



THE REPUBLIC OF UGANDA

## COURTS OF JUDICATURE

**SPEECH BY THE CHIEF JUSTICE OF UGANDA, HON BENJAMIN J ODOKI  
AT THE CASE BACKLOG REVIEW CONFERENCE**

**HELD AT**

**IMPERIAL ROYALE HOTEL, KAMPALA**

**ON**

**Date: Monday 7<sup>th</sup> March 2011**

**SPEECH OF THE HON. THE CHIEF JUSTICE AT THE CASE  
BACKLOG REVIEW CONFERENCE HELD AT IMPERIAL ROYALE  
HOTEL, ON MARCH 7<sup>TH</sup> 2011**

My Lord the Deputy Chief Justice

My Lord the Principal Judge

The Attorney General and Minister of Justice and  
Constitutional Affairs

My Lords Justices of the Supreme Court and Court of Appeal

My Lords the judges of the High Court

The Executive Director, JSI

The Chairperson of the Steering Committee

Heads of JLOS Institution

Your Worship the Ag Chief Registrar

The Development Partners

Dear Participants

Ladies and Gentlemen

In March 2010, I launched the Justice Law and Order Sector Case Backlog Quick Wins Reduction Programme to clear at least 18,400 old cases. The long term objective of the programme was to decongest prisons, expedite the adjudication of disputes and generally improve the legal environment for doing business in Uganda.

Since launching the programme, JLOS institutions have completed more than 80,000 cases through adjudication and quality assurance. I

thank the Judges and staff of all JLOS institutions and the public who contributed to the success of the programme. I

I thank the JLOS Development Partners and the Government of Uganda, for funding the programme.

The JLOS Case backlog reduction programme has registered several achievements, suffice to mention the following:

- Through targeted and intensified hearing of capital cases in the High Court, the programme has reduced the average time capital offenders spend on remand from 29 months to 15.1 months. In Luzira - Upper Maximum Prison, the convict – remand ratio improved from 50:50 to 53:47- for the first time in 28 years. While in South Western Region, the convict remand ratio improved from 29.1: 70.9 to 34.3:65.57 and congestion reduced by 5.4% during the period. The average number of cases completed per judge per session increased from 30 to 50 cases.
- The Uganda Police Force weeded out 75,903 cases from the system representing about 69 % of the cases registered annually.
- The Court of Appeal for the first time held sittings outside Kampala- in Mbarara and Gulu, where it completed 150

criminal appeals in two months. The Court of Appeal will soon sit in Mbale and other regions to deal with its backlog.

- The Uganda Human Rights Commission completed 82 cases and 412 investigations.
- Lastly, the programme revived quality assurance in management of cases.

Because of the successes registered, the case backlog programme will be rolled out to the entire country. In the new programme we shall prioritize the following actions:

- Civil cases will be prioritized through heightened sessions and deployment of more judicial officers to deal with hot spots. The Judiciary is piloting land courts. Chief Magistrates have been deployed at Mengo and Nakawa to specifically handle land cases in a timely manner.
- The powers of Registrars in Civil and criminal cases will be increased to reduce the workload of judges in the High Court.
- Mediation and the small claims procedure will be rolled out throughout the country to expedite resolution of civil disputes. Likewise, a law on plea bargaining will be enacted to deal with criminal cases.

- In consultation with the Judicial Service Commission, the President will be petitioned to appoint acting judges under article 142(2) of the Constitution to deal with case backlog.
- The District Chain linked Committees will be strengthened to deal with case backlog in the districts. In April, 2011, JLOS in partnership with UNICEF, will strengthen the District Chain Linked Committees through skills development, training and mentoring to adopt a demand and a pro-poor person oriented approach to service delivery.
- The Police will receive additional resources to improve the training of investigators, expand community policing, enhance the use of forensic science and acquire a finger processing machine. Each of the 112 Police Stations will be given at least two dogs to fight crime especially in the rural areas.
- The sector aims to improve service delivery across the justice chain through prioritizing customer care to garner the support of the community in crime prevention and effective administration of justice. Consequently, all our programmes will target and robustly respond to the needs of the client. This is to be preceded by adoption of client charters and simplification of procedures and laws to make the legal and judicial system accessible to all, especially the marginalized.

- Furthermore, the Judiciary will introduce a toll free line to deal with complaints related to delays in the administration of justice and corruption. I have no doubt that the other JLOS institutions will follow suit to improve service delivery.
- The sector will prioritize the use of information technology in case backlog reduction. With the help of information technology, the process of dispensation of justice can be made easier, fast , affordable and user friendly. An integrated data management system will be introduced to serve all the Criminal Justice Agencies and ensure timely processing and handling of cases by management. Registries at the Uganda Registration Service Bureau and the Directorate of Citizenship and Immigration will be automated for improved service delivery.
- The sector will prioritize performance management across the justice chain to ensure value for money and deploy labour where it is most needed.
- Inspectorate Units in all the JLOS institutions will be expanded, retooled and mobilized to deal with indiscipline and quality assurance at all JLOS points.
- We shall also promote legal aid to reach the lower echelons of society, who constitute the biggest JLOS constituency. Para-legals will be used to eliminate unnecessary detention of

suspects, speed up processing of cases, diversion of young offenders, reduction of case backlog, reduction of the remand population and improvement in the equality of arms.

Last but not least, sustainable backlog reduction is about using time efficiently across the chain of justice because:

***“Nature takes care that no man gets rich morally, intellectually, or spiritually by sitting still and letting things pour into his lap. Wealth in these imperishable things is a matter of time for every man and woman. If we want time for great tasks, for fine growth, for beautiful accomplishments, for rich resources of all sorts, we must not wait for it. For time is not found. It is made. We make all time we really use, and we make it by using it. That thing we call time- meaning the flight of hours as recorded by the clock- is the only raw material out of which time is made. It is mere duration. Time is duration made significant, turned to account, directed to some fruitful, intelligent, or beautiful end”<sup>1</sup>. (The vision splendid by JD Snider at page 43).***

It is therefore my singular honour and pleasure to declare the conference officially open.

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<sup>1</sup> Vision Splendid