



**President Museveni address at the 19th Judges Conference at Speke Resort, Munyonyo
under the theme: 'The Uganda Judiciary as the Guarantor of the rule of law'**

Your Lordship the Chief Justice

Your Lordship the Deputy Chief justice

The Honorable Minister of Justice and Constitutional Affairs

The Attorney General

Your Lordship the Principal Judge

Your Lordships the Justices of the Supreme Court and the Court of Appeal

My Lords the Judges of the High Court

The Secretary to the Judiciary

The Chief Registrar

Your Worships

Ladies and Gentlemen

I thank you for, yet again, inviting me to officiate at the Annual Judges Conference, 2017. Interactions of this kind are healthy for a democracy, just as the rule of law is vital for the efficient functioning of a country. I am, therefore, pleased that you are going to consider the role of the Judiciary as the Guarantor of the rule of law.

The NRM supports the rule of law for better or for worse. Even when we don't agree with the philosophy of the legal system, our reasoning is that these are the laws we have now. Therefore,

we must respect them. Sometimes we don't agree with the philosophy because you know our background is a back ground of revolution, of independence — that is where we come from.

Nevertheless, in spite of our philosophical orientations, we support and respect the laws the way they are. We have not had time to put forward a different philosophy of jurisprudence. This is because we have been busy with the basics: no salt, no soap, no drugs, no roads and no security.

We have spent the last 31 years handling those basics and we have had no time to raise some of the fundamental questions of the law which we have in the country today.

When the NRM came to power in 1986, it started working methodically towards taking Uganda back on the road to constitutionalism from which it had been diverted by past regimes. The dividends of the struggle are the many benefits of the rule of law that we are enjoying today. We have liberated Uganda from ideologically disoriented leadership that lacked a progressive ideology and instituted sound governance institutions and structures which are a prerequisite for a bright future for Ugandans.

In the last two decades, Uganda has registered consistent economic progress averaging 6% per year. As a result, we have increased our revenue collection from a paltry 5 billion shillings in 1986 to over 11.2 trillion shillings in 2015/16, which has enabled us to finance numerous Government projects. We have also maintained macro-economic stability and contained inflation within the single-digit bracket. Building on these achievements, we are working to consolidate the State through increasing the size of the economy and expanding the revenue base. To achieve this, we will continue removing bottlenecks constraining doing business for both large investments and Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs). In addition, we shall aggressively promote Uganda as an investment and tourist destination.

It is important for us to note that some of the considerations that investors pay attention to in determining which country to invest in is the efficiency of the judicial and legal systems and the efficacy of protecting property rights and enforcement of contracts and judgments. As you know, because of case backlog and inefficiencies in the judicial system, it takes years to resolve disputes and we have to reverse this trend, if Uganda is to attract high end investors.

I, therefore, appeal to your Lordships to expedite the handling of these cases, especially land and commercial cases that are so critical to the development of this country. You should also explore other alternative means of dispute resolution to promote certainty and efficiency in the legal system. Being conscious of the importance of investments in national prosperity, the judiciary should prioritize the handling of cases, giving priority to commercial disputes and may be murder cases.

In the next four years, Government will be focussed on transforming Uganda to a middle income country through wealth and job-creation and inclusive development. I, therefore, appeal to your Lordships as you adjudicate cases to bear in mind the country's priorities so your decisions do not fetter but amplify these priorities for the common good of society. Your decisions should be fair, balanced and delivered in an expeditious manner.

Your Lordships, the presence of good governance, democracy and security are good indicators of the presence of the rule of law in a country. The NRM government has made great strides in the area of good governance, democracy and security both within Uganda and our neighbours in the region. We have also democratised the management of Uganda right from the village level up to the highest levels of Government. We have also built a strong and efficient police force and the army to deal with law and order and external threats respectively. Regionally, we have contributed to peace and development in the region as part of our Pan-Africanist responsibility to cushion Uganda from threats of instability and terrorism and broadly to create a more just and peaceful Africa.

Vision 2040 builds on the progress that has been made in addressing the strategic bottle-necks that have constrained Uganda's socio-economic development since independence, including; ideological disorientation, weak private sector, underdeveloped human resources, inadequate infrastructure, small market, lack of industrialization, underdeveloped services sector, underdevelopment of agriculture, and poor democracy, among others.

Fighting corruption — corruption is very dangerous because it is again reducing the resources, the resources which are available to the State are not enough in the first place. Then what is available is again reduced by corruption. So, therefore, zero tolerance to corruption is not only justice, it is also a tool in development. It maximizes the resources. The scarce resources which are there should be used for the purpose they are meant for.

Government lobbied for the passing of the Anti-Corruption Amendments Act 2013 that provides for the confiscation of the properties of those convicted of corruption. The Whistle Blower's Act 2010, which allows people to report cases of corruption and guarantee them protection, will be popularised to encourage its use.

From the International and Regional Co-operation perspective, Government will continue to work vigorously for the deeper integration of the East African Community and co-operate with our partners in the Eastern Africa region.

In terms of adjudication, our courts should not be barriers to trade by taking so long to deliver decisions involving movement of goods and services. We shall, in the same vein, work to strengthen regional organisations such as the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD), the Southern Africa Development Co-operation (SADC) and the EAC, SADC and COMESA tripartite agreement. At the African Union level, we will continue contributing to the peace-keeping missions and working for the consolidation of the African Economic Community.

I thank you for inviting me and it is now my pleasure to declare the Annual Judges Conference officially open.

Date:

Friday, January 27, 2017