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STATEMENT BY

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MINISTER FOR GENDER, LABOUR AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

ON

THE END-OF-YEAR PERFORMANCE HIGHLIGHTS

DELIVERED AT

THE

UGANDA MEDIA CENTRE, KAMPALA

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**Fellow Countrymen and Women,**

**Members of the Press,**

Allow me start by congratulating you all for making it to this moment when we prepare to see off an old year and usher in a new one. I also extend warm wishes to communities observing the Christmas holiday. Many families have come together to observe the holidays.

I want to take this opportunity to enumerate some of the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development key performance highlights for the 1st half of Financial Year 2021/2022 and plans for the second half.

1. At the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Ministry was handed responsibility to design and implement a **Relief Cash Transfer for Vulnerable Persons** employed in the informal sector, specifically those who had been directly affected by the COVID-19 containment measures. It was a task the Ministry took on enthusiastically given the longstanding experience in running a cash transfer Programmes for Older Persons, Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities.

Overall 52,719,505,703/= was utilized, out of which 97.8% was paid to beneficiaries, while only Shs. 1.152bn (2.2%) was spent on administrative costs. Each of the 497,848 beneficiaries that were ultimately paid received Shs102,425, inclusive of bank and withdrawal charges. The majority of the recipients were aged 30-54 years, most of whom were males (52%) and dominated categories such as boda boda, drivers and conductors, car washers, shoe shiners among others. Females were dominant in categories such as salon, massage parlours, teachers in private schools, food vendors, slum/ghetto dwellers, street vendors, bar/gym/restaurant workers among others. A Report on this exercise has already been submitted to the Permanent Secretary/Secretary to Treasury. Monitoring reports for the exercise show that the fund was greatly impactful with some of the recipients using some of the money to start up small income generating activities.

1. Still within the realm of workers, the **NSSF Amendment Bill** was passed and awaits Presidential assent. This is good news to close the year because once the Amendment comes into force, the law will:
	1. Expand coverage to all workers. Currently the law covers only workers in establishments with 5 or more workers;
	2. Provide for voluntary contributions by workers including those already making mandatory contributions;
	3. Allow midterm access to benefits to workers who have are 45 years and above and have contributed for at least ten years, with concessionary arrangements for Persons with Disabilities who can access up to 50% of their savings.
2. In what is a huge score for resolving disputes between employers and employees, the **Labour Disputes (Arbitration and Settlement) Amendment** came into force on the 23rd of July, 2021. The Act among others:
3. Increased the number of judges of the Industrial Court from two to five.
4. Allowed each judge to hear cases independently. Prior to this Amendment, both judges had to seat on the panel.
5. The Amendment further provides for the enforcement of awards by a Labour Officers.

I therefore encourage all workers and employers to make use of the District Labour offices to have their employment issues resolved.

1. Under the Department of **Occupational Safety and Health**, surveillance inspections have been conducted in 10 flower farms in the country. The results showed that workers were being exposed to *organo phosphates* (a cancer causing chemical) while carrying out their duties, and the control measures are not working effectively in these workplaces. Other health problems found among workers were dermatitis, masculo-skeletal problems, cuts, thorn pricks, over exposure to wet places, exposures to other chemicals and high temperatures in the green houses.

The Ministry has since intervened by requiring the farm proprietors to ensure that the affected workers get medical care, and that they should provide appropriate protective gear and generally improve the health safety standards to safeguard the workers.

As a result, the Ministry will be commencing inspection of other agricultural plantations to get a baseline on the health of the workers. A number of coffee, tea and tobacco plantations have been targeted and the activity is ongoing through to the end of this Financial Year.

1. Ugandans have embraced **job placements abroad** especially in the Middle East with destinations including Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Qatar, UAE, Iraq, Bahrain, Jordan, Afghanistan and Kuwait. Other destinations include Somalia and Poland. Total numbers externalized this year are 84,879, the majority of these to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (75,873), Qatar (3,991), and UAE (3,368). Estimated remittances from the Migrant Workers in the Middle East alone is approx. USD 900m per year.
2. The Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development continues to put in place systems that guarantee decent, safe and secure jobs for Ugandans abroad. **The Employment (Recruitment of Ugandan Migrant Workers) Regulations, 2021 Statutory Instrument No. 47 of 2021** came into effect on 13 August 2021. The Regulations among others provide for:
3. Verification of all job orders by Uganda’s Missions abroad
4. Accreditation of all foreign recruitment Agencies by Uganda’s Missions abroad
5. Prohibits non-Ugandans from owning external recruitment agencies
6. A penalty of imprisonment not exceeding five years or a fine not exceeding one thousand currency points, or both for persons found guilty of illegal recruitment activities. The 2005 Regulations provided for imprisonment for only three months.

Last week, I led a delegation to the United Arab Emirates (UAE) for a bilateral meeting with my counterpart of UAE (Minister for Human Resources and Emiratization) to operationalize the 2019 Government of Uganda/UAE Memorandum of Understanding on Labour matters. Cabinet cleared the deployment of Labour Attaches to our Missions abroad in countries that attract the highest number of migrant workers to strengthen supervision, monitoring and consular services support to Ugandans in diaspora.

Arrangements are also in advanced stages to sign a new Memorandum of Understanding with Qatar following clearance from the Ministry of Justice and Constitutional Affairs and the Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development.

On the other hand, the Ministry has tightened the regulation of the licensed recruitment firms and over the last six months, **20** non-compliant Private Recruitment Agencies and one Pre-departure orientation training institution have been suspended. We have also over the same period recovered and ensured the refund to affected persons **UGX 72 million** and **US$ 2,650** from Recruitment Agencies for failing to place workers on promised jobs.

1. Ladies and gentlemen, you will recall that around July this year, about **100** children who had been trafficked to Nairobi were rescued and repatriated back to Uganda. It’s my pleasure to inform you that **79** of them have undergone vocational skills training in tailoring, liquid soap making and bakery at the Ministry of Gender, labour and Social Development institute at Kobulin in Napak District. We believe that this training will open new frontiers for them to make a living back home.

We have also conducted youth trainings at Ntawo in Mukono while Persons with Disabilities receive specialized trainings at the 5 Vocational Rehabilitation Centres across the country.

1. To support Ugandans cope with the business disruptions occasioned by COVID-19 pandemic, the Ministry has disbursed grants to **375** groups of Persons with Disabilities under the National Special Grant for Persons with Disabilities. The money has been invested by beneficiaries in different enterprises for improved livelihoods.

Government through the Ministry has sustained the remittance of the Social Assistance Grants for Empowerment for Older Persons and to date there are **262,169** beneficiaries enrolled under the Programme. Of the total beneficiaries, **154,728** are female while **107,441** are male. Over the last few weeks, **808** new beneficiaries have been verified and successfully enrolled to start receiving the monthly pay of **Sh25,000**.

We have also moved in to resolve the issue of older persons who are not getting paid due to the lack of National Identity Cards. We are working with the National Identification and Registration Authority (NIRA) to ensure that this is resolved without putting much strain on the older persons.

We further recognize that we have arrears of April to June last Financial Year, which money has already been secured but awaits authorization for expenditure from the Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development. However, currently the team is winding up payments for July to September and we have also finished preparations to offset payments for October to December, which should commence at the start of the new year.

Support has also been extended to the Jua Kali artisan groups with procurement and distribution of **1,442** business tool kits and equipment that were recently received by **24** groups. The equipment are intended to promote self-employment and expansion of the Jua Kali artisan businesses. Some of the beneficiaries have included; mechanics, electricians, welders, plumbers, carpenters, washing bay operators, millers, tailors and confectioners among others.

1. Ladies and gentlemen, one of the key concerns during the COVID-19 pandemic has been the astronomical increase in the cases of **Gender Based Violence**. The Ministry has been working with various partners to counter the vice and at this juncture I want to thank members of the Civil Society, Donor Community and other Government Ministries, Departments and Agencies with whom we are collaborating to bring an end to Gender Based Violence and Violence against Children.

We have through concerted effort been able to finalize and launch the Response Plan and Strategy on GBV/VAC related to COVID-19.

The **Sauti-** **116** Helpline has also been upgraded to receive and respond to calls reporting cases of Violence against Children and Gender Based Violence. Previously the line had been registering and attending to cases of Violence against Children. Following the merger, the line has since registered **1,898** cases. It is a toll free line and therefore I urge members of the public to make use of the line so that we bring an end to violence against children and Gender Based Violence.

Relatedly, Uganda successfully completed the implementation of the first phase of EU-UN Spotlight Initiative on ending all forms of violence against women and girls. Uganda was the ranked as the best performing country out of 8 African Countries implementing the Programme in Africa. Uganda qualified for the Second Phase of the EU-UN Spotlight Initiative for the period 2022-2025. Key milestones under the programme included increased reporting of cases of GBV from 39.5% in 2016 to 75% in 2021, Uganda has also reduced physical violence from 51% in 2016 to 45% in 2021.

1. Because of the close relationship between household incomes and Gender Based Violence, the Government in the Financial Year 2015/2016 launched the Uganda Women Entrepreneurship Programme (UWEP) through which women can access interest-free credit for entrepreneurship.

Over the last six months, UWEP has funded **1,260** women projects and another **1,140** women groups are lined for funding before the current Financial Year closes. This funding has been a big boost to women enterprises across the country having been released during the pandemic when most businesses suffered negative effects.

I want to urge all UWEP beneficiaries to ensure that the funds are utilized well and paid back to benefit other groups.

1. In line with the promotion of Swahili as the second official language in Uganda, the department of **Family and Culture Affairs** developed principles for the Kiswahili Council Bill which were approved by Cabinet. This paves way for the drafting of the National Kiswahili Bill for the establishment of the Uganda Kiswahili Council.
2. As I conclude, Government has adopted the **Parish Development Model** as the last mile strategy for service delivery. The Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development is the lead agency in the rollout of the ***Community Mobilization, Mindset Change and Crosscutting Issues Pillar***.

The Pillar is responsible for ensuring that the main aim of the Parish Development Model is achieved, of moving households from the Subsistence Economy into the Money Economy, with each Household earning an income of at least Shs. 20m per annum by the year 2025. Its an extension of the Whole of Government Approach to development as envisaged under the Third National Development Plan (NDP III), with the Parish identified as the lowest administrative and operational hub for delivering services by both State and Non-State Actors. Implementation of this Model will facilitate inclusive and sustainable development through mainstreaming of crosscutting issues such as Gender, Youth, Disability, Older Persons, HIV and AIDS, Nutrition, Food Security and Climate Change.

Through sensitization and training, the focus of community mobilization and mindset change under the Parish Development Model will be on **creation of a** **Business Mindset** needed to support and sustain the transition of households into the money economy with a view to achieving greater socio-economic transformation over the next 5 years. We have accordingly planned a series of activities targeting key stakeholders (State and Non-State Actors, who are going to play a critical role as “transformational leaders”) as well as households through the month of January and February with some held at the national and regional level to lay the ground for implementation.

Once again, allow me wish you a Merry Christmas and a progressive 2022.

**For God and My Country**

Signed:

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Hon. Betti Amongi Ongom

**Minister of Gender, Labour and Social Development**