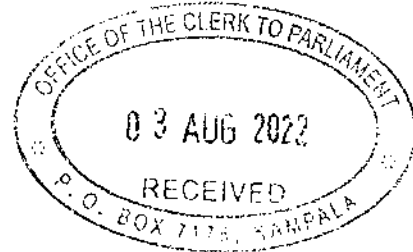




**OFFICE OF THE
LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION**




OPPOSITION RESPONSE TO THE STATE OF THE NATION ADDRESS 2022

DELIVERED BY:
MPUUGA MATHIAS (MP)
LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION

AUGUST 2022

**Rt. Hon. Speaker,
Honourable Members of Parliament,
Esteemed citizens of Uganda,**

1. Pursuant to Rule 53 of our Rules of Procedure, I seize the opportunity to respond to the State of the Nation Address delivered by the President on 7th June 2022.
2. First, I congratulate you Rt. Hon. Speaker and Members upon the commendable performance exhibited in the First Session. At times we converged and on other occasions disagreed. I celebrate the times when we built consensus and moved together in the interest of our motherland.
3. I also congratulate Hon. Members that have had election petitions upon securing rulings that were in their favour. I sympathise with those that lost their seats and are awaiting by-elections. As the Opposition, we are saddened by the way our Member, Hon. Attan Moses Okia lost his Soroti City East Parliamentary seat. It is unfair that the counterpart in Soroti City West constituency never lost his seat yet both their constituencies were affected by boundary alterations. It is further unfair for a Member to be penalized for the inefficiencies of the Electoral Commission. This was compounded by the brutal force of the State in the by-election of Soroti City East Municipality. A ray of hope is drawn from the fact that the results are challengeable in the Courts of Law.
4. I once again reiterate that there is need to amend the Electoral Commission Act to redefine the role of police and other armed personnel during elections. Electoral Commission should be solely in charge of and in direct command of the co-opted police and other internal security personnel deployed in electoral processes. Not the other way round.
5. Rt. Hon. Speaker and Members, while the President complied with Article 101 of the Constitution to present the State of the Nation Address, it fell short of the expectations of the citizens in as far as accounting for the performance of Government. Instead, the Address was loaded with liberation war hangover, historical reflections, economic fascinations and imperialism undertones. It was at crossroads with the realities of the citizens.
6. As emphasized in the response that I delivered in August last year, we are convinced that the State of the Nation address should report on progress made in realising the National Objectives and Directive principles of State Policy. This is enshrined in National Objective and Directive Principle I(ii) of the Constitution. This Principle dictates the expected structure of the State of Nation Address. Our response therefore will be delivered based on this constitutional structure.



Objective 1 – Implementation of National Objectives

7. Rt. Hon. Speaker and Members, the reading, understanding, application or interpretation of the Constitution or any other law as well as government policies is constrained by the veil of the official language.
8. Although the literacy rate i.e. ability to write, read and understand a simple sentence in any language is 72% for adults and 76% for persons of 10 years and above¹, many citizens lack the ability to access and comprehend policy, regulatory and legal frameworks that are majorly published in English. The second official language of Swahili is also not comprehensible to many citizens. This is a cause of concern given the fact that only 40% of the persons that have completed the basic Universal Primary Education are able to read and comprehend a Primary 2 level English story².
9. Besides, efforts to translate the frameworks Constitution are progressing on snail pace. For instance, while the Third Schedule of the Constitution reflects 65 indigenous communities that have unique dialects, it has only been translated into 19 languages ever since its promulgation. Hence a translation rate of 29%. Additionally, there are over 500 laws on the statute book of Uganda but only 2 laws i.e. Local Council Courts Act and Prohibition of Female Genital Mutilation Act have been translated into 6 and 2 languages respectively³. These inadequate levels of translation adversely affect civic engagement, influence, accountability of government policies and ultimately service delivery. No wonder several citizens do not tune into national addresses, follow parliamentary debates nor have a grasp of policies passed by Cabinet. They require interpreters.
10. ***In line with Article 6(3) of the Constitution, an indigenous and official languages bill will be developed and introduced in Parliament targeting educational, legislative, administrative and judicial purposes.***

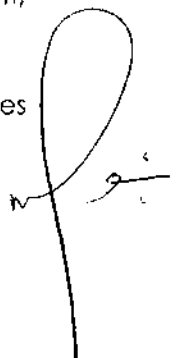
Objective II – Democratic Principles

11. Rt. Hon. Speaker and Members, the governance style of the NRM regime is characterised by threats and coercion other than accommodative engagements which are expected in a democratic dispensation. This has been exhibited in the conduct of elections, handling of grievances of public servants and rebutting of political dissent among others. As a result, citizens are unable to fully participate in the determination of their leaders and influence matters that affect them. These have translated into authoritarianism and ultimately violation of human rights as envisaged in the violence marred in the general elections as well as byelections in Soroti,

¹ Uganda Bureau of Statistics, 2021. Uganda National Household Survey 2019/2020

² Uwezo Uganda, 2021. Are our Children Learning? Illuminating the Covid-19 Learning Losses and Gains in Uganda. Uwezo National Learning Assessment Report, 2021

³ Uganda Law Reform Commission, 2022. Matrix of the Translated Laws



Kayunga and Omoro, citizens abductions, illegal suspension of 54 Non-Governmental Organisations as well as shrinking space of Opposition political parties.

12. Worryingly, the citizens recourse in Courts of Law as a means of checking the excessive powers of Government has also been held captive by the State. As a result, the judicial system is increasingly becoming opaque, less trustable, distant from the people from whom it derives its judicial power and closer to the ruler. There is open expression of bias by some high-ranking judicial officers, increasing rate of written other than oral submissions in a bid to limit public scrutiny, hefty bail terms in appeasement of the regime leader, illegitimate detentions in disguise of completing investigations and presidential discretion that facilitates appointment of regime cadres as judicial officers.
13. Regarding the principle of decentralisation and devolution of government functions and powers, the decentralisation policy is long overdue for review. It has been observed that currently Government is largely enforcing a centralisation policy particularly in the management of finances, procurements and recruitments. This has incapacitated the functionality of local governments which are the main anchors of the decentralisation policy and last mile in service delivery. This prompted the Opposition in the last Session to move a motion that was adopted by Parliament urging Government to reverse the directive requiring Local Governments to remit all local revenues to the Consolidated Fund. It is yet to be ascertained whether the resolution has been adhered to.
14. ***In compliance to Rule 220 of the Rules of Procedure, the Minister responsible for Finance should submit an action taken report on the resolution of Parliament. Parliament should also demand for an update on the review of the decentralisation policy in Uganda.***
15. Rt. Hon. Speaker and Members, there is need to have constant focus on the representation of the national character in government and its institutions. It is common in public discourses to align institutions to 'belong' to persons originating from a given region of the country. For instance, it has once been established that 59% of the heads of parastatals originate from western region followed by central and eastern region each at 18% while northern region came last with 2%. In terms of staffing levels, the western region accounted for largest position at 35% followed by central region 27%, eastern region 23% and lastly northern region at 15%⁴. This most a time arises from identification of persons of authority originating mainly from a particular region irrespective of rank-and-file officers having a national character. On other instances, the leadership levels may reflect national diversity but the lower-level staffing reflect regional imbalances.

⁴ Parliament of Uganda, 2015. COSASE Report on Boards and Personnel of Public Enterprises

16. It is critical that the Minister of Public Service periodically tables in Parliament a report on the composition of government and its institutions detailing the levels of reflection of the national character and social diversity of the country.

Objective III – National Unity and Stability

17. Rt. Hon. Speaker and Members, the popular chants of the political parties represented in this Parliament are so revealing regarding the aspects of national unity and stability. The mantra of the NRM regime “*Tubonga nawe*” loosely translated “*we associate with you*” is individualistic in nature. It is targeted at praising and servicing the ego of the ruler. This denotes a political environment in which citizens and institutions are subject to the whims of the ruler. No wonder there is massive institutional breakdown and proliferation of presidential directives that are illegally executed by timid civil and public servants.

18. The approach of individualism has also been extended to the response of Government to issues that are threatening national stability. For instance, the country is faced with escalating prices particularly of fuel and household items. These have led to financial insecurity of almost every household. This has contributed to the increase in crimes such as theft, armed robbery, murder and illegal roadblocks across the country. Instead of advancing plausible interventions, the President has categorically stated that each citizen is on their own and should not expect any assistance from Government. Rather, the President urged citizens that pay taxes which sustain him to implore the liberal market forces of demand and supply. This is utter insensitivity.

19. No wonder the chants of the Opposition parties point to the prevailing deficiencies and project aspiration of hope, liberty and unity as they strive to attain a peaceful, secure and stable political environment. For instance, “*People Power, our Power*” for the National Unity Platform (NUP), “*One People, One Uganda*” for the Forum for Democratic Change (FDC), “*Together in Progress*” for the Peoples Progressive Party (PPP) and “*JEEMA power, power*” for the JEEMA party. These call for change chants will continue to sound until a new, empowered, united and fair Uganda is realised.

20. The Opposition will seek space on the Order Paper to present a statement on the current state of the economy. It will articulate plausible interventions that will support citizens in the current economic crisis and avert the imminent risk to national stability.

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large loop at the top and a vertical line extending downwards, with some smaller scribbles at the bottom.

21. **Effort will also be undertaken in this Session to champion amendments to the Political Parties and Organisations Act with emphasis on funding and facilitating civic engagements.**

Objective IV – National Sovereignty, Independence and Territorial Integrity

22. Rt. Hon. Speaker and Members, I commend our men in Uniform for defending the country. However, it is noted with concern that Government has disregarded the law on the deployment of the UPDF in the Democratic Republic of Congo. The operation Shujja has never acquired parliamentary approval and yet lives and public resources continue to be deployed in the offensive.
23. Our men in uniform work amidst challenging working conditions and desire to be motivated. Although Government has committed in the medium term to enhance their salary payments, it should be noted that the arts-oriented officers will be discriminated against for priority has been set on science-oriented officers. For instance, it was observed that out of a funding gap of UGX 682.8 billion, a total of UGX 73.2 billion was indicated as full salary enhancements of UPDF scientists in this FY2022/23⁵. Such discriminatory approaches are bound to raise disquiet in the forces and risks of insecurity.
24. While this concern needs to be urgently addressed, there is a visible shift towards security forces preserving the regime. This has diverted the forces away from the constitutional mandate of preserving the integrity of the nation. This is observed in the brutality inflicted on the citizens through abductions by ununiformed officers, disruption of lawful assemblies, violence against journalists and extrajudicial killings among others.
25. Unfortunately, these human rights violations continue unabated. This prompted the Opposition to momentarily walk out of Plenary in protest, launch complaints register to capture human rights violations in different parts of the country, unsuccessfully pursue censure of the Minister for Security, table in Parliament a list of missing persons and those killed by security forces. In addition, a statement was delivered demanding for remedial actions from Government and a report on persons killed during the General Elections campaigns. The matter was referred to the Committee on Human Rights in February 2022 and to date no report has ever been presented. The same Committee has never presented a report on the inquiry into the allegations of human rights violations that marred the 2021 General Elections.

⁵ Ministry of Defence and Veteran Affairs, 2022. Responses to issues raised by the Defence and Internal Affairs Parliamentary Committee on the MODVA Ministerial Policy Statement for FY2022/23.

26. ***I implore you Rt. Hon. Speaker to use your prerogative to demand that the Committee on Human Rights is directed to present its report on human violations in the country at the next sitting. Otherwise, Parliament would be insensitive to the plight of the affected persons.***
27. Rt. Hon. Speaker and Members, within this Objective there is a directive to the effect that the country should avoid undue dependence on other countries and institutions. Unfortunately, the country does heavily economically depend on other countries, donors and lending institutions. For instance, out of the approved budget of UGX 48.13 trillion for this FY2022/23, domestic and local revenue is projected at only UGX 25.78 trillion (54%) while the rest amounting to UGX 22.34 trillion (46%) will be mobilised from borrowing and grants. To make matters worse, the domestic revenues cannot fund the entire county's recurrent expenditures of UGX 34.04 trillion.
28. Furthermore, there are programmes within the approved budget for FY2022/23 that will largely be dependent on external financing. These include sustainable urbanisation and housing (81%), sustainable energy development (66%) and manufacturing (53%). The situation is not any different within individual votes of Ministries responsible for Health (86%), agriculture, animal industry and fisheries (83%), water and environment (70%) as well as energy and mineral development (66%). Therefore, with these illustrated excessive levels of economic dependence, sustainable development cannot be guaranteed.
29. ***As a means of addressing the escalating levels of borrowing, the Opposition advanced alternatives to the Charter of Fiscal Responsibility that were adopted by the House. The alternatives were hinged on the principle that expenditure needs of government be targeted to liquidity rather than solvency levels. Raise more revenues to increase expenditures and vice versa. This is meant to reduce dependence on borrowing. It is therefore critical that Parliament offers adequate oversight into the implementation of the Charter of Fiscal Responsibility.***

Objective V – Fundamental and other Human Rights and Freedoms

30. Rt. Hon. Speaker and Members, Objective V(i) requires that the State provides adequate resources for effective functioning of institutions charged with the responsibility to protect and promote human rights. The lead agency on these matters is the Uganda Human Rights Commission (UHRC) and is facilitated by funds from the Consolidated Fund. Unfortunately, only 10% of the Ugandans are aware of the existence the Commission⁶. This is not helped by the indifference and inaction of the Commission even when it confirms occurrence of human rights violations such as torture and political incarceration as was the case for novelist

⁶Uganda Bureau of Statistics, 2019. 2018 Statistical Abstract

Kakwenza Rukirabashaija, Hon. Ssewanyana Allan and Hon. Ssegirinya Muhammad. Instead, when appearing before the Committee on Human Rights in February 2022, the Commission's Chairperson insensitively downplayed complaints of human rights violations by State operatives as exaggerations⁷.

31. The Commission is also slow in enquiring into human rights violations happening in the public domain on assertion that it is awaiting formal filing of cases. This is not any different for those formally filed before it. For instance, in February 2022 a copy of a complaint filed with the Commission on 9th February 2021 by Namugumya Zainab, a resident of Kimaanya Kabonera in Masaka City was laid in this House. She and her children sustained injuries due to negligence of Police. To date, her case remains undisposed. This is just one of the several cases filed with the Commission. In the year 2021, the Commission had 1,827 cases of which only 326 were investigated and disposed. This translates to a deplorable performance of 18%⁸.

32. Given the fact that security forces are leading human rights violators in Uganda, it would be prudent that the Committee on Human Rights is transformed into an accountability committee and led by the Opposition. This will ensure increased scrutiny into the operations of human rights institutions and investigations into the management of human rights cases. This will be pursued through comprehensive amendments to the Rules of Procedure.

Objective VI – Gender Balance and Fair Representation of Marginalised Groups

33. Rt. Hon. Speaker and Members, it is time for the citizens to have an honest deliberation on the level of representations in the country. While it is a constitutional obligation to ensure balanced and fair representation of marginalised groups, one cannot be oblivious of the justified sentiments about over representation particularly regarding special interest groups. Besides, rarely do the special interest groups introduce in Parliament business that specifically targets the concerns of the people they represent. To the contrary, some have been proud to pronounce themselves as listening posts. So, they are voted to merely listen not to speak. No wonder, the public is agitated by the administrative costs incurred for mere listening amidst a troubled economy.

34. Some people have argued that representation of special interest groups is an affirmative intervention that should be time bound or cap the years of

⁷ NTV Uganda, 2022. UHRC not doing enough to investigate rights abuses – MPs. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rtPpb-QDANo> Last accessed 8 July 2022

⁸ Office of the Auditor General, 2022. Report of the Auditor General to Parliament for the Financial Year ended 30th June 2021

representation. Others argue that Constituency Members of Parliament by virtue of sex, age and professional trade, they can represent interests of women, youth, elderly and workers. These are fair opinions that need an extensive discourse. However, each time a motion for review of representation in Parliament is introduced as per Article 78(2) of the Constitution, there is no commissioned study or report to inform decision making. As a result, there is a risk of a sentimental approach in deciding the Motion.

- 35. Given the fact that the Constitution has been operation for 26 years since its promulgation on 22nd September 1995, it is long overdue for a review. Aware that we are in a multiparty dispensation, when constituting a Constitutional Review Commission, consideration should also be taken to appoint at least a representative from each of the political parties represented in Parliament.**

Objective VII – Protection of the Aged

36. Rt. Hon. Speaker and Members, this Objective stipulates that the State shall make reasonable provision for the welfare and maintenance of the aged. While effort has been taken to promote the dignity and welfare of the aged through interventions such as Social Assistance Grant for Empowerment (SAGE), more is still desired to adequately address the vulnerabilities that they are exposed to. Nevertheless, in each financial year it is one of the programmes that is underfunded and characterised by arrears. It is saddening to watch the elderly lament for arrears arising from a modest monthly grant of only UGX 25,000.
37. Whereas Government has argued that the aged can benefit from other programmes focused on health, water and education among others, these do not deliberately target them. Hence many continue to live in conditions bordering on negligence. At the watch of the State, many are sliding into aged prompted but preventable disability, living in dilapidated structures, losing their property to land grabbers and exploited by scrupulous people due to dementia. At risk are 1.91 million households that have at least one elderly⁹.
- 38. The Opposition will present a policy paper for consideration of the House on a holistic social security and protection system targeting every citizen other than the elderly alone. Nevertheless, as a matter of urgency, measures to protect the property of the elderly particularly land ought to be undertaken. Land is the most valuable asset and foundation of the livelihood of the aged¹⁰. The Land Act should be amended to introduce provisions that**

⁹ Uganda Bureau of Statistics, 2021. Uganda National Household Survey 2019/2020

¹⁰ Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development, 2020. The State of Older Persons in Uganda – Situational Analysis Report

safeguard the interests of the elderly by restricting transfer of their land as is the case for family land.

Objective VIII – Provision of adequate resources for organs of government

39. Rt. Hon. Speaker and Members, while adequate funds have been provided in the approved budget for the functioning of the Executive, Legislature and Judiciary, access to the funds is hampered by releases from the Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development. For instance, in the just concluded FY2021/22, functioning of Parliamentary Committees was constrained through suppressed releases.
40. It is common knowledge that the Executive particularly the President has greater leverage on all other arms of Government. The leverage is mainly drawn from budget development powers under Article 155(2) of the Constitution. The President also exploits appointment powers drawn from the Constitution to influence operations of the Judiciary and party authority to influence who takes up leadership in Parliament. These have led to infringement of the doctrine of separation of powers as well as the attendant checks and balances.
41. ***Nevertheless, I salute Members of the ruling party for withstanding pressure from the President and sided with the citizens when you unanimously recommended the termination of the Vinci coffee agreement. It was also gratifying that irrespective our shades of opinion, the House rejected the proposal to acquire preference shares in Roko Construction Limited before undertaking due diligence. May we continue to be united in pursuit of national interest.***

Objective IX – The Right to Development

42. Rt. Hon. Speaker and Members, Ugandans have an alienable right to amass wealth through lawful and gainful means. In order to facilitate this rapid and equitable development, the State shall encourage private initiatives and self-reliance amongst citizens. For the indigent or vulnerable persons and households, the State is obliged to meet their needs and narrow the disparities in the populace.
43. Unfortunately for the time that the NRM has been in power, income inequalities are widening in the country. The recently published national household survey of 2019/20 revealed that 1 in 5 people live in poverty, persons in absolute poverty have increased from 8 million to 8.3 million, 3.5 million people are living below the food poverty line, rural poverty is twice higher than urban poverty and share of population of households with heads not working has increased from 9% in 2016/17 to 19.6% in 2019/20. Almost half of the population i.e. 49.2% earn less than UGX 150,000 and only

1% of the adults in Uganda earn more than UGX 1 million a month¹¹. Thousands of citizens have degenerated from peasantry to starvation particularly in Karamoja region. With such indicators, it is no brainer that Uganda is far away from being a middle-income country.

44. Hence, the haggling for middle income status badge between Government and World Bank is a misguided and childish fight. Countries don't negotiate their way to being classified as middle income rather they work their way there. You ought not harvest what you haven't worked for. The scourge of poverty and inequality have for long been visible in the country for all to see. Therefore, the debate on mode of measurement and set of statistics used in determining middle income status is a mere distraction.

Objective X – The Role of People in Development

45. Rt. Hon. Speaker and Members, this objective obliges the State to involve people i.e. citizen or non-citizen in both formulation and implementation of government interventions that affect them. Most times the people are engaged in implementation but not formulation of laws, development plans and programmes. This has been envisaged in the programmes such as Emyooga and Parish Development Model. Consequently, this detaches the people from Government and deprives them of their role in development of the country yet it is their right.

46. In a bid to reclaim their right to participation in development, citizens have challenged Government in courts of law. One such Case was the monumental challenging of the Electricity (Establishment and Management of the Rural Electrification Fund) Instrument of 2020. It was successfully argued that the instruments were developed without due consultation of public and private stakeholders. The instrument was invalidated by Court which also counselled Government that it is not the repository of ultimate wisdom and ought to learn from the public¹².

47. A Bill on public consultation will be pursued in a bid to give effect to the provision in National Objective X of the Constitution.

Objective XI – Role of the State in Development

48. Rt. Hon. Speaker and Members, I state without fear of contradiction that the sitting regime stripped the Country of the opportunity to realize real development. As earlier mentioned, the gap between the rich and the poor is expanding seamlessly whereby the rich amass more wealth and

¹¹ Bank of Uganda, 2021. Financial Capability Survey (FCS) 2020

¹² Miscellaneous Cause No. 91 of 2020 Centre for Public Interest Law Limited versus Attorney General

grow richer while the poor further sink into abject poverty. The wealthy populace enjoys 35% of the national income while the poorest claim 5.8%¹³. This income dissimilarity has increased since the 1990s whereby Uganda's economic development has grown but with a few profiting from the economic gains.¹⁴ This stems from the government's failure to take proactive measures to ensure balanced and equitable development for all in Uganda.

49. The imbalance is visible and pronounced in the scramble for land across the country. The rich are displacing the poor most of whom are bonafide and lawful occupants. They acquire and evict citizens on huge pieces of land leaving many homeless and with nowhere to raise food. This indiscriminate acquisition of land has also been adopted by Government in the guise of development of public infrastructure and incentivizing foreign investors. This is being pursued by Government through numerous attempts to amend the Constitution and other relevant laws. These are purposed at permitting compulsory land acquisition while attempting to circumvent the constitutional requirement of fair, prompt and adequate compensation.

50. At an appropriate time, the Opposition will seek space on the Order Paper to present a policy paper on land management and administration in Uganda.

Objective XII – Balanced and Equitable Development

51. Rt. Hon. Speaker and Members, various parts of our County have stagnated in development without any clear agenda to rejuvenate them. Uganda's snail development over the years has occurred in patches, in a way that is highly imbalanced and inequitable as far as Uganda's regions are concerned. This has been affirmed through the recently launched Multidimensional Poverty Index of 2022. It highlights that the areas of Karamoja, Acholi, Lango, West Nile, Kigezi, Bunyoro and Tooro have the highest incidence and intensity of poverty. They are deprived of schools, toilet facilities, electricity, housing and financial services. Surprisingly, these areas have for long been beneficiaries of affirmative programmes such as Northern Uganda Rehabilitation, Karamoja Affairs, Luwero – Rwenzori Triangle and Bunyoro Affairs. Irrespective of the years of implementation of the affirmative programmes, these areas have remained deprived. This is a clear indication that the affirmative programs are ineffective.

52. At an appropriate time, the Opposition will seek space on the Order Paper to present position paper on affirmative programmes. A Motion will also be

¹³ Oxfam, 2016. Who is growing? Ending inequality in Uganda, A study of the drivers of inequality in Uganda. Pg. 17

¹⁴ Ibid.

moved urging Government to present a roadmap of developing and implementing a physical planning framework.

Objective XIII – Protection of Natural Resources

53. Rt. Hon. Speaker and Members, the Constitution obligates government to hold in trust for the people and to protect, land, natural lakes, rivers, wetlands, forest reserves, national parks for the common good of all citizens. This is what is termed as the public trust doctrine. However, it is evident that Government has abdicated its responsibilities and abused the trust bestowed upon it by the Constitution.

54. Under the watch of the NRM Government, for the last over 30 years almost every critical aspects of the environment have degenerated. For instance, wetlands cover has reduced by half from 16% in 1990 to 8% and forests cover has reduced by 3 times from 24% to 9%¹⁵. It is disheartening that this degradation has been facilitated by the weak regulatory systems and selective enforcement by institutions such as National Forestry Authority (NFA) and National Environment Management Authority (NEMA). For instance, regarding wetlands, they have been prone to issuance of titles and weak or selective enforcement. This has been evidenced in the implementation of the recent government policy of banning rice growing in wetlands. For instance, rice farms in the district of Otuke were slashed while in Lwera wetland continue unabated. Pure double standards.

55. The provisions in Section 51 of the National Environment Act should be operationalized by declaring conservation areas in every region of the country. This will buttress the legal protection of fragile ecosystems.

Objective XIV – General Social and Economic Objectives

56. Rt. Hon. Speaker regarding this Objective, there is no better way to highlight the socioeconomic and welfare of Ugandans than the latest Uganda National Household Survey. It highlights disgraceful findings that require urgent attention. They included the following:

- a) 81% of Ugandans sourced startup capital from their own savings followed by contributions from well-wishers 4%, cash rounds and loans from commercial banks 0.4%.
- b) The number of households in the subsistence economy had grown in number from 3.3 million in 2017 to 3.5 million in 2020. It is not true that the number of households in subsistence economy had reduced from 68% to 39% in a period of 3 years.
- c) Busoga is the poverty cradle of Uganda followed by Bukedi, Acholi and North Buganda. Each of the 4 sub-regions individually being responsible

¹⁵ Minister of State for Environment, 2021. Status of Environment and Natural Resources in Uganda

for 14.5%, 10.4%, 10.3%, and 8.1% respectively of the national poverty burden.

- d) Only 19% of the Households in Uganda are connected onto the grid. This number is estimated to have declined must faster as Government failed to implement its own Electricity Connections Policy. 61% of all households not connected to the grid gave reason of the grid being too far or non-existent.
- e) 52% of the elderly in the country are engaged in unpaid care work that is excluded in the computation of GDP. Hence it does not inform the design of social and economic policies of the elderly particularly social protection. Surprisingly, Government is led by some influential age mates of the very citizens they have failed to accord social protection.

57. The funding and products of the Microfinance Support Centre Limited and Pride Microfinance Bank Limited should be merged to form a hybrid bank with a defined market segment of the poor who earn less than UGX 1 million a month. The disbursement of the Parish Development Model funds could be channelled through this indigenous bank. This, we expect will create competitive pressure amongst the current banking environment full of foreign owned banks leading to a reduction in the cost of borrowing and other banking services.

Objective XV – Recognition of the Role of Women in Society

58. Rt. Hon. Speaker and Members, enhancing women's participation in development is essential in attaining socioeconomic transformation. Experience clearly shows that supporting a stronger role for women in society contributes to economic growth, improves child survival and overall family health and reduces fertility hence slowing population growth rates among others. The motto of Mary Stuart Hall in Makerere University "Train a woman, a nation trained" summarises perfectly well the role of empowered women in society.

59. Unfortunately, women in Uganda face many barriers in contributing to and benefiting from development. The barriers range from predator approach of people with authority especially in corporate world and education institutions. It is common to hear of gruelling stories regarding sex for jobs, promotion and academic excellence among others. In some work spaces particularly in the informal sector, replacements are made for pregnant ladies and lactating mothers. In the political arena, women electoral processes if not carried out during General elections are relegated or ignored. This has been envisaged in the recent midway discontinuation of women elections by the Electoral Commission. This was an act of mockery.

60. The mockery has been extended in almost every election cycle by the NRM Government when they undertook to offer menstrual hygiene products specifically menstrual pads to women and girls in education institutions.

However, it remains a perpetual unfulfilled pledge and a mark of dishonesty of the NRM Government.

61. At an appropriate time, the Opposition will seek space on the Order Paper to present a policy position paper on women affairs for Parliament's considerations.

Objective XVI – Recognition of the dignity of persons with disabilities

62. Rt. Hon. Speaker and Members, persons with disabilities have special needs which when satisfied enables them to live dignified lives. Part of these needs include special needs facilities for the blind, deaf, mentally unstable and lame among others. Development and maintenance of facilities such as schools, rehabilitation centres and medical facilities are extremely capital intensive and unevenly distributed in the country. It would only be ideal for Government to be at the centre of providing these facilities. To the contrary, it has relegated this responsibility to the non-governmental organisations. While they are commended for the service to humanity, sustainability of their intervention is most a time unguaranteed. This is evident with the nodding disease facility.

63. While interventions geared at improving representation of persons with disability and creation of special wealth funds are commendable, efforts need to be geared at ensuring equitable distribution of their requisite facilities across the country. For instance, while interventions are mainly in the education sector, there are only 113 special needs schools across the country¹⁶. These are largely concentrated in urban areas and not every district has a facility. Yet every district has persons with disabilities. Specialised rehabilitation and medical facilities for the persons with disabilities are short in supply in the country. For instance, government supported specialist services for children with hydrocephalus can only be accessed at the 2 National Referral Hospitals i.e. Mulago and Butabika and at only one referral hospital i.e. Gulu Hospital. Otherwise, one has to incur some out of pocket to access services at the few NGO run facilities¹⁷.

64. Effective FY2023/24, the Public Investment Plan should consider a ratio of 1:20 in prioritising, funding and developing of facilities for persons with disability. For every 20 projects or development facilities, there should be one facility for persons with disability developed.

¹⁶ Ministry of Gender and Social Development, 2020. Situational Analysis of Persons with Disabilities in Uganda

¹⁷ *ibid*

Objective XVII – Recreation and Sports

65. Rt. Hon. Speaker and Members, join me in celebrating our gallant sports men and women across all disciplines that excelled at several fora. A few days ago, the country was enchanted at the masterclass performance of Joshua Cheptegei (won Gold), Victor Kiplangat (won gold), Jacob Kiplimo (won Gold and Bronze), Oscar Chelimo (won Bronze) and all our representatives at the different recent international competitions.

66. I congratulate them upon their achievements. They have flown the flag of our motherland with honour and earned us accolades. Now the routine of pledges and tribute ensue. It is high time, the bar is raised to develop a structured reward framework as a benchmark of rewarding our sports men and women. Given the years and numerous times that the Government has committed to develop the framework and failed, this House of representatives ought to take up the mantle.

67. Secondly, many of the sports men and women have excelled largely at their own effort with minimal support of Government. They are either self-made or accidental revelations to the sporting administrations in the country. They largely incur huge expenses on accessing requisite sports infrastructure and expert trainers. While the private sector has endeavoured to develop a few facilities and trainers, their footprint is limited. Nonetheless, entrepreneurs that have ventured to fill the gap are appreciated and implore Government to act in haste to address the sorry state of sports system and public sports infrastructure across the country.

68. A Bill will be pursued to amend the National Council of Sports Act to address administration, rewards and infrastructural gaps in sports industry.

Objective XVIII – Educational Objectives

69. Rt. Hon Speaker and Members, while the Constitution compels Government to promote free and compulsory basic education, it is undisputed that this aspiration is yet to be achieved. At all levels of education, the Government has been outpaced by the private sector which includes individuals, religious bodies, cultural institutions and other non-governmental bodies that it inadequately regulates. For instance, pre-primary schools are outrightly privately owned; at primary level, there are 12,491 government schools and 22,575 private schools; at secondary level, there are 1,351 government schools and 3,796 private schools at secondary level; as well as at tertiary level, there are 471 government tertiary institutions and 1,149 private tertiary institutions¹⁸.

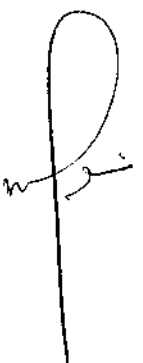
¹⁸ Uganda Bureau of Statistics, 2019. Report on the Master List of Education Institutions in Uganda (MEIU) 2019

70. Unfortunately, the quality of education in most government institutions is inferior to that of private institutions. Government institutions have literally aspired and achieved the constitutional minimum target of basic education. This has prompted parents and guardians to prefer enrolling their children into private institutions as a means of securing their education empowerment.
71. Due to the competitive nature of the private sector, quality is a daily aspiration that is delivered at a cost. Hence parents and guardians must grudgingly accept to pay prohibitive fees. These have contributed to declining completion rates as students progress to higher levels. For instance, completion rate at primary level is 60% as compared to ordinary level at 35%¹⁹. The situation is worse in special needs schools that target persons with vision, walking and cognitive difficulties. This is an indictment of Government's failure of ensuring that provision of quality education is affordable. Attempts to regulate exorbitant school fees through issuance of guidelines and circulars by the Ministry of Education and Sports have failed to curtail them.
- 72. At an appropriate time, the Opposition will seek space on the Order Paper to present a policy position paper on the cost of education in Uganda.**

Objective XIX – Protection of the Family

73. Rt. Hon. Speaker and Members, Families as basic units of society play a pivotal role in human capital development of any country. Integral in a family system are parents or guardians that nurture and mentor persons under their charge to be productive in society. This is hinged on successful marriages. While Government has played a critical role in developing legal and regulatory frameworks that safeguard marriages, religious and cultural institutions are commended for being at the forefront of facilitating their functionality. To this extent they facilitate each other. They offer marriage instructions, officiation, guidance, counselling and promotion among others. Emphasis is most times placed on morals and values. The critical aspect of financial empowerment seems underprioritized. Consequently, many families are challenged by poor housing, food starvation, school dropouts and survival on illicit livelihoods such as prostitution, gambling, pickpocketing, street begging among others.
74. Secondly, Government interventions are designed based on political structures and marginalized groupings which tend to underprioritise family matters. For instance, the households upon which the Parish Development Model is anchored are largely run as families. Unfortunately, these have not explicitly been identified as key actors rather beneficiary quotas are categorized based on women (30%), youth (30%), persons with disability

¹⁹ Uganda Bureau of Statistics, 2021. 2021 Statistical Abstract



(10%), older persons (10%) and others (men)(20%)²⁰. All these categories live and exist within a family unit that is under prioritized. It is no wonder therefore that a government undertaking to develop a National Family Policy and databank have been in the offing since 2017²¹. These are critical in mainstreaming family matters into government interventions.

75. It is fundamental that public investments specifically targeting families are developed based on their core functions i.e. family formation, economic empowerment and parenting.

Objective XX – Medical Services

76. Rt. Hon. Speaker and Members, in 1999 the Government developed and adopted the Uganda Minimum Health Care Package (UMHCP). It has been operational for now 23 years and is a basis for rationing of public resources to health facilities across the country. The package mainly prioritises malaria, HIV and Tuberculosis²². However, of late there new emerging and widespread diseases such as diabetes, high blood pressure, cancer and mental illness. These are outside the scope of the minimum package. Hence the need for a comprehensive review of the package.

77. Madam Speaker, relatedly there is still a challenge of low access to health care with 83% of Ugandans reporting unavailability of medicines or supplies, 50% assert that there is long waiting time at health facilities, 47% are concerned about the limited range of services, 42% complain of long distances to health facilities and 42% relied on out-of-pocket payments²³. Absence of universal health insurance coupled with low coverage of private health insurance i.e. 1-2% of the population²⁴, several Ugandans are unable to access quality medical care.

78. It is the considered proposition that the Uganda Minimum Health Care Package (UMHCP) is reviewed and instead of constructing new health facilities, effort should be undertaken to ensure that the existing ones are fully functional and offer the best of services.

Objective XXI – Clean and Safe Water

79. Rt. Hon. Speaker and Members, the framers of our Constitution were instructive on provision of clean and safe water to our population. Government of Uganda has a responsibility to ensure safe, accessible and cost-effective water and sanitation services for all Ugandans. It has an

²⁰ Office of the Prime Minister, 2022. The Parish Development Model (PDM) Policy Framework

²¹ Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development, 2016. The National Roadmap on the Year of the Family 2017 in Uganda

²² Ministry of Health, 1999. National Health Policy

²³ Uganda Bureau of Statistics, 2021. Uganda National Household Survey Report 2019/2020

²⁴ Ministry of Health, 2019. National Health Insurance Scheme Bill, 2019