

SPEECH OF THE DISTRICT CHAIRPERSON, LIRA DISTRICT ON THE OCCATION OF THE CHAIRPERSON'S DINNER TO COMMUNICATE TO LIRA DISTRICT STAKEHOLDERS HIS VISION FOR LED AND INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITIES IN THE DISTRICT

Honourable Members of Parliament Present,
My Colleagues the District Chairpersons Present,
The Speaker Lira District Council,
Honourable Members of the District Council
The Chief Administrative Officer
Technical Staff in your respective order
The Executive Director, Lango Agenda
Development Partners
All dignitaries Present in your respective Capacities
The Lango Business Community

Ladies and Gentlemen

I am happy to join with you today in what will go down in history of our District as the greatest demonstration of the fulfilment of one of the purposes of a Council in any Local Government, which is facilitating the welfare of Society. This is a mandate given to every Council by the people, the Constitution, Local Governments Act and the Decentralization Policy.

Ladies and Gentlemen I HAVE A VISION, I saw it and this evening I wish to share it with you.

Fellow Citizens, in 1993, the Decentralization Policy was established to devolve powers from the Central Government to Local Governments with the District as the facilitating facet for decentralization and planning. The power transferred from the Central Government to Local Governments was sevenfold, that is:

- The Power of the People which is also called Political Power,
- The Power to enact Local Legislation to defeat local mischief and disorder and to foster local development,
- Power to set up suitable Local Administrations,
- Power to recruit suitable employees,
- Power to plan, budget and implement planned activities,
- Power to promote Local Economic Development, and
- Judicial powers to settle local cases within the jurisdiction of Local Council Courts.

We have done well with all except one. That is the Power to promote Local Economic Development.

The real promises of democracy can never become real unless and until the greatest of the enemy of our people has been dealt with and dealt with decisively. This enemy is

poverty. It is when poverty is dealt with properly that therefrom we can say the necessity for change and the potential for hope of our people is on course in every quarter of our society.

I wish to state with some degree of shame, that, in spite of the favourable resource endowments and an admirable legal framework in our Country in general and our District in Particular, conditions still exist among our people involving abject poverty, inequality, economic and environmental injustice, deprivation of many persons, low local revenue collections, inadequate service delivery, limited transparency and accountability in the management of public affairs, all of these weaken the fight against backwardness, disease, and poverty which in turn limit human wellbeing and progress in real terms.

Government in this District has a duty to ensure that the benefits from developmental programmes in every field reach all citizens and special measures to this effect have been and shall further still be incorporated into governments' planning processes and administrative structures.

It is for this reason that I speak today, to commit my Government, together with you listening to me, to building a better future for ourselves, as citizens in this District by establishing a socio-economic order based on principles of development, advancement and progress and by reaffirming the universality, indivisibility, interdependence and interrelatedness of all human rights and fundamental freedoms and the need for all citizens to be guaranteed the full enjoyment of those rights without discrimination.

However if poverty still has a firm grip on the necks of most of our people, there shall be limited progress in any sphere of life, and any talk of development shall only be hot air and mere oratory.

I am thereby emphasizing the importance of facilitating citizens to exercise their sovereignty by realizing a better economic future, and more choice in the quality and quantity of goods and services they consume. In my view it is this that makes governing easy and enjoyable. Out there, you may not know the pain, agony, discomfort and the heartaches of being a leader of poor people.

For this reason, I am determined to realize in tangible terms Sustainable Economic Development in Lira in general and in every household in particular.

My fellow Citizens, permit me to address myself to the matter of poverty and its consequences on the life of a person who lives in it and experiences it first-hand.

Everyone has heard of poverty, but not everyone knows for certain what poverty is. Above all, we may not all conceive where poverty dwells, its impact on a person and how it influences daily life.

There are several definitions of poverty depending on the context of the situation it is placed, and the views of the person giving the definition. Poverty to me, is the scarcity or the lack of a variant amount of material possessions and money among the people, leading to restricted living, disabled minds and inactivated innovativeness or resourcefulness.

Poverty is a source of multiple disadvantages, indignity and ignominy to our people. Persons living with poverty are rarely respected or regarded, let alone consulted on matters concerning them. Someone else usually assumes knowledge of the poor man's predicament and as such takes the right to prescribe remedies, which is, from my experience usually bitter, painful and by and large never a solution after all. It is sad and regrettable, yet it is true that poor people are rarely helped but are, in most cases, taken advantage of.

More than fifty years ago, the great founding fathers of our country Uganda, in whose symbolic shadow we stand today, obtained independence for our nation and declared the emancipation of our people not only from the colonial yoke but also with proclamations of economic progress and deliverance from the disgrace of poverty and debased living. They proclaimed Liberation from us working for others and not for ourselves. This momentous time of independence came as a great beacon of light and hope to millions of all Ugandans and the Lango person inclusive, who had been seared in the flames of withering injustice. It came as a joyous daybreak to end the long night of captivity and restrictions.

But Fifty-seven years later, we are still not free. Fifty-seven years later, the life of the common man in our villages is still sadly crippled by the manacles of poverty and the chains of insufficiency. Fifty-seven years later, the life of the common person is still defined by such things like grass thatched housing, one meagre meal a day, shameful dependency on the credulity of others, plagued by challenges of merely paying school fees and or getting medical help.

Fifty-seven years later, the common man in our villages is still dependent on muscle power to drive production and the hand hoe as the basic tool of livelihood. Most of our people are living in poverty in the midst of a vast ocean of material resources within our reach. Ladies and gentlemen, this is unacceptable by any consideration.

I detest this, you do not like it either, and even our people do not like it. Now we should not just look on and keep on looking on. We ought to collectively do something and do it fast.

I have a Vision to end this miserable state of affairs together with you. Thereby today, with anguish below my bosom, I have come, and you too have come here to dramatize a shameful condition, but also to mark the beginning of a new dawn, the dawn of Local Economic Development, which is our collective responsibility.

I refuse to believe, and I call upon you too, to refuse to believe that we are bankrupt in ideas to help ourselves and that we need other peoples' help to rescue us. I refuse to believe that there are insufficient resources within our territory. There are great vaults of opportunity in this District and in Lango as a whole. We have vaults of opportunity, sure enough to give us the riches, freedom and the security of livelihood and the justice of decent living.

Many people have asked, where on a person is the dwelling place for poverty? To me I contend that the residence of poverty is inside people and not on them. What we see on people is evidence of poverty inside. It is therefore our joint responsibility to expel poverty from inside our people and infuse in them a new progressive mind-set, which, in my own words, I have termed "*The Wealth Oriented Mind-set*", with the acronym "*WOM*". WOM mind-sets will help our people to *try*. They will look, knock and search. It is when people try that they will actually do. This is doing Local economic Development.

It would be fatal for the District to overlook the urgency of transforming our people to develop WOM mind-sets. Indeed, this in itself is not an end, but a means to an end. From here today, there will be neither rest nor respite in pursuit of the golden future time, of better and deserving economic stretches for our people. As a leader of the time, I have called out a command for "*a Forwards Quick March*" in the District until Lira people receive this economic emancipation.

But there is something that I must say to you my people, who stand on the warm threshold which leads into that golden future time: in the process of gaining our rightful place in the economy of this country, we must not be guilty of wrongful deeds, corruption, xenophobia, taking advantage of the weak, self-aggrandizement and cutting cunning corners and all character of such nature and import. Such should we verily cast far from us. Let us drive our development Van with dignity and discipline.

The Vision I have is a "*Decent Living by our own means*" for every person in this District and Lango as a whole. In my mind, every social and economic question should be answered with this phrase "*Decent Living by our own means*". It should be there for Men and women, boys and girls, Adults and Children, village and urban resident, big and small names, clergymen and lay persons, businesspersons and Civil Servants, Governors and the governed; all should have decent living by our own means.

I do not see this as a farfetched dream, wishful thinking or politicking. I am convinced of it, and I trust that it is adoptable, adaptable and can be done. But it is our joint responsibility to find this golden future time. Let no man or woman stand aside and say "*let's wait and see what becomes of it*". Let us all join hands to work for a decent Living by our own means, for it is our collective responsibility.

To begin with, I have established a Local Economic Development Secretariat and a Local Economic Development Resource Team in the District to coordinate all efforts towards the attainment of this Vision. This Team has already started work and some money has been allocated to it in the District 2019/2020 Budget, so that they can do more.

The Team has identified redundant Assets around the district, for which I would like to enter into Public-Private Dialogues with a view to make Public-Private-Partnerships to operate these assets and make them productive and more viable. A list of those Assets is

available with the Local Economic Development Secretariat in the District. It is public information and it is accessible.

Early in the new Financial Year coming, I am establishing a Local Economic Development Information and Resource Centre in the District to provide our people with the Information they will need to do business. Therefrom I intend to point to you the great vaults of opportunities in this District. Opportunities, in Merchandizing Business, Hospitality and Tourism Industry, Oil-seed Enterprises, Agro-processing, Farm Production, Fish and fingerling dealings, charcoal Farming and all other associated support services that go along with an industrial boom.

I am working with all stakeholders in the District to establish an Industrial Park to facilitate more industrialization of the District and to connect rural production with the industrial activity in the proposed park. For all this to happen, I believe it is our collective responsibility.

I am so grateful and highly indebted to GIZ, the German International Development Cooperation Agency for the support they have given and are still giving to the District by supporting the initial stages of our Local Economic Development. I am appreciative of the ICON Institute who gave the LED Resource Team I appointed training on various aspects. These trainings enabled my LED Resource Team to get started. I am as well thankful to Governance Links for all the Training and rapid consultations support they have given.

These notwithstanding, there are persons that I wish to appreciate by name for the strong support they have selflessly given to the Local Economic Development impetus in the District. They are Eberhard Hauser and Micheal Tebere of the ICON Institute, Okebe Onya Joshua from Governance Links and Josephine Alobo my very faithful District Commercial Officer.

As I end this discourse, I wish to reiterate that it is never too late to launch a vision for development. If my people so choose that I implement it beyond 2021, I will give it my whole, if they so choose that someone else implements it beyond 2021, I will gladly hand over this vision to my successor as my legacy. Good leadership demands nothing less of us. I have said all this, because I believe in a decent living for everyone in Lira, by our own means, and knowing that it is our collective responsibility.

I need you and you need me.

FOR GOD AND MY COUNTRY