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THE REPUBLIC OF UGANDA

OFFICE OF THE CHIEF REGISTRAR  
JUDICIARY  
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KAMPALA - UGANDA

30 March 2016

## Press Release

### Judiciary's response to accusations attributed to Minister of State for Ethics and Integrity, Fr. Simon Lokodo

The Judiciary is dismayed by the reckless and unethical outburst by the Minister of State for Ethics and Integrity, Fr. Simon Lokodo, that appeared in the Wednesday (March 30, 2016) New Vision, Page 30.

The minister was, among others, quoted castigating the Judiciary as corrupt and called for its overhaul. He claimed that "a poor person does not get justice" from the courts, and that "judicial officers (should) get back to their senses and do the job they are expected to do with diligence, dedication and without bias or partiality and misguided discretion". He further claimed that the courts have "disappointed (him) on three occasions".

*SPN*

#### We respond as follows:

1. Appointments of judges and other judicial officers takes an elaborate and stringent system which only picks out the best, who are vetted by different government agencies, including parliament, before they are appointed by the president. For the minister to say the judges are senseless is to abuse the integrity of the appointing authority, who is the fountain of honour of this country.
2. The honourable minister should concentrate his efforts towards strengthening the five pillars of fighting corruption of: **detection, investigation, prosecution, adjudication and punishment**, rather than destroying them.
3. The minister should provide further and better particulars of his accusations so that they are properly investigated rather than engaging in the making blanket accusation against an institution. The constitution and other laws of the land clearly stipulate the various complaint and appeal avenues for anyone dissatisfied with court services.

[www.judicature.go.ug](http://www.judicature.go.ug)

4. In the absence of formal complaints through appropriate channels, the Judiciary demands a public apology from the minister for the embarrassment his claims have occasioned to the honourable judges, justices and other judicial officers.
5. Judicial officers operate under very harsh environment to make ends of justice meet. Our officers religiously uphold their judicial oath and have shunned corruption.
6. The Judiciary has one of the most robust anti-corruption strategy in this country and has a zero tolerance policy towards corruption and the corrupt. We know that corruption can be in the system, and it is the reason we have put in place the Judiciary Anti-Corruption Strategy, drawn from the national and the JLOS Anti-Corruption Strategy.
7. The Judiciary also has a robust Inspectorate function headed by a justice of the Supreme Court. The inspectorate of courts, receives and processes internal and external complaints against any staff of the Judiciary and investigates cases of maladministration of justice.
8. The Hon. Chief Justice has also opened up the institution to help people like Fr. Lokodo to bring forward all sorts of complaints that are investigated and dealt with decisively. Results from our internal Disciplinary Committee and that of the JSC are regularly shared with the public.
9. The Judiciary has spearheaded anti-corruption efforts through its Anti-Corruption Division (ACD) of the High Court. Since its establishment in 2008, conviction rate of corruption and related offenders in the ACD have improved to 70 per cent from less than 10 per cent. President Yoweri Museveni recently lauded ACD as one of Uganda's success stories during his appearance at the African Peer Review Mechanism in South Africa.
10. The constitution established the Judicial Service Commission, among other things to, discipline judicial officers. Those who have been found culpable have been accordingly punished.
11. Suffice to add that there is always this stereotypical thinking that whoever wins a court case paid for the court decision. People should get used to the fact that there is always a winner and loser in a court case. But our elaborate appeal process still allows the loser of a matter to correct a lower court's judgement
12. The majority of the court users are the vulnerable and they constitute about 90 per cent of the court users and we dispense a lot of justice to them. It is therefore wrong for anyone to claim that the poor do not get justice.
13. Our appeal to the government is to quickly put in place a comprehensive legal aid scheme to help people who cannot afford the services of lawyers. Ordinary people without lawyers cannot prepare well for some court processes like handling of expert witnesses. (We urge the government to enact a Legal Aid Act to provide a holistic legal aid regime for the vulnerable).

14. We equally call upon the Directorate of Ethics in the President's Office to join hands with the Judiciary to fight corruption which has affected most segments of society.
15. By and large, the Judiciary is widely respected as a competent, independent and accountable institution that administers justice to all using little resources. We are determined more than ever before, to fight corruption and malpractices in the courts.

*SP*



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