

**REMARKS BY THE HON. THE CHIEF JUSTICE AT A MEETING
WITH MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT FROM Denmark HELD AT THE
HIGH COURT library ON 4th APRIL 2012 at 11.00am**

The Hon. The Principal Judge

Honourable Members of Parliament from Denmark

The representative of the Danish Ambassador to Uganda

Your Worship the Ag. Chief Registrar

Ladies and Gentlemen

I would like on behalf of the Judiciary and on my own behalf to welcome you to the Judiciary and the Justice Law and Order Sector of Uganda.

Your presence at this meeting underscores the special and historical relationship that exists between the people of Denmark and Uganda. The relationship between the Judiciary and Denmark dates back to 1989, when Danida donated stationery and office equipment to support the operations of the courts, which had almost come to a halt. Your support at that time, humble, as it was marked the beginning of the transformative process in the Judiciary and the special relationship between Denmark and the Judiciary.

I therefore consider Denmark a special friend and strategic partner to the Judiciary and the Justice Law and Order Sector

In 1995, Denmark scaled up its support and relationship with the Judiciary by entering into a bilateral agreement with Uganda to strengthen the Judiciary. Danish support to the Judiciary in 1995, was timely in helping to catapult the

Judiciary in a new constitutional dispensation following promulgation of the 1995 constitution. Since then this bilateral agreement has been renewed three times.

Danish support has centered on building the institution of the Judiciary in Uganda as a beacon of the rule of law through strengthening the inspectorate function, computerization of the Judiciary, building courts in up country districts, training of staff of the Judiciary and the Directorate of Public Prosecutions, strengthening the planning function, reform of sentencing in Uganda, establishment of the small claims courts- just to name a few of the many activities that Denmark has supported in Uganda.

At a Sectoral level, Danish support has helped the Government of Uganda to establish the Justice Law and Order Sector, which is a shining example of running Government efficiently through the sector wide approach which emphasizes common planning and budgeting for institutions with related and inter connected mandates. Furthermore Denmark has supported the strengthening of the monitoring, evaluation and financial management functions at the Justice Law and Order Secretariat.

The Government of Uganda is grateful to Denmark for building fifty courts up country, where more than 90% of the population and most of the poor people live. Because of your support, more than 70% of the population are able to access court services in less than an hour. Presence of strong and people centered courts in rural areas supports wealth creation and empowers the poor to protect their hard earned income and investments as well as their

rights. It is no wonder that poverty in Uganda has been declining because of a strong legal regime and sound macro economic policies.

Danish support has been most instrumental in helping the Judiciary to deal with the problem of delay in the administration of justice. Our Judicial Officers have benefitted immensely from the Law and Justice Course which is run by the Danish Fellowship Centre. This course has equipped judicial officers and prosecutors with modern techniques of which handling cases and managerial abilities for administering courts. Judicial officers are able to handle cases with professionalism and speed. As a result, the courts are now able to conclude more cases than are being registered; a sign that the courts are beginning to deal with case backlog in a sustainable manner.

I am grateful to Denmark for supporting the Anti Corruption Division of the High Court. Your support has helped the Judiciary to set up a robust anti corruption court. Before the establishment of the corruption court, conviction rates of corruption cases stood at a mere 8%. However, with the establishment of the Anti Corruption Court, the conviction rates have risen to 90% and the courts are now able to try cases of grand corruption. Only yesterday, the Anti Corruption Court convicted a Member of Parliament for misusing constituency development funds.

We have also been able to register achievements in other areas of justice. Worth of mention are the declining levels of prison congestion, which five years ago stood at 500%. To day congestion in prisons stands at 192% and will decline further as we strength administration of justice institutions. The conviction rate has increased from a paltry 25% to 51% because case

processing and prosecution of cases. We have also registered declining human rights violations despite challenges of managing public order situations.

I would like to urge Denmark to support the Judiciary and Uganda to establish a legal aid scheme for the most vulnerable. Absence of a comprehensive legal aid regime in Uganda has made it impossible for the poor and vulnerable persons to access justice. We stand to lose the gains we have made in the area of administration of justice and human rights if we do not establish a legal aid scheme for those who cannot afford our services.

I thank your kind attention.

BJ Odoki
CHIEF JUSTICE