 2023* was approved by the Judiciary Council for gazetting at its meeting of 28th September 2023.

4.4 Creation of more High Court Circuits

The Judiciary embarked on an exercise to increase the coverage and proximity of High Court circuits across the country for effective operation and delivery of justice to the people of Uganda. A taskforce was constituted in February 2023 which commenced consultations in selected regions and districts, focusing on various parameters including distance, caseload, availability of basic facilities, population, proximity with other justice institutions, and availability of land.

Accordingly, the *Judicature (Designation of High Court Circuits) Instrument, 2023* was reviewed and approved by the Judiciary Council for gazetting, at its meeting of 28th September 2023.

4.5 Enhancing pecuniary jurisdiction of Magistrates Courts

The pecuniary jurisdiction of Chief Magistrates is limited to civil suits whose value does not exceed 50 Million Shillings while Magistrates Grade One are limited to suits not exceeding 20 Million shillings. Considering the high inflationary levels, the population growth and the increasing growth in the economy, the Magistrates have very few cases they can handle, which has increased backlog at the High Court level.

The Judiciary constituted a Taskforce to conduct a study on proposals for enhancement of the jurisdiction for Magistrates Courts to further justify the need for the revision. The team reviewed the Magistrates Court Act Cap 16, in light of the reasons for enhancement of the jurisdiction. It also undertook a nationwide statistical

analysis of cases before all the High Court Circuits and Magistrates Courts to establish the impact of the amendment on the number of cases that would move from the High Courts to the Magistrates Courts. The findings were adopted by the Law Reform Committee and the process of amendment is being managed by the Office of the Attorney General.

4.6 Improved court infrastructure

With support from GoU, the Judiciary was able to construct and maintain some of its buildings. The Judiciary made significant progress in FY 2022/23 as follows:

- (i) The Supreme Court and Court of Appeal buildings are in final stages of completion;
- (ii) Soroti High Court is at second-floor walling;
- (iii) Rukungiri High Court is at the plastering stage;
- (iv) Tororo High Court is pending approval from the Solicitor General;
- (v) Alebtong CM Court is at the roofing and finishing stage;
- (vi) Lyantonde CM Court is at the plastering and fitting of windows stage;
- (vii) Budaka CM Court is at the painting stage, tiling and external works;
- (viii) Abim G1 Court Block A is at the roofing stage while Block B is at the substructure level;
- (ix) Karenga G1 Court is at the roofing stage;
- (x) Patongo is at the finishing stage with painting and tiling works ongoing;
- (xi) The rehabilitation of Nabilatuk G1 Court is ongoing at painting stage; and
- (xii) The extension of Moroto CM Court is at painting stage.

Renovations of court building were carried out and completed in the following courts: Tororo CM, Soroti CM, Kamuli CM, Otuke G1, Kalongo G1 and Nakawa CM Courts, Gulu High Court and CM courts, Mbale High Court and Chief Magistrate courts, Pader CM Court, Katakwi CM Court. and Commercial Court. The renovations were also intended to put in place facilities that enable easy access to the Courts by persons with disabilities. The Judiciary will continue to mobilise resources to make sure that the Courts are maintained in good condition.

The proportion of districts with a complete administration of Justice service delivery point improved from **79.5%** in FY 2021/22 to **85.25%** in FY 2022/23. With these expansions, we have been able to reduce the distance to courts. For example, cases

from Karamoja region that used to be handled at Soroti High Court are now handled at Moroto High Court Circuit.

In addition, plans are underway to have Regional Courts of Appeal so that appeal cases from High Courts are resolved at the regional level. This will reduce the cost of accessing justice. As the *Administration of Justice Programme* fraternity, we will ensure that institutions under the Programme like ODPP, Uganda Police, Uganda Prisons, Legal Aid Service Providers (like Legal Aid Clinics and Justice Centres Uganda) are supported to expand their services so that cases are expeditiously handled.

4.7 Provision of more Transport equipment

The Judiciary maintained a fleet of 345 vehicles and 138 motorcycles. Furthermore, a total of 47 vehicles were procured for Justices of the Supreme Court (5); a Justice of the Court of Appeal (1); High Court Judges (31); Deputy/Assistant Registrars (10); and 4 vehicles were earmarked for locus quo visits and field supervision. In addition, 52 motorcycles were procured to facilitate process service at courts.

The Judiciary is in the process of acquiring a marine boat to operate on the islands of Kalangala and Buvuma. At the close of the financial year, a 30% partial payment had been made to commence construction of the marine boat, the delivery of which was expected in FY 2023/24.

4.8 Promotion of equal opportunities to reduce vulnerability

The Judiciary embarked on special programmes that promote equal opportunities to reduce vulnerability. So far, we have created children and victim friendly rooms in **nine (9)** courts and we have plans to scale up the same and other interventions such as having in place adequate sign language interpreters in courts and access to braille services for people (litigants) with special needs.

5.0 USE OF ICT IN THE ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE

The Judiciary continued to invest in automation of court processes to improve efficiency and effectiveness in its business processes.

5.1 The Electronic Court Case Management Information System (ECCMIS)

During the FY 2022/2023, the ECCMIS was successfully rolled out to the Supreme Court, Court of Appeal, High Court Divisions of; Anti-Corruption, Land, Civil and Commercial, Luwero High Court Circuit and Mengo Chief Magistrates Court. The ECCMIS streamlined court processes, automating the entire case life cycle from e-filing to e-archival, and demonstrated the Judiciary's commitment to improve efficiency and access to Judiciary services, through use of modern technology.

The noted achievements of ECCMIS have so far been:

- (a) Increased case registration/filing.
- (b) Increased case clearance rate.
- (c) Increased Non-Tax Revenue (NTR) Collection. **UGX 400 Million** was collected through ECCMIS in March 2023, as compared to **UGX 80 Million** collected in March 2022, when ECCMIS had just been rolled out.
- (d) Increased Use of E-Payment for Court Fees. The use of ECCMIS has reduced payment of court fees by cash and increased the use of mobile money and point of sale (PoS) modes.
- (e) Increased enrolment of more ECCMIS Users. The number of current ECCMIS user accounts has increased from **4,477** in March 2022 to **13,384** users in June 2023.

5.2 Rollout of more Video Conferencing Systems

During the Financial Year the Judiciary installed 2 sets of Video Conferencing Systems which significantly improved the ability to conduct online hearings of cases, especially in areas affected by insecurity. They were installed at the Court of Appeal/Constitutional Court as well as the High Court Criminal Division.

Video conferencing technology allows for remote participation in court proceedings, enabling witnesses, legal representatives, and even Judges to join hearings virtually from different locations. It is particularly valuable in areas where physical attendance in court may be challenging due to security concerns or other logistical reasons. The implementation of video conferencing systems has helped promote access to justice

and the efficient handling of cases despite the challenges posed by insecurity in certain regions.

5.3 Procurement of Digital Court Recording and Transcription systems

Five sets of Court Recording and Transcription Systems were procured and installed in selected courts to improve operations, enhance efficiency, transparency and accountability in court proceedings across various locations. The systems were strategically deployed at the Supreme Court (2nd Court Room) and the High Court Circuits of Tororo, Luwero, Hoima, Moroto, and Iganga. The systems play a crucial role in accurately capturing and preserving court proceedings, ensuring a reliable record of discussions, testimonies, and legal arguments.

5.4 Revamping the Uganda Legal Information Institute (ULII)

The Uganda Legal Information Institute (ULII) was made more user-friendly; catalogued and organised with improvements in case collection and digitisation of the reading materials received at the documentation centre. ULII is the Judiciary's fully-fledged Law Reporting and Documentation Department that manages law reporting on Uganda case law, legislation, gazettes, statutory instruments, ordinances, and bills. On average, the main site, which had been undergoing migration since March 2023, received 261 users per minute.

6.0 ENHANCED STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENTS

6.1 Excellent performance by the Administration of Justice Programme

The Administration of Justice Programme comprises of the Judiciary, Judicial Service Commission, Office of the Director of Public Prosecution, Uganda Prisons Service, Uganda Police, Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development, Law Development Centres and Tax Appeals Tribunal. The Programme prepared and submitted the Programme Annual Performance Report FY 2022/23 to the Office of the Prime Minister, National Planning Authority and Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development.

During the recent National Annual Performance Assessment by the Office of the Prime Minister, the Administration of Justice Programme emerged the **OVERALL BEST** in creating impact using the availed resources during the financial year 2022/23. The Programme outcomes performance was rated at **75%**.

The Judiciary as the lead Programme Institution will continue to coordinate Programme activities through the Programme structures of the Technical Working Group, the Programme Working Group and the Leadership Committee.

6.2 Engagement with Development Partners and Justice delivery stakeholders

The Judiciary also engaged international Agencies to agree on avenues for funding and access to justice innovations within the Judiciary. The Judiciary Top Management met the United Nations Country Team (UNCT) on 18th January 2023 and agreed on funding opportunities under the new Administration of Justice Programme. The Agencies and development partners which agreed to further support the Judiciary include: The Austrian Development Agency, the International Development Law Organisation (IDLO), The Hague Institute for International Law (HiiL), the Pepperdine University, the UN Women, UNICEF, UNFPA, UNODC, among others.

The Judiciary will continue to work closely with the Development Partners to strengthen coordination and implementation of interventions within the Administration of Justice Programme.

6.3 Harnessing regional and international engagements

The Judiciary actively engaged in various regional and international events, fostering valuable collaborations and exchanging insights on justice-related matters. These included High-Level Meetings of Chief Justices, Judicial Officers and administrators at the East African, African and Common Wealth membership levels.

The Judiciary successfully hosted the *2nd Annual East African Judicial Conference* from 25th to 28th of October 2022 and the *17th International Association of Women Judges Conference* from 26th to 29th of October 2022. We were honoured, during these conferences to host the Honourable Chief Justices of Kenya, South Sudan, Burundi and Somalia, as well as the President of the East African Court of Justice, among others. We thank all those who organised and participated in these conferences for a job well done.

The East African Magistrates and Judges Conference held in Kigali, Rwanda in November 2022, chose Uganda to host the 2023 Conference from 5th – 8th December, 2023. The Conference preparations are already in high gear.

6.4 Public awareness and sensitisation

The Judiciary scaled up public interactive engagements and awareness through *Court Open Days*, community barazas, and media engagements in addition to extending its physical presence in various places. The Judiciary also intensified inspections, addressed complaints and offered feedback to the public to improve the quality of justice services. All the members of the Judiciary Top Management were personally involved in the various Court Open Days, and deliberately interacted with Court users in different districts.

From the reports I have received, I can proudly say that, the public have gained better trust, in the Judiciary services, than ever before. We are therefore committed to continuously addressing emerging challenges that affect service delivery.

7.0 GENERAL CHALLENGES ENCOUNTERED

1. **Closure of premises housing the Supreme Court.** Due to a series of occurrences that threatened both life and property. I took drastic measures on 30th May 2022, and advised the Supreme Court to relocate from the rented premises at Kololo that had been classified as not fit for human habitation until repairs could be made. Unfortunately, for more than half a year, the landlord was not able to correct the wrongs, and as a result, the Supreme Court was relocated to Lourdel Road, Wandegeya, pending completion of the Supreme Court house. We regret any inconveniences caused by this decision.
2. **Increasing caseload.** While commendable efforts have been made to deal with the case backlog, the number of newly registered cases have consistently increased with each passing year. For the financial year 2022/23, the newly registered cases across the courts increased from **229,375** recorded in the financial year 2021/22 to **294,020** indicating an increase of **64,645** cases. This calls for strategic interventions to deal with this growing case load in order to quench the immense thirst for justice services across the country.

3. **Inadequacies amongst some of the key justice agencies.** The other justice service agencies, such as the ODPP, the Uganda Police Force, the Judicial Service Commission and the Office of the Attorney General, among others, suffer gross human resource deficiencies and lack sufficient tools for their workforce. This has inevitably frustrated justice service delivery and made it difficult to banish case backlog in courts.

We have also noted growing case backlog at the Industrial Court, which needs to be addressed urgently. There is need for an additional 3 Judges at the industrial court to be able to clear the backlog, which stood at **69.7%** by the end of June 2023.

4. **Inadequate remand homes across the country.** The glaring absence of Remand Homes in most districts in Uganda has led to delays in disposal of juvenile cases and inevitable breach of the well-intended provisions of the Children Act and other laws. The high transport costs of taking juvenile offenders to the courts have inevitably caused congestion in the remand homes and exacerbated delays in case trials.

8.0 PRIORITIES FOR FY 2023/24

1. Reforms in the Law

We plan for more reforms in the laws in the following areas:

- a) Amend the Magistrates Courts Act to enhance the civil jurisdiction of Magistrates Courts so that they are empowered to handle disputes of an enhanced value consistent with the current economic trends and inflationary levels in the country. This will help fight case backlog and delays in delivery of justice.
- b) Revise the Magisterial Areas Instrument of 2017 to establish Chief Magistrates Courts at every district and Magistrate Grade One Courts at every county/constituency in Uganda, in order to bring Judiciary services nearer to the people.

- c) Review the High Court Circuits Instrument 2016 to increase the number of High Court Circuits across the regions. This will give rise to the creation of ten (10) new High Court Circuits at Nebbi, Kitgum, Apac, Kumi, Rakai, Bushenyi, Kasese Kitgum, Kiboga, Pallisa and other deserving places, in order to alleviate the severe inhibitions to access to High Court services in those areas.

2. Promotion of Alternative Dispute Resolution Mechanisms

The Judiciary of Uganda hosted the first ever ADR Summit from 26th to 27th June 2023. The objective of the Summit was to share experiences, best practices and build consensus on re-engineering the ADR agenda in the administration of Justice in Uganda. The Judiciary has also engaged a team of highly dedicated retired Justices and Judges and some very senior advocates to support mediation services in the Judiciary.

The Judiciary plans to enhance ADR interventions across the country, through:

- (a) Rolling out Small Claims Procedure to 36 Magistrates Courts,
- (b) holding Plea-bargaining sessions at the Criminal Division, 20 High Court Circuits and selected Chief Magistrate Courts,
- (c) promoting appellate mediation, and
- (d) training and accrediting of 160 mediators to support the application of mediation in dispute resolution.

3. Construction of more Court buildings

The Judiciary plans to:

- (a) Complete Supreme Court and Court of Appeal buildings
- (b) Complete the construction of Soroti and Rukungiri High Court buildings
- (c) Complete the construction of Alebtong, Budaka and Lyantonde Chief Magistrate Court buildings
- (d) Complete the construction of Abim, Patongo and Karenga Magistrate Grade 1 Court buildings
- (e) Start the construction of Tororo High Court building (Phase 1)

4. Renovation of more Court buildings

The Judiciary plans to renovate:

- (a) 3 High Courts circuits of Mbarara, Fort Portal and Jinja.
- (b) 3 Chief Magistrate Courts of Entebbe, Nabweru and Kapchorwa.
- (c) 4 Magistrate Grade One Courts of Amuru, Aduku, Ngora and Apala.

5. Procurement of more Transport Equipment

In an effort to improve security for Judicial Officers and facilitate locus visits and inspections, the Judiciary plans to acquire vehicles for specified officers (Justices and Judges), Registrars and Magistrates as follows:

- (a) 60 vehicles will be procured for Judicial Officers (Justices of the Supreme Court (3), Judges of the High Court (20), Registrars (4), Chief Magistrates (16) and Magistrates Grade One (17),
- (b) 5 vehicles will be procured for field supervision
- (c) 1 Minibus (14 Seater) will be acquired for cross-cutting services.
- (d) 1 boat will be procured for Courts in island areas of Buvuma & Kalangala; and
- (e) 85 motorcycles will be procured for Process Service.

6. Automation of Courts

The Judiciary will continue to foster the use of ICT in adjudication of cases. Specifically, this will be done through:

- (a) Rolling out ECCMIS to Cluster Two Courts: Criminal Division, International Crimes Division, Buganda Road CM Court, and Standards, Utilities and Wild Life CM Court.
- (b) Rolling out ECCMIS to additional six (6) courts of Jinja High Court, Jinja Chief Magistrate Court, Kamuli Chief Magistrate, Bugembe Magistrate Grade 1 Court; Kakira Magistrate Grade 1 Court and Kagoma Magistrate Grade 1 Court;
- (c) Digitization of Court files for 2 ECCMIS Court Stations - Supreme Court and Court of Appeal;
- (d) Development of the Judiciary Judgement Writing Tool.

7. Provision of alternative sources of power for courts

Courts in remote areas face frequent load-shedding which interrupts Court operations and ultimately affects the quality of service delivery. The Judiciary will procure and install solar systems in **10 Courts** of Kiruhura, Butambala, Budaka, Patongo, Pader, Mayuge, Karenga, Kiryandongo, Nabilatuk, and Napak to alleviate the power shortage.

8. Provision of Furniture for Courts

Some Magistrates Courts lack sufficient furniture in the Court halls which has forced them to borrow furniture from Local Government Councils to operate. The Judiciary plans to procure more furniture for 12 new Justices, 27 Courts and the Judicial Training Institute.

9. Acquisition of land for construction of Courts

The Judiciary plans to process and acquire 40 land titles in areas earmarked for the construction of Court buildings across the country.

10. Establishment of the Performance Management System

Section 18 of the AJA 2020, provides for the establishment of a Performance Management System within the Judiciary to ensure institutional and individual accountability. The Judiciary will complete the development of a Case Weighting Scheme whose primary goal is to develop a valid measure of judicial work across the courts in Uganda, by taking into account variations in complexity among different case types as well as the differences in non-case-related responsibilities of Justices, Judges, Registrars and Magistrates.

11. Development and implementation of the Judgment Writing Tool

The Judiciary has embarked on developing a Judgment Writing Tool that will have access to the different laws and authorities with a designed easy-to-use template. It is expected to contribute to the efficient and effective reduction of case backlog by lessening the time it would take Judicial officers to write their judgments and rulings.

9.0 CONCLUSION

As we present this Report, I call upon all of us to reflect on our achievements, acknowledge areas for improvement, and renew our commitment to serving the public with integrity. Let us embrace the opportunities presented to us and continue to adapt to the evolving needs of our people.

Let me extend my appreciation to the Judiciary's stakeholders, including the Executive and Legislative Arms of Government, the legal fraternity, the Administration of Justice Programme institutions, Development Partners, Non-State Actors, Civil Society Organisations, the academia and the media, for their unwavering support and collaboration. Together, we shall continue to work towards enhancing access to justice for our people.

I further convey my gratitude to the leadership of the Judiciary and the Judiciary Council for your support and co-operation throughout the Financial Year. I specifically want to thank the Deputy Chief Justice, the Principal Judge, the Justices of the Supreme Court and Court of Appeal, the Judges of the High Court, the Permanent Secretary/ Secretary to the Judiciary, the Chief Registrar, the Registrars, the Heads of Departments, the Magistrates and all the staff of the Judiciary for your concerted efforts that accounted for this excellent performance.

Finally, I thank you all who have joined us today to celebrate this worthwhile milestone. May the Good Lord bless you abundantly.

FOR GOD AND MY COUNTRY

Alfonse Chigamoy Owiny – Dollo
CHIEF JUSTICE

20th October 2023