

REMARKS BY PROFESSOR ASAVIA WANDIRA ON THE OCCASION OF  
THE RECOGNITION OF FOUR PERSONS BY THE UGANDA  
VICE-CHANCELLORS' FORUM

ISBAT University, Kampala

6<sup>th</sup> October 2017

Mr. Prime Minister, Sir,  
The Chairperson of the Uganda Vice-Chancellors' Forum,  
Distinguished Vice-Chancellors,  
Ladies and Gentlemen.

1. Right Honourable Prime Minister, Sir, we are greatly honoured by your presence at this ceremony and by His Excellency's generosity in allowing our recognition to flow through his very hand, the highest Fountain of Honour of our Nation. We are further honoured by the opportunity of listening to His Excellency's well-presented and rich Keynote Address.
2. Considering the honour and recognition we have received today, we cannot believe that our good fortune has anything to do with the otherwise well-chosen citations of the Orator. We stress: We are humble people, the sons and granddaughter of the peasantry! We stand greatly indebted to His Excellency to you, Honourable Prime Minister, and to this Upper Chamber of Uganda's House of the Intellect.
3. As we receive and accept these honours, permit us to make a few more remarks. We have lived and worked in a troubled world with three generations of men and women dedicated to Education and University.

4. In the first instance, we were part of the generation that took control of Education at the time of Uganda's Independence. For a brief moment we stood at cross-roads.

We contemplated the enormous task before us. On the one hand, there were loud demands for increased access, relevance, Africanisation, national building and national unity. On the other hand, we were under pressure, nationally and internationally, to maintain systems, standards and values, which we had inherited. At one and the same time, we were in danger of becoming Excellent but Irrelevant!

5. Embarrassingly and before the demands of independence had been fully answered, we worked with a second generation of Ugandans in education. Together, we faced an unexpected phenomenon: the siege and bombardment of Education and the University by the leaders of our own country. Within three years of the political and military crisis of 1966, the experienced and renown Principal of Makerere University College was sent down. He was mockingly offered the post of Chairman, Uganda Meat Packers: which he declined. His equally experienced successor as Vice-Chancellor, was murdered two years later. The successor to the murdered Vice-Chancellor, fled into exile within three years of his appointment. This litany of the woes of the University, was repeated many times over in the rest of the Education sector. The nation and its institutions hang in the balance.
6. In such circumstances, Mr. Prime Minister, Respected Vice Chancellors, there were many losses, both visible and invisible.

Apart from physical infrastructure, traditions and values which took years to build, were endangered. Relevance, theoretical advancement, creativity and innovation, professional and skill development, reason and rationality – these and other invisible but precious products of the Education System, were sent into limbo.

7. God is great! We are now living and working with a third generation of Ugandan Educators. With liberation and the return of freedom – thanks to the gallant sons and daughters of Uganda – came the bold Kajubi Report of 1989 entitled “**Education for National Integration and Development**”.

The Report revived the twin hopes of rapid increased access to and reform of Education. Little did the framers of the report know, that the return of freedom and security, modest improvements in health and nutrition, roads and infrastructure, would lead to a post-war population boom of young people, impatient for change and development and ready for adventure! Additionally, global changes in industrial and communication technology now threaten the Third Industrial Revolution predicted by such provocative economists like Jeremy Rifkin in his book **End of work** (Jeremy Rifkin, 1995). End of work: G.P. Putman’s Sons, NY.]

8. The message of Kajubi and other global thinkers is clear enough. Times of change have come to stay. In such times, we in Education today stand in greater danger of irrelevance than our predecessors the Independence generation.

Our treasured institutions, like Universities, stand threatened by the danger of becoming obsolete!

9. Honourable Prime Minister and dear Vice-Chancellors, this is the Bold New Education World in which Uganda celebrates her 55<sup>th</sup> year of Independence.

We four are proud to be part of the celebrations and to wear the Forum's garments of honour. We re-affirm our faith in the future of our country and the future of the Education of our people. At this age, we cannot be prophets of doom. We have survived worse times. Like Michael Nsimbi's famous **Sossolye** bird, we have ran the gauntlet of existence and survived. We join Michael Nsimbi in saying: "**Sossolye bw'atafa, atuuka ku lyengedde**" [Nsimbi B.N. (2000:13) Siwa Muto Lugero: Pearson Education Ltd]

We pay tribute to those men and women in Education and University, for too numerous to be counted, who stood with us in times of danger but perished in the struggle. Theirs is the glory of today.

10. As we joyfully partake of this rich bounty of ripe banana (laid before us by this August House of the Intellect), permit us Mr. Prime Minister and distinguished Vice-Chancellors, to wish you a Happy Day as we celebrate our 55<sup>th</sup> Year of Independence.