

**SPEECH BY HON. RUKIA NAKADAMA ISANGA,
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AFFAIRS**

**ON THE OCCASION TO MARK
INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY 2012**

**UNDER THE THEME
"CONNECTING GIRLS, INSPIRING FUTURES".**

VENUE: NEBBI DISTRICT.

8th March, 2012.

- Your Excellency, the President of the Republic of Uganda
- Hon. Ministers
- Hon. Members of Parliament
- Your Excellences, Ambassadors and Development Partners
- Heads of Government Institutions
- Cultural and Religious leaders
- Members of Civil Society and the Media
- Invited Guests
- Ladies and Gentlemen.

1. Your Excellency, I take this opportunity to welcome you to this commemoration of the International Women's Day in Uganda. I wish to congratulate you in advance for steering this country to its Independence Golden Jubilee year. Your personal contribution and that of the NRM government especially in the area of women's empowerment cannot be over emphasized.

2. As we converge to commemorate the International Women's Day we take stock of achievements as a country and continue to map out sustainable strategies with the overarching goal of uplifting the condition, position and status of women in our society.

3. Your Excellency, this year's theme "**Connecting girls, Inspiring futures**" was adopted from the United Nations theme for 2012 because of its relevance to issues girls face today and the need to connect them to opportunities that will enable them discover and enhance their potentials for a better future. Indeed we need to inspire the minds of girls for a future of equality, development and peace. The theme is significant because besides enjoining all duty bearers to visibly empower the girl child, it implies motivating and causing enthusiasm among the girls who are future mothers to strive for prosperity. You may recall that during the last year's International Women's Day, you launched the African Womens Decade 2010 – 2020 and also inaugurated the "Young Women's Movement". The importance of this venture was energizing and mentoring the young women to be champions of Gender and Women's Empowerment. This has served as an added guiding light for the duty bearers since then in their efforts to promote women's empowerment.

4. Your Excellency, permit me to state that the affirmative policy by your government has promoted the visibility of women in a cross section of spheres such as politics and education. The results are quantifiable and manifest so much that Uganda is a modal for

many countries in the area of mainstreaming women's concern. Education is not only a basic right but a way to the empowerment of the girl child and as the old adage goes "**when you educate a woman you educate a nation**". The government gender sensitive policies and programmes in the education sector including Universal Primary Education (UPE) that has led to parity in enrollment and Universal Secondary Education (USE) that increased total enrolment rates of females as well as the affirmative action in terms of adding 1.5 points to qualifying girls on entrance to Public Universities which has contributed to the desired critical mass of professional females cannot be over emphasized. In addition, the National Strategy for girls' education has addressed a number of institutional and infrastructural gender issues that were forcing the girls to drop out of school and this has inspired the girls to stay in schools.

5. The enjoyment of physical and mental health is a pre-requisite for equitable participation of the girl child in the development arena as well as attaining equality and peace in the private one. Issues related to women's sexual and reproductive rights continue to be a concern, aggravated by the HIV/AIDS epidemic.

It gives me great pleasure to report that government has put in place measures to inspire adolescent girls to access sexual and reproductive health information and services so that they can take charge of their sexual and reproductive lives. These include; family planning, safe motherhood, HIV/AIDS counseling and testing, Presidential Initiative on Aids Strategy for communication to young people (PIASY) programme in schools, supportive laws and policies such as, The Prohibition of FGM Act 2010 and The penal code (Amendment prohibiting defilement of girls and boys) among others.

6. You Excellency, the girl child has continued to be inspired to participate in leadership and decision making through affirmative action measures. The affirmative action has not only enabled women to break into a male domain but has also disproved the stereotypes about women's leadership capabilities. The older women who joined politics in 1986 were such good role models that today the young women have been inspired to join politics and to make decisions and choices that benefit the women folk.

7. As we commemorate this day under the theme, “**Connecting girls, Inspiring futures**” the different duty bearers must perform their roles accordingly.

- The parents should socialize their daughters to have dignity and self esteem to be able to overcome the gender biases, stereotypes and discrimination which are deeply entrenched in our society.
- Community and religious leaders, teachers, health workers, implementers of government and Non-governmental programmes, policy makers and legislators must take cognizance of the unique problems faced by the girls and ensure that appropriate measures are put in place in order to have Inspiring futures for the girl child.

8. Allow me, your Excellency to pay tribute to DFID for their support to the women of this country through the UN Joint Programme on Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment (2010-2014). This Programme is executed by the UN WOMEN, the Agency which is responsible for gender equality and women’s empowerment in the UN family. We at the Ministry of Gender cherish the cordial and professional working relationship with the UN WOMEN.

Allow me your Excellency, through you to once again welcome the UN WOMEN Regional Representative, Eastern and Central Africa, to today's celebration. Nebbi district is one of the 10 districts in the country in which this programme is implemented. Other districts benefiting in this programme include; Gulu, Kitgum, Lira, Moroto, Kween, Pallisa, Masaka, Mbarara and Kyenjonjo. This programme is expected to directly benefit women and girls but equally important, it is executed and co-ordinated by UN WOMEN. The Uganda Woman Magazine you are launching today is a baby of this programme.

9. Last and not least, You Excellency, allow me also to extend our sincere appreciation to our Development Partners- Department for International Development (DFID), Irish AID and UNICEF for the support to the Senior Citizens of this country under the Expanding Social Protection Programme-that you will launch in Nebbi today. The programme is providing direct income support in form of a Senior Citizens Grant and a Vulnerable Family Support Grant of UGX 23,000 monthly to poor and vulnerable households in 14 pilot districts including Nebbi.

The majority of the beneficiaries of the Senior Citizens Grant are older women without any other form of income security. Ugandan women play a key role in caring for their families particularly grand children especially those that have been orphaned by HIV/AIDS.

Your Excellency, the Senior Citizens Grant complements Government's efforts to empower women and address their unique vulnerability and needs. In particular, the Grant supports older women to empower their granddaughters to access good quality health, education and sanitation services. These services are vital to their reproductive health and rights, human capital development, economic wellbeing and dignity; thereby inspiring the girl child to effectively participate in and benefit from Uganda's Socio-economic transformation.

With these few remarks your Excellency, I do now take the pleasure to invite you to address the Nation, and launch the Women's Magazine and the Senior Citizens Grant in Nebbi.

“FOR GOD AND MY Country”