

**Speech by Jeroen Verheul, Ambassador of Kingdom of the Netherlands,
Chair JLOS DPG, at the Ground Breaking Ceremony for the JLOS offices in Lamwo, Northern Uganda**

February 22nd 2012, Lamwo

Honourable Minister of Justice and Constitutional Affairs,
Honourable Minister of Internal Affairs,
Director of Public Prosecution,
Representative of the Inspector General of Police,
The district authorities,
Representative of the JLOS institutions,
Ladies and gentlemen,

We are here today to break the ground for JLOS services in the district of Lamwo. As mentioned by the previous speaker, the Minister of Internal Affairs, the Netherlands is supporting Justice, Law and Order service delivery in Uganda. However, I would like to clarify that this support is not earmarked for Lamwo specifically. The Justice Law and Order Sector prioritized the construction of a court, a public prosecution station and a police station in the district of Lamwo. As JLOS cannot have offices in each and every district, it is important to rationalize JLOS service delivery, based on criteria such as amount of the population that can be served and distances to the nearest police station, court, or prison. We will discuss with the JLOS why in this case, the district of Lamwo was prioritized.

Let me congratulate the people of Lamwo with the JLOS services that will come to their district. As you know, JLOS services are not only about bricks and mortar, though in some cases getting the infrastructure physically in place is the first priority. The Justice, Law and Order Sector - JLOS - stands for institutions working together, by coordinating, communicating and cooperation; In Lamwo, the cooperation will be strengthened by the fact that they will be physically located at one and the same place - the Prosecution, the Magistrate, and the Police. Let us hope that this will enhance good communication and coordination.

Access to justice is an important right for every Ugandan, especially here in Lamwo, where only a few years ago, there was a war going on. When I first arrived in Uganda, five years ago, I was not allowed to travel even to the north. Killings, abductions, and rape were of the order of the day. Now, people have returned to their homes and it is a relatively safe place.

However, being safe is not enough. I believe in the National Development Plan, and also in the JLOS strategic plan, they talk about a safe and JUST society. Some say that there will be no peace without justice, and I believe this is true.

So it is a milestone that we are here today, to break the ground for the JLOS offices. It is important to invest in bricks and mortar, to get JLOS services to the people.

As said, JLOS services do not come automatically when the bricks and mortar are in place. JLOS is about people, who deliver their services in a just, professional and fair manner. So when we break the ground for the JLOS services, I hope the shovel does not only symbolize the commitment of the contractor to bring you the JLOS buildings, but also the commitment of the JLOS personnel, whether it is the probation officer, the police officer, the court clerk, the prison ward, or the magistrate to bring their services to the people.

How to ensure this? We have this forum called the District Chainlinked Committee. I hope also in Lamwo they are meeting regularly, even though I been told most services still operate from Kitgum. All the heads of institutions, plus the district leadership, plus the civil society organizations are supposed to meet once every two months to discuss how to increase access to justice. I explicitly mention civil society, because they are a valued partner in assuring access to justice.

The DCC also monitors if the contractor is doing its work. If there are delays in the construction, please report that. The DCC monitors whether the magistrate visits prison once a month, as he/she is supposed to do, to identify any backlog or emergency issues with the prisoners. The DCC monitors whether police and prison staff respect the rights of the people in detention, that there is no violence. They monitor whether all people who are accused of capital offences have access to legal representation in court. They monitor whether the magistrate oversees the functioning of the informal or traditional courts, such as the Local Council Courts, or the clan tribunals. They monitor whether the probation officer promotes and oversees the delivery of community services for petty offenders. And more in general, they monitor whether JLOS officers, from the lowest to the highest rank, are there, present, to deliver their services.

There are a few issues that are of specific importance to you, here in Lamwo. Many of the people here have been displaced during the LRA war. You might have returned home, only to find out that your land have been occupied by other people. I have been told land conflicts are rampant here, and I want to ensure you that as development partners to the JLOS we will keep emphasizing the importance of land justice. Especially widows and orphanaged children are vulnerable for land grabbing. The majority of the people go to clan court or LC-III courts. Without good supervision by the JLOS over these courts, and without functioning appeal systems of these courts, there is no land justice.

The second issue is related to the trauma. Research has shown that in post conflict situation, there is a lot of trauma arising from rape and sexual violence – during the war, but also thereafter. The only way to hold the perpetrators accountable for their offenses is a professional desk at the police station, where women feel safe and respected so they will be able to talk about the trauma. Where possible, secure forensic evidence, so the judge can base a verdict on facts, not on hear-say.

Also, domestic violence is common in post conflict situations, and northern Uganda is no exception. JLOS institutions need to be prepared for this. Now that there is the Domestic Violence Act, police can investigate and DPP can prosecute. Counseling is also of great importance, to avoid recidivism.

I will come to my conclusions. With this symbolic ground breaking ceremony, we hope to be able to make a significant step towards the delivery of JLOS services to the people of Lamwo. I thank you for your time and attention.