

ADDRESS

BY

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

**DELIVERED AT THE OPENING OF THE
25TH ANNUAL JUDGES CONFERENCE, 2024**

AT KAMPALA SERENA HOTEL

ON 5th FEBRUARY, 2024

Your Lordship, The Chief Justice;
Your Lordship, The Deputy Chief Justice;
The Hon. Ministers present;
Your Lordship, The Principal Judge;
Your Lordships, the Justices and Judges of Courts of Judicature;
Your Excellencies, The Ambassadors and High Commissioners;
The Chairpersons and Members of Constitutional Commissions;
The Permanent Secretaries present;
The Chief Registrar;
Your Worships;
Invited Guests;
Ladies and Gentlemen.

It's my pleasure to officiate at the opening of the 25th Annual Judges Conference. I congratulate you for successfully concluding the year 2023. I wish to thank His Lordship the Chief Justice for inviting me to interact with the Justices and Judges so that we can apprise each other on the justice needs of our people.

I thank the Chief Justice for maintaining this good practice of meeting with the Judges at the beginning of each year for purposes of planning for the year together. This is the starting point of the "*People Centered Approach to Justice.*" This theme resonates well with the aspirations of the makers of the 1995 Constitution. We followed closely when the 1995 Constitution was being debated. I was happy that those who promulgated the Constitution included a provision that Judicial power is derived from the people and that

the Courts should exercise this power in the name of the people. The provision also states that the Courts should put into account the values and aspirations of the people in performing judicial duties.

It, therefore, gives me pride to find that the conference I am opening today is grounded on a theme that reminds us that we are called to respectfully serve the people of Uganda. When disputes are brought to the Courts for adjudication, in addition to applying the facts and the evidence to the law, you should also consider the norms, values, traditions and aspirations of the people.

Your Lordship, in addition to these norms and aspirations, the people of Uganda want quick and timely resolution of disputes, they require to be treated with respect and courtesy, they require present judicial officers, they require simplified processes. These are some of the reflections for meaningful justice to our people.

Most importantly your Lordships, I wish to remind you that justice will be meaningful to our people and resultantly people centered, if in every case that you handle, you do the following:

1. you apply the constitutional principles enshrined in Article 126 (2)- justice must be done to all irrespective of their social or economic status; justice must not be delayed; adequate compensation shall be given to victims of wrongs; reconciliation between parties shall be

promoted and substantive justice shall be administered without undue regard to technicalities;

2. adhere fully to the principles of your judicial code of conduct- integrity, independence, impartiality, propriety, equality, competence and diligence;
3. stand by the judicial oath that you took on assumption of duty to administer justice without fear, favour, ill will or affection.

Your Lordship I commended you for continuously convening these conferences. This is in line with our known methods of work as NRM. The people of Uganda appreciated the NRM ideology right from the time the NRA was formed, when we were still in the bush, until now. It is important to involve the people at the planning stage, at the execution stage and at appraisal stage. We need to hear the feedback on our services, which helps us to improve and perform even better.

We have always ensured that policies and programmes of Government are initiated, formulated and implemented with the involvement of the public. People-participation in the affairs of governance is paramount in any progressive society. For us in the NRM, it is the **people first** ideology that has given us credence over the years. We are always mindful about where our people have come from; where they have reached; and where they want to be. I am therefore very happy with this theme and I know that the feedback that you will receive here over the next 4 days will facilitate improvement in

the administration of justice. I encourage you all to take the feedback positively and close up the gaps in the administration of justice.

You know very well, your Lordships, that our societies had well known legal and Judicial systems before the advent of colonialism. These legal arrangements were suppressed through the introduction of new Judicial systems that applied in the countries where the colonialists came from.

Our own Judicial system encouraged brotherhood and sisterhood. It allowed the maintenance and sustenance of friendship and good neighborliness. Methods of solving disputes such as mediation and reconciliation were well appreciated by our ancestors. It is time for us to reconsider our Justice system and evaluate its relevance to these people.

The NRM Government acknowledges that, for there to be a strong democracy, there is need for a strong Judiciary, that settles conflict amongst the people and curtails oversight in the workings of the organs of Government. This will promote inclusiveness and enhance realization of United Nations Sustainable Development Goal No. 16, which is geared towards promoting peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.

As government, we shall continue to support and build a strong Judiciary through all means possible including respect of Court orders. I take this occasion to remind the people of Uganda that courts are independent in their

operations and must be allowed to function as such. Recently, I read a press release by the Hon. Chief Justice where he was reminding the public about the independence of the Judiciary in execution of its mandate.

We have noted, with appreciation, the progressive achievements registered by the Judiciary over the recent years. We have noted the increasing use of ICT in adjudication, the decreasing case backlog, the presence of courts in more parts of Uganda, the increased staffing levels and the completion of the Supreme Court and Court of Appeal buildings, among others. I would therefore like to take this opportunity to congratulate you for these accomplishments.

The Government is committed to continue supporting the Judiciary and to ensure that you execute your mandate in accordance with the Constitution. We are aware that more Judges, Registrars and Magistrates are still needed to clear the big workload pending in the Courts. We are also aware that the increase of Judicial officers calls for more staff that work with the Judicial officers such as Clerks, interpreters, process servers etc. The Government shall continue to support the Judiciary as we serve the people of Uganda in their quest for Justice.

Your Lordship, the Government will continue to support the Judiciary to enable it realize its Transformation Agenda. The Judiciary should, however, appreciate that no single institution of Government can prosper and thrive alone. The Judiciary therefore can only realise its intended transformation, if

other important sectors of Government like agriculture, security, transport infrastructure, mineral exploration and exploitation are given the attention they deserve. The Judiciary should, therefore, appreciate that our resource envelope is strategically utilized to simultaneously cater for all these demands.

I wish to extend Government's appreciation for the role played by the Judiciary in the transformation of Uganda, the realization of our Vision 2040 and our National Development Goals. I wish to emphasize Government's commitment to good governance and the rule of law in Uganda. The Government will continue to support the Judiciary to enable it realize its transformation agenda of fighting delays and enhancing access to justice.

I wish you all a very fruitful conference.

It is now my honor to declare the 25th Annual Judges Conference 2024, open.

For God and My Country.

Gen. Yoweri Kaguta Museveni
PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF UGANDA