



THE REPUBLIC OF UGANDA

SPEECH BY

HON. GIDUDU MAFWABI DOMINIC

MINISTER OF STATE FOR ELDERLY AFFAIRS

ON THE OCCASSION TO COMMEMORATE

THE WORLD DAY FOR SAFETY AND HEALTH AT WORK

THURSDAY 28TH APRIL, 2023

AT

BUSOGA SQUARE, JINJA CITY

Honourable Ministers

Honourable Members of Parliament

The Permanent Secretary Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development,

Your Worship, the Lord Mayor of Jinja City

The RCC Jinja City

Executive Director Federation of Uganda Employers

Leaders of Workers' Unions

Representative of the International Labour Organisation

Distinguished Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

1. It gives me great pleasure to address you on this important day when we join the rest of the world to commemorate the World Day for Safety and Health at Work. I am particularly impressed to see school children participating in this commemoration for the first time. I greet you all the children.
2. Today is an awareness-raising campaign day intended to focus attention on trends in workplace safety and health and the magnitude of work-related injuries, diseases and fatalities worldwide. This Day also provides an opportunity to look at how the country is faring regarding decent work in terms of safe and healthy workplaces. This year, we are commemorating the Day under the global and local theme **“A Safe and Healthy Working Environment as a Fundamental Principle and Right at Work”**.

Ladies and gentlemen,

3. The theme for the 2023 World Day for Safety and Health at Work focuses on the recognition of a “safe and healthy working environment” as a fundamental principle and right at work. This underscores the importance of occupational safety and health. We all know that our workers are

exposed to many risks in the workplace, ranging from biological, chemical and physical hazards, to psychosocial and ergonomic hazards.

4. World-wide, millions of workers lose their lives each year due to occupational accidents and diseases, with many more suffering from debilitating work-related injuries and chronic conditions. Despite these dangers, occupational safety and health measures to prevent accidents and diseases at work are often lacking in many countries including our own country.
5. To uphold this fundamental principle and right at work, the Government through the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development put in place the Department of Occupational Safety and Health as the national authority responsible for Occupational Safety and Health. Government further, through Parliament, put in place laws, namely the Occupational Safety and Health Act of 2006 and the Toxic Chemicals Prohibition and Control Act of 2016 and regulations there under.
6. It is the duty of all employers, workers and citizens to comply with these laws and regulations. However, through workplace inspection and reported accidents and sicknesses as a result of work, we realized that the compliance level is still generally low. I would like to applaud the workplaces that have exerted efforts to improve the compliance levels in their respective workplaces. I will be awarding some of these good performing workplaces during the course of this event.

Ladies and gentlemen,

7. The Occupational Safety and Health Act together with the other laws and regulations clearly state the requirements and responsibilities to achieve a safe and healthy workplace. I will give a few examples of these requirements.

8. First and foremost, the law requires that all workplaces must be registered with the Department of Occupational Safety and Health, as per section 41(2). Registration of workplaces enables the Commissioner keep a register of all workplaces in the country for purposes of proper planning and delivery of services. This certificate is renewable every three years. This process is now done online through the Occupational Safety and Health Management Information Systems (on the URL address: <https://oshmis.mglsd.go.ug>)
9. Secondly, all workplaces must have in place a written Occupational Safety and Health Policy as per section 14 of the OSH Act. The policy should give a clear strategic direction and the day-to-day operations in regard to workers' safety and health. Having the correct policies and procedures in place helps workplaces monitor performance in occupational safety and health and comply with the laws and regulations.
10. Other key responsibilities of the employer include instituting a safety and health committee, training of workers, provision of first aid, supervision of workers' health, provision of safe work premises and personal protective equipment at no cost to the worker, provision of suitable sanitary conveniences and reporting and investigating accidents and sicknesses that occur at the workplace.

Ladies and gentlemen,

11. In as much as the responsibility for ensuring a safe and healthy working environment primarily lies with the employer, workers also have a role to play in realizing a safe and healthy working Environment as a fundamental principle and right at work.
12. Workers must take responsibility of their own safety and health and that of others around them by following instructions from their employers as well as pro-actively participating in the improvement of the working

environment. Workers are also empowered to avoid dangerous work situations and are required to report to their supervisors in such cases. They must not be reprimanded for this action. Workers are also cautioned not to interfere with provisions aimed at providing safety, health and welfare at the workplace.

13. Government of Uganda is committed to supporting employers and workers in realizing a Safe and Healthy Working Environment as a Fundamental Principle and Right at Work in all workplaces throughout the country.

14. The Ministry, through the Department of Occupational Safety and Health has achieved several milestones in the areas of policy, inspection, revenue collection and technical support to workplaces. These include:

- a) The amendment to OSH Act that is soon to be tabled before Parliament for approval. The amendment is aimed at strengthening the Act by widening the scope, raising penalties for offences and streamlining powers of the Minister
- b) Developing the draft of the National Occupational Safety and Health Policy framework to provide a roadmap for improving occupational safety and health in the country
- c) Drafting of the Regulations on First Aid in workplaces
- d) In July 2022, the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social development launched the Occupational Safety and Health Management Information Systems (OSHMIS) to facilitate the following key departmental functions:
 - i) Workplace Registration (559 workplaces were registered and over Shs.1 BN collected as NTR)
 - ii) Workplace inspection (600 workplaces were registered)
 - iii) Examination and certification of statutory plant and equipment (steam boilers, air receivers or compressors, other pressure vessels,

cranes and other lifting equipment) (465 equipment inspected and Shs.300 MN collected as NTR)

- iv) Approval of architectural plans for workplaces
- v) Reporting and investigation of occupational accidents and diseases
- e) Under Chemical Safety and Security Program implemented to strengthen institutional, technical and operational capabilities in management of chemicals at workplaces, the following have been done:
 - i. Drafted guidelines on safe storage and handling of hazardous chemicals
 - ii. Trained and equipped 60 first responders in the EAC Region in chemical incident response and management
 - iii. Secured two sets of Analytical Equipment to strengthen the Directorate of Government Analytical Laboratories in analyzing agro-chemical residues in farm produce for action against cancer diseases.
 - iv. Conducted risk assessment in three cement factories and surrounding areas to establish level of exposure of Particulate Matter which is a significant cause of lung diseases in human beings. The findings show dangerous levels of toxic dust exposure.

Ladies and gentlemen,

15. Before I conclude my speech, I would like to register my sincere appreciation to the management, staff and the school children of Tendo Junior Primary School, Victoria Nile Primary School and Lakeside Primary School, respectively for the beautiful presentations that they have made here today. Occupational safety and health being a culture needs to be instilled in children for sustainability and progress. I, therefore, direct my technical staff to ensure that occupational safety and health is mainstreamed in all learning institutions in the country.

- 16.I would like to thank the following workplaces that have generously contributed to the success of this commemoration: Stabex International Ltd, Uganda Civil Aviation Authority and Uganda National Oil Company.
- 17.I would like to thank Jinja City and Busoga Region at large for setting the standard as the first venue for the commemoration of the World Day for Safety and Health at Work outside Kampala in the last 19 years that we have had this Day. Thank you for the wonderful reception.
- 18.Finally, I wish to thank the PS, staff and the National Organising Committee of this event for a job well done.
- 19.I thank you all for your attention and time.

For God and My Country

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