



THE REPUBLIC OF UGANDA

SPEECH

BY

**H.E. YOWERI KAGUTA MUSEVENI
PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF UGANDA**

**DELIVERED AT THE
THE OPENING OF THE NEW LAW YEAR 2023**

ON 3rd FEBRUARY, 2023

**AT JUDICIARY HEADQUARTERS
KAMPALA**



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Your Lordship, The Chief Justice;
Your Lordship, The Deputy Chief Justice;
The Honorable Minister of Justice and
Constitutional Affairs;
The Learned Attorney General;
Your Lordship, The Principal Judge;
Your Lordships the Justices and Judges
of the Courts of Judicature;
Your Excellencies the Ambassadors and High
Commissioners;
The Hon. Members of Parliament;
Your Grace, the Archbishop;
The Chairpersons of Constitutional Commissions;
The Secretary to the Judiciary;
Your Worship the Chief Registrar;
Your Worships the Registrars and Magistrates;
The President of the Uganda Law Society and distinguished
Members of the Bar;
Invited Guests in your respective capacities;
Ladies and Gentlemen



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I wish to salute the Judiciary in general and His Lordship the Chief Justice in particular, for inviting me as the Chief Guest at the opening of the new Law Year, 2023.

I wish to congratulate you for finishing the year 2022 and beginning 2023 and for all that you have achieved.

My Lord the Chief Justice, I also congratulate you and their Lordships for the successful Annual Judges Conference that ended yesterday. I am convinced it was a time well spent, with a new resolve to work even harder in this new Law Year. From the reports we have just heard, the Judiciary has made a number of important achievements. I congratulate the Judiciary for these milestones.

The role of the Judiciary is to deliver quality and timely justice. That is what Ugandans expect. I am pleased that every year you continue to make good progress, as noted in your performance reports.

Among the many improvements registered, I would like to commend you for fighting case backlog, operationalizing new High Court circuits, advancing the use of ICT, enhancing human resource capacity, improving court processes,



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revising court rules and strengthening case management reforms such as Mediation, Plea Bargaining, Small Claims Procedure and putting in place a Case Backlog Reduction Strategy, among others. Mediation promotes the African value of justice -when your brother wrongs you, you sit and try to solve your differences before the judge judges you.

Today, the Ugandans we serve have higher expectations than ever before from the State and I am glad to see that the Judiciary is beginning to respond accordingly. The *Wananchi* do not want to hear your legal jargons and a litany of Latin maxims. They come to your Courts to seek protection of their rights and property- land, coffee, cows and other merchandise. They seek for fair and timely judgments that embed *obuntu* - our traditional and historical values. The Courts should not be seen to protect thieves and murderers by relying on technicalities and strange procedures to quickly release them. Some of these are the issues that lower the confidence of our people in the Judiciary.



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Judiciary is the arm of Government where we all run to when faced with conflict so we expect justice and many people have received justice from the Courts.

As you well know, the Government has supported the Judiciary in the past and continues to support the Judiciary towards realization of what Chief Justice Owiny-Dollo has termed as the **Judiciary Transformation Agenda**.

- 1) The Government has progressively increased the Judiciary budget, from UGX. 199Bn in FY 2019/2020 to UGX 381.88Bn in FY 2022/23. As a result, your salaries were enhanced so that you are able to do your work with “one heart” and in order to enable you resist the temptation of corruption. I hope to hear no more cases of corruption in the Judiciary.
- 2) Government has provided funds for construction of Courts and Justice Centers across the country, including, the Supreme Court and Court of Appeal buildings in Kampala. I appreciate the good progress so far made with these projects that are going to save



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government billions of shillings that is currently being spent on rent.

3) Am informed that you ^{are} planning to decentralize the Court of Appeal which is very good because you will be bringing services closer to people.

4) Your Lordship the Chief Justice, I must caution you, however, that in order to realize your Transformation Agenda, you must put in place strong measures for accountability and fighting corruption. You must also strive to maintain utmost vigilance on issues of integrity in the Judiciary. Uganda has already established Zero-Tolerance to Corruption Policy as a national value and we are counting on you to help us deal with these thieves who are enemies of development and want Uganda to remain behind. Internally, there should be no excuse for corruption in the Judiciary. Justice in my ordinary understanding is giving everyone what is due to them and this is not for sale.



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We need a Judiciary that is dedicated to serve our people impartially and one that offers timely and meaningful justice.

We must be mindful that the modern demands of justice services have evolved with changes in technology, trends in crime and globalization of human activities. We are moving away from petty crimes like stealing cattle and fighting over a pot of beer to sophisticated and transnational crimes such as terrorism and a series of cyber-supported crimes. We therefore need to rethink our methods of delivering justice and devise appropriate measures that make us remain relevant during this Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR).

The success of the Judiciary must necessarily require corresponding effort and collaboration of the other stakeholders in the justice chain, especially the Office of the Directorate of Public Prosecutions (ODPP), the Inspectorate of Government (IG), the Uganda Prisons and the Police Force.

There is also need to bolster other support systems like online security, financial freedom and regional integration.



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This means that we must strengthen our deliberate efforts to work together with our neighbors because of our porous borders, cross cutting issues and common enemies including rampant poverty, climate change, threats of violence and terrorism.

We strongly believe that the trust of the people is the corner stone of true justice. When justice is properly administered, it guarantees stability, security and economic prosperity of society. On more than one occasion, I have spoken out against the way bail is granted. I am glad to note that the Judiciary streamlined this process with the issuance of *Bail Guidelines for Courts of Judicature* by the Chief Justice. I hope that the Courts will now give meaningful bail terms in deserving cases.

As you all know, the work of the Judiciary would be incomplete without the involvement of the *wanainchi*. We need to involve our traditional leaders and the religious leaders in the administration of justice. When they speak out against injustice, corruption and sexual violence and when they give information about criminality, they are all



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participating in the fight for justice and we must listen to them.

Lastly, I thank the Hon. Chief Justice and your team for implementing a number of transformative reforms in justice delivery. I hope we will continue the very important collaboration both within the Judiciary and with other branches of government, so that together, we can take Uganda, our country, where it needs to be.

We look forward to a new Judiciary that delivers timely and quality justice to our people in this new Law Year.

I thank you all.