

THE REPUBLIC OF UGANDA

**STATEMENT TO PARLIAMENT ON THE COMMEMORATION
OF THE INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PERSONS WITH
DISABILITIES DUE ON 3RD DECEMBER, 2023**

BY

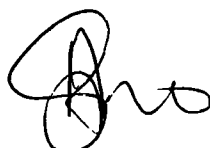
**HON ASAMO HELLEN GRACE (MP)
MINISTER OF STATE FOR DISABILITY AFFAIRS**

**MINISTRY OF GENDER, LABOUR AND SOCIAL
DEVELOPMENT**

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- Rt. Honorable Speaker
- Hon Members of Parliament

- 1.1 The United Nations Decade of Persons with Disabilities was held from 1983 to 1992 to enable Governments and Organizations to implement measures to improve the lives of Persons with Disabilities all over the world. On October 14, 1992, as the decade drew to a close, the UN General Assembly proclaimed 3rd December as the International Day of Persons with Disabilities. This day was first observed on December 3, 1992.
- 1.2 Every 3rd December, Uganda joins the rest of the world to celebrate the International Day for Persons with Disabilities and acknowledge the capabilities of Persons with Disabilities in contributing towards the development of the country.
- 1.3 Rt. Honorable Speaker and Hon Members, this day is used to create awareness on the importance of promoting equality and full participation of Persons with Disabilities in social life as well as development.
- 1.4 Specifically, this year, Government will be taking stock of the role of innovations by Ministries, Departments, Agencies, Local Governments, and other stakeholders, in ensuring meaningful inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in socio-economic development interventions.
- 1.5 According to Uganda's Persons with Disabilities Act 2020, Disability is defined as 'A substantial functional limitation of a person's daily life activities caused by physical, mental or sensory impairment and environment barriers, resulting in limited participation in society on equal basis with others.



1.6 Rt. Honourable Speaker and Hon. Members, Schedule 3 of the Persons with Disabilities Act, 2020 provides for 8 disability categories or impairments. These include the following:

- Physical Disability
- Hearing disability
- Visual disability
- Deaf and blind disability.
- Mental disability
- Little people.
- Albinism.
- Multiple disabilities

1.7 Rt. Hon. Speaker and Hon Members, according to Uganda Bureau of Statistics (UBOS) 2014 Census Report, Disability prevalence stands at 12.4%. UBOS report goes ahead to break down prevalence per category. Persons with Visual difficulty at 32.9%, Persons with hearing difficulty at 16.8%, Persons with mental disabilities (or persons with difficulty in remembering) at 27.5%, and Persons with physical impairments at 22.8%.

1.8 I wish to update you, Rt. Hon. Speaker and Hon Members that the post 2014 census analysis by the disability technical working groups established that there were some gaps in the disability statistics. For instance, data on some categories of Persons with Disabilities such as little persons, those with multiple disabilities, among others, is missing.

UBOS has promised to be more innovative in domesticating the Washington group- disability tools, in the upcoming census exercise to address some of these challenges.

1.9 Rt. Honorable Speaker and Hon. Members, Government is committed to addressing the concerns and needs that come with the increased number of Persons with Disabilities, through eliminating all forms of




neglect as provided for under Articles 32 and 35 of the Constitution, while promoting recognition of their contribution to national development.

1.10 Rt. Honorable Speaker and Hon. Members, since the inception of the commemoration of the Day for Persons with Disabilities, the following positive impact has been registered:

- a) Increased awareness and advocacy about disability
- b) Appreciation of the capacities and contributions of Persons with Disabilities to national development
- c) Enhanced Government support towards programmes of Persons with Disabilities which include; the National Special Grant, PDM, Emyooga etc and some affirmative action initiatives like university scholarships for learners with disabilities, NSSF mid-term access at a lower age of 40 years, Political Representations in Parliament, Representatives on all commissions and Government boards, among others.
- d) Improved legal and policy frameworks that protect the rights of Persons with Disabilities
- e) This in addition to other fundamental milestones

10.11 Rt. Honorable Speaker and Hon. Members during last year's commemoration, key achievements were highlighted and challenges identified in relation to upholding the rights and welfare of Person with Disabilities. There was a launch of policy documents to enhance the well-being of Persons with Disabilities. These included a brailed version of the Constitution, the Revised National Policy of Persons with Disabilities, the Audio-visual version of the Persons with Disabilities Act 2020, and the comprehensive report on albinism situation. Uganda became the 13th Country in the world to have a brailed version of the Constitution.



10.12 Rt. Honorable Speaker and Hon. Members last year's event raised awareness on the transformative results of the National Special Grant for Persons with Disabilities. The demand and willingness to start enterprises by Persons with Disabilities has tripled. This is one of the indicators that demonstrate that our affirmative action measures are slowly bringing Persons with Disabilities to the mainstream, from the previous barriers of discrimination.

10.13 My Ministry will work with you Rt. Hon. Speaker and Hon. Members and the Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic development to support us in addressing the high demand for enterprise development in terms of reasonable budget allocation in the next Financial Year.

10.14 Rt. Honorable Speaker and Colleagues, the Special Disability grant has had positive impact in households of Persons with Disabilities that have so far benefited. This is mainly because it is customized to that unique needs and nature of Persons with Disabilities. This grant is a critical preparation and grooming ground for Persons with Disabilities, to learn how to manage enterprises, to reduce self-stigma, and slowly help them transit to other wealth creation Programmes such as the Parish Development Model.

10.15 The cumulative data on the Special Disability Grant from 2019 to date, shows that a total of 41,084 Households of PWDs have

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benefited. In terms of gender, 20,656 are males and 20,428 are females. The cumulative amount disbursed is 25.8billion (See Annex I, II & III attached for details).

10.16 Rt. Hon. Speaker and Hon Members, the national theme for this year's celebration of the International Day of Persons with Disabilities is: **"The Role of innovations in Disability Inclusion"**

This has been derived from the Global theme for this year, which is "Transformative Solutions for Inclusive Development: The Role of Innovation in Fueling an Accessible and Equitable World".

10.17 Rt. Honorable Speaker and Members of Parliament, this year's theme is in line with the principle of 'leaving no one behind' as highlighted in Sustainable Development Goals, NDP111, vision 20230, among other frameworks.

10.18 The theme focuses on the need to raise awareness and exchange good practices on the importance of innovation as a tool to increase the possibilities for Persons with Disabilities. Innovations help Persons with Disabilities in meaningful participation, in expanding opportunities, and in easy sharing of knowledge, and therefore, it helps in reducing inequality.

10.19 Rt. Honorable Speaker and Hon Members, the theme enjoins the Executive, Legislature, Judiciary and the private sector (especially Ministry of ICT, Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation,

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Universities, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education & Sports, Banks, Telecommunication companies, manufacturers, NGOs, Investors, Committees of parliament, Court sessions, among others), to critically think about all new and upcoming innovations, in the context of their meaningful inclusion for each category of Persons with Disabilities.

10.20 The theme helps us to prioritize empowerment and independent living of Persons with Disabilities, through provision of more user-friendly assistive devices and technologies. This enables Persons with Disabilities to navigate work spaces, access services, employment, and markets easily, hence enhancing equity and disability inclusive development.

10.21 Rt. Honorable Speaker and Hon Members, each of the different categories of Persons with Disabilities, has its unique needs that all innovations need to prioritize. For example:


- (i) Persons with physical disabilities require innovations focused on powered wheelchairs, functional electrical stimulation (to rehabilitate persons with spinal cord injuries, etc.), wearable exoskeletons (that rehabilitate persons with stroke and other neurological conditions), among others. As a country, we need to increase funding for innovations, for instance under Ministry of Health regional workshops. This will enable them produce assistive equipment, with better and accommodative technologies.



- (ii) The Persons with Visual impairments need innovations in terms of adaptive technologies such as Braille keyboards, smarter versions of braille, text-to-voice computing, talking devices, among other options. These innovations provide better chances of meaningful inclusion and independent living.
- (iii) The Persons with Hearing Impairments need innovations in Video-Relay Services. These services enable a person with hearing impairment to receive signed big-screen telephone calls, through a communications assistant who is a qualified universal sign language interpreter.

Similarly, Ministry of Education and sports need to explore innovations such as online sign language tutorials for secondary schools, and signed audio-visio copies of the curriculum, to mitigate the current teaching gaps in sign language. This also supplements on the instructional materials and methods. These among others, would possibly address the current challenges of performance among learners with special needs.

In cases where there are no sign language interpreters, the Ministry responsible for innovations or ICT can support installations of real time voice-to-text translation systems at work places, schools, health facilities, and other public places. These systems can accurately transcribe voice conversations using

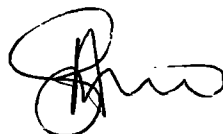


speech to text technology; in conferences, class rooms, among other platforms. These innovations will slowly promote independent living, especially among the educated category of persons with hearing impairments.

- (iv) The adoption of sub-titling of all voice speeches on Television is another simple innovation, but with transformative results in the lives of persons with hearing impairment. Though Uganda communication commission requires all Television stations to have sign language interpreters, this has not been fully achieved for all Television Programmes. But sub-titling of voice in most Programmes on TV like it is done in international media, is a reform that can help bridge the gap. We need to consider this as a matter of urgency.
- (v) The Persons with a combination of hearing-speech-and visual impairments require the Ministry in charge of technology and innovations to prioritize the area of tactile technology. This helps people with hearing, speech and visual impairment to communicate. It's an innovation that thrives on the sense of touching and manipulation of hands between a helper a person with such a disability. This is very transformative in the lives of persons with a combination of the three impairments.

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- (vi) The Persons with Albinism require Government agencies like Uganda pharmaceutical industries and other local scientists to prioritize products such as sunscreens, face balms, among others, which are currently imported and expensive.
- (vii) Persons with Spina Bifida condition require innovations in the local production of affordable organic diapers, among other materials, to strengthen accessible care for children with this category of disability.
- (viii) Similarly, children with hydrocephalus require innovations in the production of free or subsidized supplies such as shunts. The shunts are medical tubes used in health facilities to drain extra fluids from the head of children with hydrocephalus. Most parents of such children cannot afford these critical supplies, yet they are not adequate in our health facilities.
- (ix) The Persons with short stature require Government interventions to make adjustments for reasonable accommodation. For instance, there is need for Ministry of Finance to issue a circular to banks to have a certain percentage of ATM machines at a lower height to cater for persons with short stature (little persons) who keep complaining of inaccessibility. Then adjustments by Ministry in charge of Sanitation, in the height of some toilets in public places to accommodate persons with short



stature, among other adjustments for reasonable accommodation.

Rt. Hon. Speaker and Colleagues, the above, are some of the few examples to demonstrate the urgent need for the different duty bearers, to prioritize the promotion of innovations for disability inclusion

10.22 Rt. Hon. Speaker and Hon Members, since the inception, and as a practice, commemorating this Day, is organized on a Regional rotational basis. Last year it was in Northern Uganda (Kole District) and this year, the day will be commemorated in Western Region. The approved venue for this year's Commemoration, is Mbarara District in Western Uganda, which was selected among others, based on its timely expression of interest, and other suitability considerations, to host the event.

10.23 Rt. Honorable Speaker and Hon Members, the Chief Guest for the National Commemorations is expected to be the Rt. Hon Prime Minister of the Republic of Uganda.

10.24 Rt. Honorable Speaker and Colleagues, My Ministry constituted a National Organizing Committee (NOC) comprised representatives of Ministries, Departments, Agencies, non-state actors, and the host Local Government, to spearhead arrangements for the event.

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10.25 Rt. Honorable Speaker and Hon Members, The pre-event and D-Day activities include: assessment of some Persons with Disabilities for assistive devices, distribution of assistive devices, a National Disability Symposium with panel discussions on Innovations for Disability inclusion, HIV screening, Blood donation, Cancer screening, Media engagements, provision of dummy cheques for selected groups in the region, exhibitions of inclusive innovations by Private sector and Government agencies, among others.

10.26 Rt. Hon Speaker and colleagues, I wish to acknowledge and appreciate the Hon Members of Parliament for their efforts in enacting enabling laws, and supporting budget allocations towards empowerment of Persons with Disabilities.

10.27 I urge all Hon. Members of Parliament to participate in the National and some of the District level commemorations of the International Day of Persons with Disabilities.

10.28 Rt. Hon. Speaker and Hon. Members, I conclude with an appeal to you, to always support and mobilize resources for Persons with Disabilities to address their unique disadvantages, and enhance their meaningful inclusion in the development agenda of our Country.

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I beg to submit,

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Asamo Hellen Grace (MP)

MINISTR OF STATE FOR DISABILITY AFFAIRS