



THE JUDICIARY

**SPEAKING NOTES FOR HON. JUSTICE BART M. KATUREEBE
CHIEF JUSTICE**

AT THE LAUNCH OF

THE STANDARDS, UTILITIES AND WILDLIFE DIVISION

HIGH COURT GROUNDS

KAMPALA

26TH MAY 2017

The Hon. The Principal Judge

Justices and Judges of the Supreme Court, Court of Appeal and the High Court

Heads of Government Departments and Agencies

Registrars and Magistrates

Invited Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen.

It is a great pleasure for me to welcome you all to this launch of the Utilities, Standards and Wildlife Court. Let me begin by thanking you all for attending this launch. I am aware that the setting up of this court and indeed the arrangement of this launch has been heavily supported by some key stakeholders. I would therefore like to appreciate this support and collaboration. We need this kind of partnership if we are to fully advance the cause of justice.

Under the just concluded Judiciary Strategic Investment Plan III (JSIP III), one of the Key Result Areas was the enhancement of access to justice. One of the actions identified to achieve the said objective was the creation of specialized divisions and courts for purpose of improving efficiency and effectiveness in delivery of judicial services. This is a strategy that was started by the Judiciary way earlier and, overtime, we have mastered constant improvement in that regard. We have seen improved efficiency and effectiveness through the establishment of various divisions of the High Court. We now boast of eight divisions of the High Court. We have also established special procedures like the Small Claims Procedure; and alternative dispute resolution mechanisms like mediation, plea bargaining, among others. All these have been geared at improving service delivery in the Judiciary. I believe I do not have to belabor the essential milestones that we have realized through those special innovations.

The establishment of the Standards, Utilities and Wildlife Court is yet another innovation in that line. All along, there has been no organised mechanism for an efficient and effective enforcement of rights and obligations in the area of consumer standards, utilities and wildlife. There has always been a need to prioritise and improve the institutional, structural and legal mechanisms in this area of justice for purpose of eradicating misuse of utilities, illicit trade in

wild life, strengthening consumer protection and enhancing delivery of quality services to the people of Uganda.

Cases accruing from this area of the law have previously been handled by the courts generally across the country. There has been no fast-tracking, no uniform sentencing, no monitoring and evaluation mechanism in the handling of these cases. It has therefore been difficult for us to assess how effectively or efficiently we have been performing in that regard. It is however easy to conclude that we have been performing miserably. By invoking the intrinsic benefits of specialisation, we want to realise a turn-around in this area of access to justice.

Obviously, there will be great need for capacity building in terms of structural and human resources if we are to achieve the set targets. The law establishing the Court is already in place - Legal Notice No. 12 of 2016 - **The Constitution (Magistrates Court) (Standards, Utilities and Wildlife Division) Directions 2016** which I issued on the 5th day of September 2016. The Court is however still housed at the Buganda Road Chief Magistrates Court which, itself, is already squeezed in terms of space. We therefore have an urgent need to find a home for this Court if it is to effectively perform its functions to the expected levels.

I am informed that some training has already been offered to the Judicial Officers, prosecutors and investigators with a view of equipping them with the necessary knowledge and skills required in the specialized court. It is however clear that more and constant training is necessary to fully equip these key players to enable them perform to the expectations and to keep them abreast with new trends in this area of adjudication. The key players in the Court also need to keep abreast with amendments to the respective legislations.

Let me point out that the subject of standards, utilities and wildlife is very critical to the country's economic development. As such access to justice in this area has the capacity to promote investment in critical areas of the economy, protection of the environment, public health and ethical trade practices. The courts have a big role to play in furtherance of these efforts towards economic development. A specialised, efficient and effective Standards, Utilities and Wildlife Court is therefore a right step in that direction. It is a timely and well thought strategic

intervention that needs to be well managed and taken advantage of. The establishment and proper management of this court would therefore be a great achievement to the Uganda Judiciary and to the national economy as a whole.

I therefore urge the staff of the Court and the other key players to be focused and ensure attainment of the objectives that have informed the establishment of this Court. I call upon the judicial officers and other key players to conduct the business of the Court with the highest level of integrity. Avoid all corrupt tendencies and unprofessional behavior. Do constant research and benchmarking to keep on top of new developments in this area of the law. Offer service with excellence so as to justify the creation and relevance of the Court. It should not be business as usual. The Court should also take benefit from the success of other specialized divisions like the Commercial Court, the Anti-Corruption Divisions, among others, and build on such achievements. Make serious use of the Court Users Committee and the JLOS Co-ordination Committee to achieve desired output.

The Judiciary is committed to offering continued improvement in the way we do our business. We do not expect any backlog to build in this kind of Court. Currently, we are making serious efforts not only to eliminate case backlog in the judicial system but also to shorten the time leads for case disposal. Creation of specialized courts is one of the strategic interventions in that regard. We have to continue developing and implementing meaningful strategic interventions aimed at enhancing access to justice and contributing to the overall development goals of this country.

Let me therefore conclude by appreciating everyone who has been involved in the activities that have brought us this far. I look forward to a focused and successful operation of this Court. I now have the singular honour and privilege to launch: The Standards, Utilities and Wild Life Court; and to hand over the instruments and tools of the Court to the head of the Court.

Bart M. Katureebe

CHIEF JUSTICE