

Speech By

H.E. Yoweri Kaguta Museveni
President of the Republic of Uganda

At the

**Opening of the
18th Annual Judges' Conference**

19th January, 2016

Your Lordship the Chief Justice

Your Lordship the Deputy Chief justice

The Honourable 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

Your Lordship the visiting Judges from the Supreme Court of
Kenya and Judge of the United States Court of Appeal of the
Sixth Circuit

My Lords the Judges of the High Court

The Secretary to the Judiciary

The Chief Registrar

Your Worships

Ladies and Gentlemen

I wish to salute the Judiciary in general and His Lordship the
Chief Justice for upholding this noble tradition of holding an

Annual Judges' Conference to take stock of what was done in the previous year and plan for the year ahead.

The theme of this year's Conference – **Promoting the Rule of Law through Judicial Accountability and Excellency** – is timely. This theme reinforces the cardinal principle that only an effective, efficient and accountable Judiciary can observe, uphold and enforce the rule of law in a civilized society. For a lay man in legal matters, accountability is not only about justice being done but justice being seen to have been done. Accountability also means that Judges respect the well horned principles of integrity, impartiality, nondiscrimination, propriety, equality and diligence in executing judicial work as spelt out in the Uganda Code of Judicial Conduct.

I congratulate you upon the bold step you took to carry out a census of the cases that are pending in courts. You now

have the ability to use scientific solutions to deal with the problem of case backlog. Government will provide the requisite support to you to ensure that this data is regularly updated.

The NRM Government restored the rule of law in Uganda after decades of misrule. We have restored enduring peace throughout Uganda and are now on the journey to promote sustainable development and prosperity.

The NRM Government remains focused on the continued strengthening and harmonization of the legal, policy and regulatory environment to spur the national transformation processes and goals. In line with NRM Manifestos in the past, now, and our current Party platform for the 2016 to 2021, we remain committed and focused on laws that enhance stability, peace, productivity, growth and employment; as well as laws that improve Uganda's regional

and global competitiveness for accelerated socio-economic transformation.

Ugandans are aware of the transformation that we have spearheaded in reducing extra judicial killings, enhancing access to formal courts and creating sanity in the community through civilised judicial processes. We have restored civilian authority throughout Uganda; rebuilt court infrastructure in more than 50% of the districts. We now have all institutions needed in the administration of justice in 75% of the districts.

I applaud you in supporting our effort to fight corruption. The continued excellent performance of the Anti- Corruption Court is a demonstration of Government's will and growing capacity to decisively tackle corruption. We are aware of, and dealing with, challenges in the judicial process,

especially in the lower courts which represent major bottlenecks in Government's effort to fight corruption.

In this regard , I am happy with the innovations introduced by his Lordship the Chief Justice to fight corruption in the Judiciary. The telephone hotlines that you have set up to allow people to report corrupt practices and the regional tours to interact with the people and receive complaints from the public are appreciated. I commend you for taking a bold step to investigate all complaints of corruption leveled against Judges.

I must caution you here that these measures shall not achieve the desired results if you do not take action on those culpable. Let your internal disciplinary mechanisms be beyond reproach to avoid suspicions of bias, favoritism or selective prosecution. We also need to place more emphasis on cleaning up the courts by fighting corruption inherent

therein. I have no doubt that the Judicial Service Commission will conclude all pending disciplinary issues against Judges and expeditiously tackle complaints against other judicial officers to restore public confidence in the administration of justice. The Anti-Corruption Court should not allow the corrupt to slowdown court processes and defeat the cause of justice – this must be urgently adressed.

As we move to elections, I would like to remind Judges to remain impartial and to handle election disputes fairly and expeditiously. Government has provided resources to train you in the adjudication of electoral disputes so as to support the growth and expansion of democratic dispensation in Uganda.

As promised, we are prepared to engage retired Judges and hire acting Judges and even make use of those in retirement to reduce case backlog especially in reducing the

long gestation period of cases in the courts. I, however, implore your Lordship the Chief Justice to fast track the implementation of performance management in the administration of justice to enhance judicial productivity and accountability. You should institute deliberate efforts to address the public outcry of delays and lost files by strengthening Court Registries, streamlining case management and strengthening the inspectorate function.

With these few words, it is now my pleasure to declare the 18th Annual Judges' Conference 2016 officially open.

I thank you.

FOR GOD AND MY COUNTRY

H.E. Yoweri Kaguta Museveni

PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF UGANDA