

ON THE OCCASION TO LAUNCH EXPANDING SOCIAL PROTECTION PROGRAMME

STATEMENT BY

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MINISTER OF GENDER, LABOUR AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

KAMPALA, 28 September 2010

Our Chief Guest, Rt. Hon. Muganwa Henry Kajura, The 2nd Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Public Service,

Hon Ministers,

Hon Members of Parliament,

The British High Commissioner to Uganda,

The Irish Ambassador to Uganda,

**The UNICEF Country Representative to Uganda,
Ambassadors, High Commissioners and Heads of Missions**

Traditional Leaders,

Religious Leaders

Distinguished guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen.

Chief Guest, I am happy to warmly welcome you, to this very important function, where we are launching a new programme, Expanding Social Protection, under my Ministry. Ladies and Gentlemen, I also wish to welcome all of you and thank you for honouring this event with your presence. Your acceptance to put aside your other busy schedules to participate at this launch, underscores your interest and importance you attach to the cause of this programme.

Permit me, Mr. Chairman, to welcome, in a special way Dr. Nunkoomar Deerpalsing, from Mauritius. Dr. Deerpalsing; I thank you for presenting such an enlightening paper in your keynote address. I have no doubt that the experience and issues you have shared will help to enrich our programme.

Allow me at the very onset of my statement, Mr. Chairman, to extend my gratitude to our development partners, especially DfID/UKaid, Irish Aid, and UINCEF. Without their dedicated commitment and support to Expanding Social Protection, we would not have come this far with this programme. My Ministry appreciates their support, which includes, technical assistance, capacity building across government, skills and knowledge transfer onto our staff, and of course financial resources to implement the programme. I invite you to join me to thank them for this constructive partnership between Government and development partners, which is aimed at improving service delivery to Ugandans.

Chief Guest, my Ministry recognizes the paramount importance of economic growth for sustained development of the country. But we also believe that growth must be for people and by the people. If this is not emphasized, then growth and development can-not be sustained. Our paradigm demands of us, policy makers, that we ensure a big proportion of people are not excluded from development programmes. The price and stakes would be high for Government if large numbers of our population are excluded from the development process, and therefore left extremely vulnerable, living in destitution, or otherwise trapped in chronic poverty.

My Ministry acknowledges the importance of social protection not only from a moral and ethical perspective, but particularly on its contribution to national development. Socially, social protection (S.P) restores the dignity of the poor, enhances the confidence of the poor to participate in community activities, and helps to improve the life chances of the vulnerable people. In recognition of this, my Ministry's first social development sector strategic investment plan (2003 – 2008) identified direct interventions that would contribute to improved social protection. Interventions like Functional Adult Literacy (FAL), Orphans and other Vulnerable Children (OVC), Community Based Rehabilitation (CBR), and

Community Mobilization and Empowerment (CME), people in difficult circumstances (PIDC) and promotion of employment initiatives are cases in point. In addition to these initiatives, my Ministry has developed policies such as Orphans and Vulnerable Children policy, Equal Opportunities, National policy for Older Persons, and Policy on Disability policy. There are also laws that have been made to operationalise these policies, such as the Disability Act, Equal Opportunities Commission Act. The overarching goal of these policies and laws is to create a platform for the respect and realization of human rights as well as protect individuals and communities against shocks and vulnerabilities in order to provide them access to opportunities to improve their livelihoods.

Chief Guest, the first disbursement of grants will happen in April 2011 under this programme. Between now and then my technical teams are working to identify some of the best methodologies and approaches to ensure that the systems used are foolproof and that these grants actually reach the people they are targeted at. This is very important for us if we are to achieve the purpose of this programme. The success of this programme is extremely important for us because it will guide the Government in expanding social protection to cover the entire country.

Chief Guest, this programme also fits well with regional and international commitments and declarations that we are signatory to. In March this year, the African Union and Government of Zambia co-hosted a sub-Saharan Africa conference on Social Protection. African governments, including us, called for several actions be undertaken in social protection. It is our obligation to live up to our commitments.

Ladies and gentlemen it is my sincere hope that our goodwill and commitment will result in achievement of the objectives of this programme and therefore those of the National Development Plan and the Millennium Development Goals(MDGs).

With these remarks, I now therefore have the honour to invite you, our Guest of Honour, to deliver your speech and thereafter, officially declare Expanding Social Protection Programme officially launched.

Thank you

For God and my Country