

Cities Alliance-GPOBA-PPIAF-PIDG Joint Meetings June 4, 2012 | Uganda

OPENING REMARKS BY HON DAUDI MIGEREKO, MINISTER OF LAND, HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT

THEME: STRENGTHENING SUPPORT TO CLIENTS THROUGH COLLABORATION

- Honourable Ministers and Members of Parliament
- Permanent Secretaries
- Development Partners present from the four global programmes (specifically Cities Alliance, the World Bank, UN-Habitat, and other partner institutions)
- Officials from line Ministries and Local Governments
- The Private Sector
- Ladies and Gentlemen

It is indeed a great honour to preside over the opening ceremony of this important joint meeting being convened by Cities Alliance, the Global Partnership for Output-Based Aid (GPOBA), the Public-Private Infrastructure Advisory Facility (PPIAF), and the private Infrastructure Development Group (PIDG).

What springs to mind when I look at the theme of the workshop is the growing commitment, the goodwill and the determination of all our partners in contributing to addressing the challenges of urban development in the world. I thank you all for coming to Uganda to share your views with us and making your contribution to this noble cause.

With the high urbanisation rate of 5.2 % and, the high average national population growth rate of 3.2%, it is projected that half of the Ugandans will be living in urban areas by 2050. The projection is that two-thirds of the world population will also be urbanised by this year. This growth trend is attributed to high natural population increase, high rural-urban migration rate, emergence of new urban areas and expansion of existing urban areas beyond their administrative boundaries.

As you are aware, there is no country in the world that has developed without urbanising and industrialising. However, there is need to plan for our

urbanisation just like we plan for industrialisation in order to ensure sustainable urban development. Urbanisation should not be viewed as a curse to this country, but rather as a blessing since urban areas are the engines of economic growth globally.

While Uganda is still predominantly a rural society, we cannot ignore the fact that urbanisation is growing very fast and our urban areas are facing inevitable challenges. The major challenges of urbanisation in Uganda include amongst others: unemployment, emergence of massive slums, dysfunctional urban economies, urban poverty and lack of accessibility to basic facilities such as shelter, water, sanitation, electricity and infrastructure.

All these critical issues have to be resolved through proper planning and resource mobilisation. It is in line with this that the Government of Uganda has recently procured – and Parliament approved – a USD 150 million concessional line of credit from the World Bank to revitalise 14 municipalities. Obviously, this is a small sum compared to what is required to meet the requirements on the ground.

From a political and economic point of view, the costs involved in resolving the aforementioned challenges are extremely high; hence the reason the Ministry of Lands, Housing and Urban Development is seeking to be proactive by developing national policies and strategies that will enable upcoming cities and municipalities to plan and manage sustainable urban growth by involving all stakeholders.

These national policies will seek to, inter alia, emphasise the need to collaborate with the people and the private sector through a Public, Private, People Partnership (PPPP). The aim of PPPP is to promote the optimal utilisation of urban land and sustainable development of urban housing, built-up areas and infrastructure.

The theme of this meeting is therefore timely, and is in line with the Government policies. The theme bears testimony to the long-shared values on sustainable urban development which is about consultations, collaboration, inclusion, and empowering of people to participate in solving their own problems. It is about fighting slums and not slum dwellers and fighting poverty instead of fighting the poor! This conference therefore

provides us with the unusual opportunity of sharing experiences and ideas on the way forward.

The pertinent issues that should be focused on during this conference include:

1. Ensuring implementation and enforcement of laws on proper physical planning and urban development.
2. The framework for collaboration to ensure effective and efficient service provision.
3. Sourcing of concessionary funding for infrastructure and housing development in urban areas. This is one of the surest ways of meeting the needs of the ever-growing population and the expectations of our young generation which is being greatly influenced by modern technology e.g. internet and television.
4. Mainstreaming employment creation and income generation as we pursue urban planning and development. This will enhance our clients' capacity to collaborate with urban authorities.

Let me take this opportunity to thank the organisers of this conference, resource persons and our development partners for supporting us in the area of physical planning and urban development. Organisations such as Cities Alliance, PPIAF, GPOBA, PIDG, and the World Bank have been our partners for a very long time. We want to thank you for your support and look forward to continued partnership. As my colleague the Minister of Finance has indicated, we are eager to share with you the experiences of our country, and to reflect together on the way forward. I believe the discussions you will hold here will undoubtedly be of value to us and the lessons shared will help to improve the lives of millions of Ugandans and other people in the world.

I wish you successful deliberations and I look forward to learning more about your conclusions this week.

For God and my Country.