



**LAUNCH OF THE PRIVATE SECTOR PLATFORM FOR SDGS  
Kampala Serena Hotel  
4 May 2021**

**KEYNOTE ADDRESS BY  
RT. HON. RUHAKANA RUGUNDA,  
PRIME MINISTER OF THE REPUBLIC OF UGANDA**

**Salutations:**

- Hon. Mary Karoro Okurut, the Minister for General Duties and Focal Point Minister for the SDGs;
  - Your Excellency Rosa Malango, the UN Resident Coordinator in Uganda;
  - All Representatives of Government Ministries, Departments and Agencies;
  - Representatives of UN Agencies and Development Partners;
  - Our Esteemed Partners from the Private Sector in Uganda;
  - Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen - including those attending virtually:
1. I am pleased to welcome you here this afternoon, as we jointly launch the Uganda Private Sector Platform for the Sustainable Development Goals, the SDGs.

2. This is a very timely and important meeting, as there can be no realistic discussion about accelerating achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, without reflection on the much needed external and internal development financing and the pertaining invaluable contributions of the Private Sector. Therefore, to see this platform come to life, is very encouraging for the Government and the people of Uganda.
3. I commend all those who have played a role in getting us to this major milestone, including the SDG Secretariat within the Office of the Prime Minister and the United Nations Country Team led by Her Excellency, the UN Resident Coordinator. Very importantly, I also commend the Private Sector actors, under the umbrella of the Private Sector Foundation of Uganda (PSFU), for their willingness to actively participate in and contribute to the development process of our country.
4. The Government is committed to its pledge to leave no one behind, as it steers the course to achieve the 17 SDGs in Uganda. At the same time, the Government is also starkly aware that while it must take the lead, this is a journey hinged on partnerships, including with the Private Sector.
5. Discussions about partnerships are always generally two-way. In the most simplistic terms, the question is, "What do the different parties stand to gain?" Perhaps that is even more true in discussions about partnerships with the Private Sector, where the bottom line is usually the ultimate determinant. In fact, the PSFU slogan is "Business Growth is Our Business"!

6. Let me start off by saying, that the business case for the Private Sector is very clear. Realizing the Sustainable Development Goals will improve the environment for doing business and building markets. As we continue on the journey of raising trillions of dollars to achieve the goals, this also creates huge opportunities for companies.
  
7. That, however, is the other key consideration. Former UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon put it best when he said, “Companies need to do business responsibly and then pursue new opportunities. In short, companies must not make our world’s [and country’s] problems worse, before they try to make them better”. To do that, it is necessary for every business in this country to align its strategies, policies and practices to the Sustainable Development Goals – all of them.
  
8. The truth, though, is that often times that is easier said than done. It is said – and rightly so – that we cannot achieve one goal by compromising the achievement of another. You cannot say you have steered economic growth by creating jobs, while at the same time creating waste that affects the climate. You cannot claim to empower women farmers when the products from their efforts affect numerous health targets adversely for the farmers and other consumers. Examples abound, but obviously, this creates a dilemma for business owners in their direct engagement in achieving the SDGs and a need to think about sustainability approaches. This puzzle also exists for the Government, which depends on domestic revenue as an important base for development financing, but also has the primary responsibility for sustainability.

9. As the conversation on the necessity of development financing grows, so must the interest in the impact of the financing. Various reports have highlighted that it is unhelpful to assume that the SDGs are a project dependent solely on financing. One paper says, and I quote, “Agenda 2030 is predicated on the fact that sustainability is built, not bought. More money is needed, but the ends to which it is used are as important as the quantities in which it is available.”
10. These are the discussions we need to continually have as partners; the questions we need to continually ask ourselves. There is a need to explore and define a practical implementation mix. Development experts have called for stronger integrated planning, strategic thinking and policy integration. In Uganda, we have moved from previous sector-focused policy-making approaches to program approaches. These are the important changes we must continually make as the world’s realities also continue to evolve.
11. The COVID-19 pandemic is one such reality. The crisis has brought many lessons and plenty of food for thought. If we didn’t before, we have realized how interconnected the SDGs are in policy and in practice. We have acknowledged that the 2030 Agenda and Uganda’s Vision 2040 still provide the framework that is needed for transformation into a prosperous and just society. We have witnessed firsthand, the value of partnerships and now acknowledge more than ever, the need to better mobilize across sectors and develop integrated approaches to meet the SDG targets. Indeed, the accelerated pace to put this Private Sector Platform is proof of that.

12. The 2020 UN Sustainable Development Goals Report noted that the SDGs can “frame long-term strategies towards more resilient and sustainable societies”. This Private Sector Platform is a partnership strategy which will enable Ugandans not only to build forward more sustainably, fairly and equitably, but with renewed momentum towards achieving the vital SDG targets.

13. While acknowledging that achieving all the SDG targets at the same time is difficult, the Government also emphasizes that it is not impossible. The Government of Uganda therefore pledges to ensure continued political and technical commitment and accountability, as well as appreciation and support of the role of the various non-state actors, including the private sector. The Government is counting on you to be in the co-driver’s seat to the destination.

I thank you.