Speech by
His Excellency, Yoweri Museveni, The President of the Republic of Uganda at the opening of the 4th Conference of African National Human Rights Institutions, Kampala Uganda
14th August 2002
The Representative of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights,

The Chairperson, African Commission on Human and Peoples rights,

The Chairperson, African Co-ordinating Committee of African National Human Rights Institutions,

The Chairperson, Uganda Human Rights Commission,

Your Excellencies, the Ambassadors and High Commissioners,

Distinguished conference participants

Ladies and Gentlemen

It is a great pleasure for me to address you at the opening of this 4th Conference of African National Human Rights Institutions. On behalf of the people of Uganda, I warmly welcome you all to our country and hope you will have a wonderful stay and a fruitful conference.

I want from the very beginning to express my support for national human rights institutions, which in my view are important players in the promotion and protection of human rights. I welcome the initiative of these institutions in holding a conference of this kind on the subject of development.
We all are looking forward to receiving constructive proposals and recommendations regarding strategies for enhancing development in Africa.

Development is an issue that should occupy the attention of all governments. In 1995 the World Summit for Social Development brought together Heads of State and Government for the first time to discuss social development. The resultant Copenhagen Declaration “established a new consensus to place people at the centre of concerns for sustainable development and pledged to eradicate poverty, promote full and productive employment and foster social integration to achieve stable, safe and just societies for all” Development therefore is meaningless unless it is people centred. Development is not just economic growth because such growth alone may not be for the full well being of all the population of the country. It is imperative that in our development planning, strategies are designed not only to generate economic growth, but to ensure equitable distribution of the benefits of such growth. This is the challenge we have in Africa, the challenge of constantly improving the well being of all our people, of each and every individual citizen without discrimination.
This conference will discuss rights-based strategies for development. In my view, there are key elements, which are fundamental for development to take place in Africa and in any other continent for that matter. The first is for us to define and understand the meaning of people-centred development:- development is people-centred if it places human rights at the core of development planning and implementation; development must empower people economically, socially, politically and culturally. Development must enhance the capabilities of the people. Development must have as its highest priority the elimination of poverty and it should integrate all vulnerable groups in the development process. It must create self-reliance. Any other scheme of development that does not create sustained improvement of the well-being of all citizens based on their meaningful participation is useless and cannot maintain national peace and harmony.

Understanding development is crucial for Africa and failure to do this is probably one of the reasons why post independent African leaders failed to propel Africa to development:- they concerned themselves with the retention of power by means of oppression, killings, violations of human rights and manipulations.
And yet a key factor for development in any country is the creation of an enabling environment. In Africa, we must understand that we will remain backward unless we create an enabling environment for development:- Good governance, the rule of law and respect for human rights are important in creating an enabling environment for development. At the same time there must be space for a free and vibrant civil society, which is important in promoting participation and enforcing accountability by leaders.

Sound development environment is not only created by good governance and the rule of law but is also supported by effective development planning, sound employment policy and proper and effective utilisation of national resources. These are key elements that African governments must bear in mind. At the same time Africa must eliminate armed conflict, military aggression which are not only a drain to resources but drives away investment capital.

In working out development strategies it must be recognised that the responsibility for development is a shared one in which individuals, national governments and the international community all have important roles to play.
We must pay attention to the international dimensions that affect developing countries some of which have negative implications:- the International community must consider the negative implications of the increasing debt burden, decreasing ODA and unequal market access all of which have profound effect on development planning in the third world.

Debt relief for heavily indebted poor countries would contribute in building an enabling environment for development in those countries. The external debt situation for some low income countries, mostly in Africa is not only worrying but has strained local economies and absorbed development resources. The IMF/World Bank HIPC initiative while offering assistance to some heavily indebted countries, still leaves the debt crisis unresolved and its negative impact on development is far from over.

As we discuss strategies for a right-based approach to development we must bear in mind that a key target and benchmark for measuring development should be the extent to which poverty has been reduced in our society. Poverty is about human deprivation not only of economic income but of basic capabilities to meet ones needs.
The victims of poverty experience a denial of almost all human rights but particularly the right to adequate standard of living and also the right to effective participation in political processes, access to information and education and many others. Poverty elimination must be a major target of development planning because it is poverty that denies people economic and social rights like the right to adequate food, the right to health, the right to proper housing. In planning to eliminate poverty it will be desirable to have strong political will, in the pursuit of good governance and the rule of law. It will equally be desirable to remove insensitive local officials, corrupt institutions who often are responsible for the misuse and theft of public funds meant for the poor. We must also ensure that the voices of the poor are heard in development planning.

Poor development performance in Africa is often due to the inadequate response to the scourge of poverty, which continues to perpetuate itself in Africa. Underdevelopment and poverty are now cyclical, leading to poor health, under-education which in turn leads to marginalisation and poverty. Poverty and underdevelopment is also intergenerational, with millions being born into poverty each year and the cycle continues.
In Africa, we are yet to make full commitment, supported by effective programmes of action, for achieving gender equality. Gender inequality contributes to poverty and poor development in our countries. In today’s world the majority of people living in poverty are women, with women accounting for $\frac{2}{3}$ of the illiterate adult population in the developing countries. Development strategies should therefore take into account the rights of women. The strategies should enable full participation by women in national development by providing them with equal opportunities in education, health, employment, land ownership and protecting them from exploitation and sexual harassment at home and at the workplace. Gender issues must be mainstreamed in our development policies.

Development planning in Africa must give serious attention to the issue of health in Africa. For many people in the least developed countries the realisation of the right to health continue to be elusive. Seventy five per cent of the people of these countries still die before the age of 50 – which is the global life expectancy figure 50 years ago. The world over, 790 million people suffer from malnutrition, while 880 million have no access to basic health services, and 2.6 billion are without basic sanitation.
In the least developed countries more than half the population have no access to health care. Issues of health are therefore so crucial for development planning that it should occupy a central role in any development strategy. Such a strategy must bear in mind that the right of health cannot be achieved unless other rights namely the right to food, to work, to housing, and to education have been achieved.

Under-development and poverty are very significant and sustained in developing countries. They have serious threats on human rights. They therefore demand substantial, sustained and efficient response nationally as well as internationally. Under international law all states have a role to play in the protection and promotion of human rights including the promotion and protection of economic, social and cultural rights. Unfortunately, the international community has not effectively met this responsibility:- Globally, ODA has fallen below 0.25% of GDP, the lowest since aid began over 50 years ago. Today only 4 countries exceed the international donor target of 0.7% of GDP in providing aid. While I accept that the principal responsibility for national development lies with each state, that fact should not excuse the international community of its collective responsibility to render support to needy countries.
Further, it cannot be denied that development co-operation does benefit donors as well as developing partners alike. Development aid should not be viewed as charity. It is not. It is investment in the interest of a safer, more just and peaceful world for us all. Under the UN Charter, the UN and its members commit themselves to international co-operation and assistance in order to achieve economic and social progress. It is therefore important that the framework for international co-operation is improved and strengthened. In this connection development partners should by now have realised that narrowly focussed plans and programmes relying on income level indicators, technocratic responses, or encouragement of private investment, have been insignificant in eradicating poverty and stimulating development. It is now the view of a number of development actors, that a right-based approach, in practical terms would produce better results. Such approach would put the people in the centre of development planning. It is my understanding that a right-based approach to development entails the integration of norms, standards, and principles of the international human rights systems into plans, policies and processes of development, that the norms and standards are those contained in the various international human rights treaties and declarations.
I also understand that such an approach would define the objectives of development and international aid in terms of particularly rights, as legally enforceable claims. This may sound good because many states sign international human rights treaties as a matter of routine without serious consideration as to how the commitments would be implemented. I however, warn that whatever strategies are designed must be realistic, succinct and implementable. Many times, the donors and the multilateral development partners issue prescriptions as conditions for development assistance. Prescriptive approaches will always be resisted and end up not realising the intended objective. I call upon you to develop strategies, which should be marketed as recommendations, leaving it to each state to draw up priorities desirable for achieving positive development results. The strategies proposed should be guidelines and not mandatory prescriptions.

In Uganda, my government has long recognised the importance of people-centred development planning. Aware of the importance of poverty eradication, we have drawn up and is implementing a comprehensive Poverty Eradication Action Programme (PEAP).
Because of positive planning and implementation it has been possible to reduce the level of poverty in the country from 56% in 1986 to 35% in 2002.

On health, infant mortality rate reduced from 122 children out of 1000 born alive in 1986 to 88 per 1000. For the under-fives it reduced from 203 children out of 1000 to 147 children per 1000.

On maternal mortality, women dying reduced from 900 out of 100,000 in 1986 to 506 in 2000. The doctor patient ration also reduced from 1 doctor to every 23,000 in 1986 to 1 doctor for every 18000. We are talking of government doctors here excluding those in private hospitals.

On HIV/AIDS, the prevalence in adults has reduced from 30% in 1986 to 8.3 % in 2000. Each county in the country now has a health centre, an operating theatre and a resident doctor.

By 1986 only 10% of the rural population had access to safe water but in 2000 the percentage of people accessing safe water had increased from 17% in 1986 to 65%.
On education we have emphasized universal primary education. Since we started a program of UPE in 1996, we have increased the number of children in primary school from 2.5 million to 6.8 million. There was only one university (Makerere University) when we came into government but by 2000 there were 13 universities. These are some of the progresses we have made and we believe they answer the need for a right-based development planning.

These efforts however, are being derailed by misguided people and their agents who are bent on creating confusion in some parts of the country by engaging in pointless violence inspite of our offer of amnesty to them. We are however, confident that these people will fail or will be defeated and the country will continue to march forward.

In conclusion, I want to reiterate what I have always said and stood for – that to truly advance human rights and development we need to:-

- promote good governance and the rule of law. This will ensure protection of human rights.
• advance basic economic and social rights namely the rights to education, to health, to clean water, to adequate food and to safe sanitation.

• efficiently utilise our resources, including development aid, through proper planning, implementation and elimination of corruption in our governance system.

• empower of the people through democracy, and awareness, thereby providing one of the tools of ensuring accountability by those who govern.

It is now my pleasure to declare your conference open.