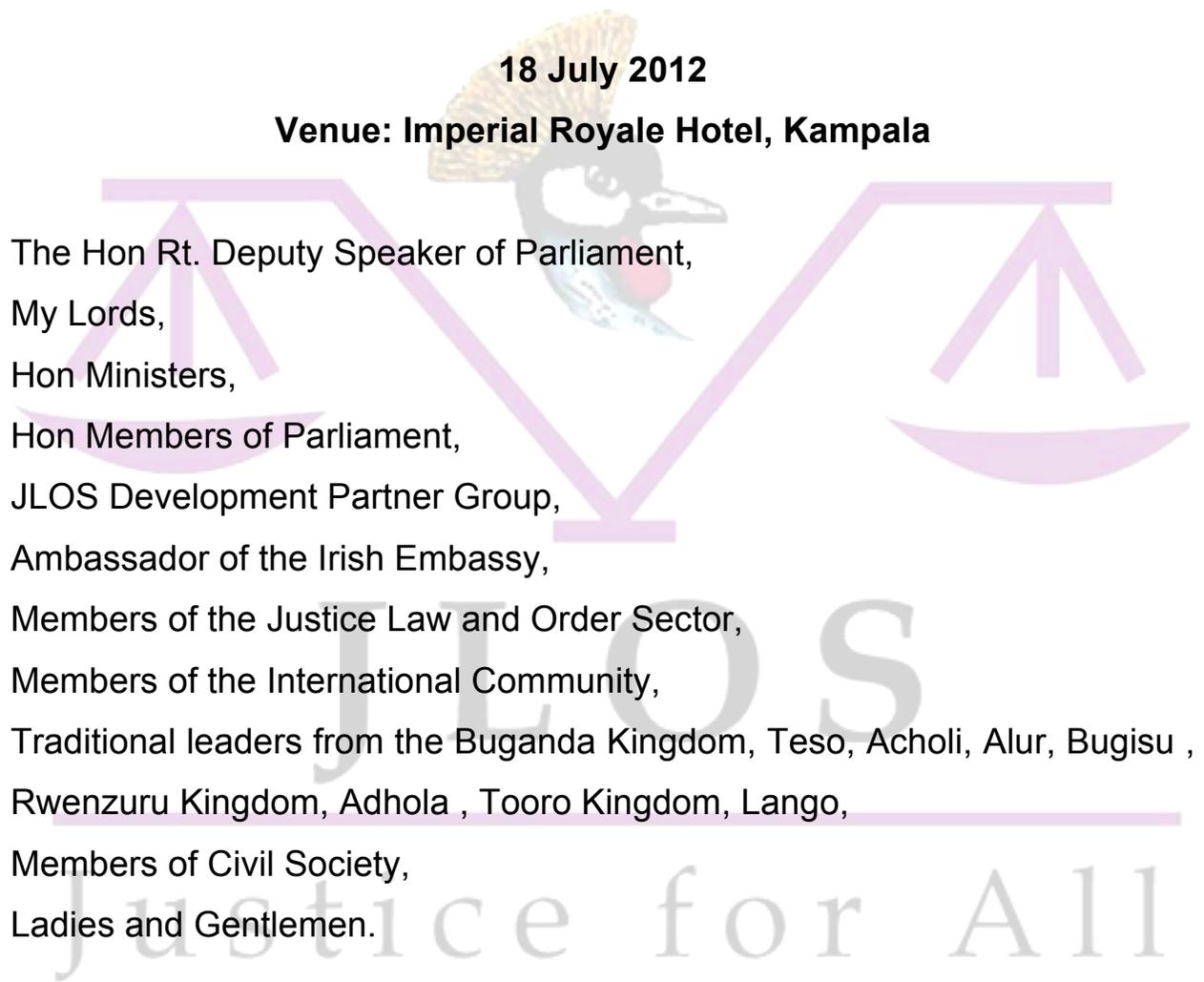


**OPENING REMARKS BY HON ENG. HILLARY ONEK MINISTER OF  
INTERNAL AFFAIRS AT THE VALIDATION OF A REPORT AND  
POLICY PROPOSALS ON THE USE OF TRADITIONAL JUSTICE AND  
TRUTH TELLING MECHANISMS IN THE PROMOTION OF JUSTICE,  
ACCOUNTABILITY, PEACE AND RECONCILIATION**

**18 July 2012**

**Venue: Imperial Royale Hotel, Kampala**



The Hon Rt. Deputy Speaker of Parliament,  
My Lords,  
Hon Ministers,  
Hon Members of Parliament,  
JLOS Development Partner Group,  
Ambassador of the Irish Embassy,  
Members of the Justice Law and Order Sector,  
Members of the International Community,  
Traditional leaders from the Buganda Kingdom, Teso, Acholi, Alur, Bugisu ,  
Rwenzuru Kingdom, Adhola , Tooro Kingdom, Lango,  
Members of Civil Society,  
Ladies and Gentlemen.

I welcome you all to this important workshop.

Civil conflict and rebellion has ragged this country in the recent decades. Examples include; the ADF (Allied Democratic Forces), West Nile Bank Front, UPDA (Uganda People's Democratic Army, the UNLA (Uganda National

Liberation Front), the Holy Spirit Movement (of Alice Lakwena), the longest being the 21 year long LRA – Government of Uganda conflict/war in northern Uganda which accounted for the (80%) eighty percent population in the north being internally displaced, and living under devastating situations. Normal livelihood settings were crumpled. Communities were affected in various ways however; children, women and youths have been most affected.

In the context of the LRA insurgency, formally abducted girls and women have returned home with unwanted children, disease (HIV/AIDS), disability yet they are faced with rejection from their own parents/families. The fate of children born in captivity is unknown, an issue for urgent attention.

It is estimated that over 30,000 children have been abducted by the LRA; agencies like world vision have acknowledged receipt and rehabilitation of over 15,000 children.

In order to address the problems, the Government of Uganda initiated a number of interventions, ranging from military action to counter the insurgencies, peace negotiations, commissions of inquiry in the 70's and 1986, designing of policies notably the Internally Displaced Persons(IDP) policy and enactment of laws, like the Amnesty Act in 2000 and the International Criminal Court Act 2010.

All these processes have had their successes and challenges, which precipitates the need for collective action enshrined in values of consultation, dialogue and cooperation.

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The sector will today present their findings on the use of traditional justice and truth telling mechanisms in the promotion of accountability and reconciliation. Such intervention is critical for the Government of Uganda considering that we are still faced with the effects of conflict that have been manifested in different forms.

The Ministry of Internal Affairs, which I head, is engaged in peace and reconciliation interventions, which are being implemented through the local leadership structures. Notable is the Amnesty commission, which has been

actively involved in demobilizing, re-insertion support, providing resettlement packages to reporters and reintegration.

I also would like to take this opportunity to clarify misconceptions about the status of the Amnesty law which has been subject to lots of debate. On May 23<sup>rd</sup> 2012, through statutory instrument No. 34 of 2012, Part II of the Amnesty Act Cap. 294 lapsed operation. It is based on Section 16(3) of the Amnesty Act( as amended in 2006) which provides that; “ The Minister may by statutory instrument, declare the lapse of the operation of Part II of this Act”

The Act was however extended for one year giving powers to the Amnesty Commission to continue its functions of demobilisation, resettlement, reintegration, promotion of dialogue and reconciliation.

The implication of lapse of operation of part II of the Act is that the Amnesty Commission will no longer issue amnesty certificates to individuals who return from rebellion seeking amnesty for crimes committed during war or rebellion against the Government of Uganda.

Most important however is that those already granted amnesty are still protected under the confines of our law from prosecution for the crimes they received amnesty. They should continue reporting to the amnesty commission so that they are reintegrated, resettled and reconciled with their communities.

The Commission has to some extent been supporting traditional justice and truth telling processes especially during reunification, resettlement and reintegration of excombatants with their families and communities since, they are deemed indispensable.

Given the opportunity, the Commission can further meaningful interventions in the area of truth seeking/telling to enhance resettlement, reintegration and reconciliation.

In December 2003, Uganda referred the Case of Joseph Kony, Dominic Ongwen, Okot Odhiambo, Vincent Otti and Raska Lukwiya to the International Criminal Court in a bid to seek justice for the affected communities. Only three are said to be surviving who should be handed to

the ICC if apprehended. The Court is meant to be complementary to Ugandan National proceedings.

Government of Uganda commenced Peace Negotiations brokered by the Government of Southern Sudan in 2006, with the objective of ending hostilities and finding solutions to the conflict in Northern Uganda. Even though the final Peace Agreement was not signed, commendable progress was illustrated in the signing of Agreement on Accountability and Reconciliation in 2007. The Agreement emphasises the need for accountability and reconciliation through a combination of justice mechanisms including traditional Justice and truth telling.

I would therefore like to commend the JLOS for already implementing the provisions of the Agreement, notably the national consultations on the use of traditional justice and truth telling mechanisms which are intended to inform policy direction on transitional justice.

Government is committed to facilitating this process and with the requisite stakeholder support, justice, accountability, peace and reconciliation will be achieved.

Challenges will not be lacking however, Government is prepared to mitigate these challenges by putting in place the requisites, for example, the Uganda Law Reform Commission has a draft bill on witness protection, a transitional justice policy will be developed which will comprehensively look into the modalities for implementing truth telling mechanisms, traditional justice and reparations.

I hereby pledge support of the Ministry of Internal Affairs in process and take the opportunity to declare this workshop open.