



MEDIA LAUNCH OF THE YOUTH AND INNOVATION EXPO

REMARKS

By

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Frank Kalimuzo Central Teaching Facility

Makerere University

The Vice Chancellor, Makerere University, Prof. Barnabas Nawangwe

The Chairperson of Chairperson of Makerere University Council, Mrs. Lorna Magara

The Chief Executive Officer, MTN Uganda, Ms. Sylvia Wairimu Mulinge

Principals of Colleges of Makerere University

The Media Fraternity

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good morning,

On behalf of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), allow me to extend a warm welcome to all of you who are joining us today for the media launch of the Youth and Innovations Expo 2023 – a platform co-curated by Makerere University, MTN Uganda and UNDP for the world to witness the sheer brilliance and genius which Uganda is known for. I would like to thank the Makerere University and MTN for partnering with UNDP on this bold initiative.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

So why this initiative at this time? There four are reasons that I would like to articulate:

First, building resilience from crisis and shocks: As the world emerges from COVID-19, we are entering an era of uncertainty and turbulence. Multiple crises – from climate change and natural disasters to global conflicts and wars, to youth unemployment, rising inequality and the lingering impacts of COVID-19 - have had devastating effects across the globe that will be felt for years to come. According to UNDP's Human Development Report 2021/2022, human development globally regressed for two years in a row – the first time in over three decades. So, the world is far off-track in our mission to achieve the 2030 Agenda and the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) – to end poverty, reduce inequality and ensure that our planet can sustain future generations.

The Center for Global Development has found that the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are unlikely to be met by 2030 without rapid, ubiquitous innovation. Only by thinking outside the box or perhaps throwing the box away, being adaptable in our approach and harnessing cutting-edge tools, platforms and

services, can we achieve the SDGs by 2030 and Uganda's development agenda. This means, new and innovative approaches that effectively embrace the complexity of the 21st century development challenges to enable transformative change need to be introduced and tested.

Second, positioning universities hubs as spaces for creating, developing and sharing development solutions: Universities are the breeding ground for the kind of innovation, forward-thinking policies, and solutions we need to tackle 21st century challenges and reinvigorate the SDGs. It is for this reason and a myriad of others, that UNDP is partnering with Makerere University and MTN Uganda to co-convene the *Youth and Innovation Expo* – an ingenious initiative designed to foster innovation and unearth youth-led creative ideas and development solutions to address the defining crises of our time. But not just ideas, we must turn the ideas to action and scale.

Organised under the theme, *“Fostering Innovations for Uganda’s Transformational Development”*, the Youth and Innovation Expo will leverage on Makerere University’s innovation, MTN Uganda’s technology and UNDP’s development expertise and global innovation network to provide a platform for learning and sharing of information on the emerging opportunities to harness science, technology and innovative finance to take on the complex yet fast-evolving development challenges of the 21st century.

Third, creating jobs and opportunities for Africa, especially for the youth. Fostering innovation especially by the youth, is key to accelerating the solutions needed to tackle development challenges head on and shape a future that is sustainable, equitable and inclusive. This is all the more important in an era where development is being defunded especially through official development assistance. This, we assess, is in part due to geo-politics in the world, shifting interests, and potential ramifications for certain decisions that sovereign States in Africa, including Uganda will take. In essence, Uganda must begin to prioritize innovations that will create jobs and opportunities for its people, for Africa and by extrapolation, the world.

Fourth, creating a platform for collaboration in the innovation ecosystem (please expand).

The relevance of a robust innovation ecosystem to a country’s economy cannot be gainsaid. A vibrant and enabling innovation ecosystem facilitates the emergence and growth of businesses calls for increased interconnectedness and collaboration of relevant stakeholders and innovation ecosystem players in driving innovation interventions to transform Uganda’s economy.

UNDP is keen to foster partnerships that build on the transformative power of innovation to address present day challenges. Our Country Programme 2021 - 2025 has innovation and digital technology as strategic enablers of development which underpin UNDP's determination to stay at the forefront of development thinking and innovation.

The Expo which is expected to attract thousands of young people, innovators, entrepreneurs and policy makers from across the country is part of UNDP's efforts to foster innovation in development practice and create a platform for stakeholders in the innovation ecosystem to collaborate. To this end, the Expo will:

- i. showcase innovative social interventions and development approaches to accelerate the attainment of Agenda 2030 and the SDGs in Uganda
- ii. demonstrate the potential to commercialize youth innovations for job creation and livelihoods generation
- iii. provide an opportunity to celebrate the contribution of Makerere University and UNDP to Uganda's development journey
- iv. equip young people with information, knowledge, and skills in sustainable entrepreneurship, employability, and health

The Youth and Innovation Expo will also provide a platform for youth and innovators to draw on UNDP's global experiences and lessons, learn new skills, explore and share innovative ideas, forge new partnerships and network with like-minded individuals who are passionate about innovation for impact. The Expo will also provide a forum for a diverse range of both local and international participants including policymakers, diplomatic corps, academia, and investors to exchange forward looking ideas on stimulating.

Distinguished colleagues, ladies and gentlemen

Let me now turn my attention to a number of initiatives we have been supporting in addition to the upcoming Youth.

The Expo builds on several other initiatives in the UNDP Uganda Country Programme 2021 - 2025 to nurture innovation in Uganda.

The first is our support to creating enabling policy, legal, and regulatory environment. For instance, UNDP is partnering with the Ministry of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) and National Guidance to position digitalization at the heart of Uganda's development agenda. This entails:

- a) Supporting the Ministry of ICT and National Guidance to develop a Uganda's Digital Transformation Roadmap intended to strengthen

implementation of the enabling policies and laws and accelerate Uganda's Digital Revolution.

- b) Enabling the Ministry of ICT and National Guidance to prepare a Big Data Utilization Strategy to make data accessible, shareable, and usable for all stakeholders who require information for economic and societal gains.
- c) Supporting the Ministry of ICT and National Guidance are designing Digital Skilling Strategy and pilot programme to accelerate the acquisition of digital skills especially amongst the youth.

Second, UNDP is also partnering with Makerere University to establish a University Innovation Pod under UNDP's Timbuktoo initiative. The initiative to be launched in the coming months, will among others, put in place a functional engineering and creative design Makers Space to foster the growth and advancement of enterprising, scalable, and influential entrepreneurship among Ugandan youth.

Third, UNDP in collaboration with the Government and private sector, is fostering e-governance and e-commerce as a mechanism to improve service delivery in both the public and private sector. In this regard, we for example, are supporting the building an online Youth Employment Platform to connect youth entering the labor market with opportunities for placements and formal employment. UNDP is also supporting the development of an on-line Market Intelligence Platform to facilitate export trade, business-to-business exchanges and connections between Ugandan Micro, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (MSMEs) and regional counterparts.

Ladies and Gentlemen

Fourth, UNDP is also fostering innovation through its Accelerator Lab – a dedicated learning network of 91 labs supporting 115 countries to re-imagine development in the 21st century and find radically new approaches and pioneer new solutions to complex development challenges. The UNDP Uganda Accelerator Lab has undertaken a portfolio of experiments on the challenge of deforestation, which have resulted in the development of innovative financing to stimulate supply and demand of renewable cooking technologies, and the launch of the Uganda Natural Resource Information System (NARIS) – a digital tool to monitor and map forest cover, amongst others.

Fifth, the UNDP Youth4Business Innovation and Entrepreneurship Facility is another initiative by UNDP to nurture innovation. The innovative instrument co-created by UNDP and Stanbic Uganda Holdings; and launched by H.E. Yoweri Kaguta Museveni, President of the Republic of Uganda in August 2020, seeks to catalyse innovation by transforming commercially viable business ideas into

impact; and by scaling innovative and sustainable businesses models that create jobs and livelihood opportunities for youth.

I am pleased to note that this critical work has actively established and engaged a network of young entrepreneurs in advancing Uganda's development agenda. From this Facility, we have witnessed innovations that use Artificial intelligence and LED technology in crop farming and diagnostics, business support software and digital applications for people development. Quest Digital Finance Limited, a start-up enterprise – has with the support of UNDP successfully piloted an innovative digital financial ecosystem solution – Akellorbanker – to foster digital access to agricultural products and services for increased productivity among the smallholder farmers. The innovative digital solution has to date, positively impact nearly 100,000 farmers in Eastern Uganda. About to 6,000 farmers engaged sesame, maize, and sunflower growing have been able to access credit worth. An additional 3,850 farmers have been contracted to multiply a sesame seed variety - Equinom - from the United States of America (USA).

The Facility has also unearthed and is nurturing early-stage over 140 creative ideas in agriculture, plastic waste recycling, health, manufacturing, and creative arts among others into sustainable business entities. These will be unveiled during the Youth and Innovations Expo slated for 25 - 26 August 2023 at Freedom Square of Makerere University.

Sixth, Uganda's greatest resource is its youth. Yet, this abundant resource has been relatively untapped and is grappling with issues such as unemployment, limited access to appropriate financial services, low wages, and is often excluded from decision-making. As a result, these challenges, individually and collectively, obstruct the youth from meaningfully contributing to the social and economic transformation.

UNDP has established YouthConnekt - a multi-dimensional programme which aims at connecting youth to their role models, peers, resources, technologies, skills and economic opportunities by filling the gap between youth and opportunities for an economically empowering environment. The programme that is operational in 32 African countries including Uganda, provides opportunities for youth to unleash their creativity and leadership in civic, economic and political spheres aiming at a mindset change and transformation. It ensures greater access to capital and markets; skills development, and a sustained investment in training; apprenticeship and education through partnerships, in particular in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) and more dynamic TVET schemes for industrialization.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In closing, I extend my sincere gratitude to our co-hosts – Makerere University and MTN Uganda – for partnering with us in this effort. I am hopeful that our collective ingenuity will foster innovation and youth empowerment as well as contribute to accelerating Uganda's progress towards attainment of the SDGs whilst ensuring that no one is left behind.

To the media, we recognise your potential to drive change and to innovate. We are proud to call many of you here today our partners and look forward to forging stronger partnerships with you to foster innovation that is not only necessary but will result in increased decent jobs and dignified livelihood opportunities for most especially the youth.

I reiterate UNDP's commitment to convening all stakeholders and working alongside our partners, to explore new ways of advancing the SDGs.

I thank you.