**SPEECH**

**BY**

**THE RT. HON. PRIME MINISTER OF THE REPUBLIC OF UGANDA**

**DURING THE LAUNCH OF THE 2019 STATE OF UGANDA & WORLD POPULATION REPORTS**

**ON 23RD OCTOBER, 2019**

**AT SHERATON HOTEL, KAMPALA**

**Hon. Ministers,**

**Hon. Members of Parliament,**

**Your Excellencies the Ambassadors and High Commissioners,**

**The Chairman, National Population Council,**

**The UNFPA Representative,**

**Religious and Cultural leaders,**

**Distinguished guests,**

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Today’s launch of the 2019 State of Uganda Population Report comes at a time when we have gained a better understanding of our economy. Results of the latest GDP series released by UBOS early this month confirm that Uganda’s economy is much bigger than previously thought. The GDP results show that, as a country, we have made greater progress than previously reported towards the NDP II goal of transitioning the country to middle-income status.

The size of the economy expanded in FY 2018/19 to Ushs 128.5 trillion (US$ 34.2 billion). In the same period, our population reached 42 million people. Uganda’s GDP per capita has accordingly increased to Ushs 3,295,000 (US$ 878) up from Ushs 2,779,000 (US$ 807) in the first year of NDP II (FY 2015/16). This brings the NDP II target of US$ 1,039 within sight. It is also worth noting that manufacturing is now the largest sub-sector of the Ugandan economy, accounting for more than 15 per cent of GDP. This confirms that Government’s drive to industrialize the Ugandan economy is bearing irreversible gains.

Behind the above numbers are significant changes in livelihoods and living conditions of millions of household – men and women, boys and girls – from across all sub-regions of the country. This speaks to the theme for this year’s State of Uganda Population Report, which is: **Promote Social Protection and Ensure Equity and Equality in harnessing the Demographic Dividend.** For example, life expectancy in Uganda has improved from a mere 41 years in 1991, to 63.3 years. The number of infants and children dying has markedly reduced and so has the number of mothers dying while giving birth.

This year’s theme on social protection is important because our model of inclusive growth requires that nobody is left behind.Social protection schemes are important tools in reducing poverty and inequality. Experience shows that social protection not only uplifts individuals and their families from poverty; it contributes to economic growth by raising labour productivity and enhancing social stability.

We must therefore embrace new models of economic development that reduce inequalities while promoting growth and transformation. I am happy that Government has put in place programmes to benefit, the poor, vulnerable and the marginalized. Social protection interventions in Uganda fall under two broad categories including; social security and social care and support.

Social security initiatives include; unconditional cash transfers like the Social Assistance Grants for Empowerment (SAGE); public works programmes like the Northern Uganda Social Action Fund (NUSAF); the Karamoja Livelihoods Improvement Programme (KALIP); the Agricultural Livelihoods Recovery Programme (ALREP); and food support under World Food Programme.

Social insurance schemes in Uganda include pension schemes like the National Social Security Fund (NSSF), and voluntary health insurance schemes. Meanwhile, social care and support is provided through mainly non-state actors and community and family networks.

The Expanding Social Protection (ESP) Programme initiated in 2010 under the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development (MGLSD) has supported the national social protection system. These initiatives have enhanced the livelihood of the beneficiaries and their dependants.

The main challenge we are facing is the limited scope of these programmes. However, now that Uganda has a Social Protection Policy in place, when funding allows, these programmes will be scaled-up to cover the entire country.

Besides, the Direct Income Support schemes, other programmes in Uganda that support social inclusion include; Universal Primary Education (UPE) and Universal Secondary Education (USE), which are designed to guarantee access to primary and secondary education. We also have the student loan scheme designed to help poor and disadvantaged students to access higher education, and the Youth Livelihood Program which provides investment funds to the youth. I therefore call upon Ugandans and mainly the youth to take advantage of these programmes and improve their wellbeing.

All this has been possible owing to combined efforts in the provision of primary health care services and social protection programmes that have ensured that no one is left behind in the development process. More progress is possible and can be accelerated by the introduction of better integrated programmes under the broader social protection concept.

It is true that some of our people still practice subsistence agriculture. So, using interventions like Operation Wealth Creation, the Youth Livelihood Project, and the Uganda Women Entrepreneurship Programme we are getting more people out of poverty.

The 2015 National Social Protection Policy was developed to guide the implementation of social protection initiatives and improve the wellbeing of Ugandans. Government has put in place a number of policies aimed at ensuring inclusive growth. These include: the 2011 National Employment Policy aimed at increasing decent employment opportunities and labour productivity; the 2009 National Policy for Older Persons which prioritizes the establishment of an older person’s grants scheme; the 2010 National Orphans and Vulnerable Children Strategic Plan that identifies the need for grants to vulnerable households; and the 2010 National Health Policy which prioritizes improving access to the minimum health package.

These efforts, underline Governments resolve and commitment to the social protection agenda. In addition to the Expanding Social Protection Programme, the National Development Plan three, which is to provide the national planning framework for this country for the next five years captures the social protection issues very well.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Today, we are here to listen to the people, who have taken on this challenge, the people who are at the forefront of social protection services in Uganda. I would like to thank them for coming here to share their experiences. It is our expectation that Uganda will emerge as a leader in developing and implementing a truly adaptive social protection system.

On this occasion, I wish to commend all of you and our development partners, especially UNFPA, for supporting our development efforts. I extend my deep gratitude to the National Population Council for producing this report and organizing this event.

**Thank you. For God and my Country**