**ADDRESS**

**BY**

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**THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF UGANDA**

**ON THE OCCASION OF THE**

**WORLD TEACHERS DAY**

**6TH OCTOBER, 2020**

Fellow Ugandans and our esteemed Teachers,

Today, Uganda joins the rest of the world to celebrate the World Teachers Day. This year, we celebrate the World Teachers Day in a new normal, but I am happy that our children and teachers are alive and safe. The Government of Uganda considers education the key to National development as laid down in the National Development Plan II, Uganda’s Vision 2040.

I closed the schools in March to decongest high population centres and minimize the spread of COVID-19 and it worked. I am happy that we are now able to celebrate this day, though scientifically and it is also coming at a time when we are just opening up the schools. It is, therefore, a very good opportunity to listen to the teachers and celebrate with them.

COVID-19 affected the entire world systems. Forty million Ugandans were all locked up at one point and these included 15 million learners and over 500 teachers were out of school. This had to be done to save our country and the generations to come.

I thank the people of Uganda for obeying the guidance given by the Ministry of Health and the Scientists at the beginning of our struggle to fight and minimize the spread of this deadly virus. Later on, however, many people relaxed and we started getting some cases. I still call upon all of you to protect yourselves and all those around you. The disease is still here with us and is now spreading in the community. Strictly observe the SOPs.

Schools are opening soon and you have been advised on what to do when schools open. You have been given guidelines and you will be further guided and supported to manage any eventualities.

As we celebrate this World Teachers Day under the theme: **Teachers; Leading in Crisis, reimagining the future**; I challenge the teachers to lead in not only climate change that you have chosen to champion, but also in sensitizing the *wanainchi*, including learners and the communities around the schools on COVID-19 and how to protect themselves. I also call upon the National and District COVID-19 Task Forces and the Ministry of Health personnel to be very vigilant and offer adequate and immediate support to the schools, where required.

The questions on whether teachers and learners will be safe at school have all been answered through the guidelines issued to the schools and once these guidelines are properly implemented, there will be no cause for alarm. I want to emphasize that this virus can be managed as long as there is discipline.

Education is the backbone of our economy and Government will continue to invest in it and support teachers to ensure that there is continuity of learning and the human resource we require for Uganda’s development is produced. COVID-19 has ushered in a demand for more school structures, more teachers, more learning materials, more furniture needs, etc. and these are new challenges we have to deal with. Therefore, we need to be more creative in finding ways of managing the current situation as we plan to address the new challenges.

The Government is now getting more prepared for other forms of learning delivery, besides the traditional face to face delivery of education. Information and Communication Technologies have proved a perfect option where face to face is not possible. That is why, in developed countries, most universities continued to operate even during total lockdown. We must now reimagine the future and prepare our country to embrace the use of ICT for service delivery. There are many challenges associated with this development but when we plan properly, we should be able to manage provision of the necessary infrastructure, equipment and training to implement electronic and distance learning.

As you are already aware, Government is procuring 9 million radios for all household in Uganda to ensure that learners remaining at home are catered for and given lessons through radio and, therefore, learning should continue. Government is also expanding ICT infrastructure to enable effective use of ICT, and we will continue with this investment.

Government recognizes the importance of teachers in our education system and is also aware of the challenges the teachers are facing and, indeed, Government is doing its best to ensure that the challenges are addressed and teachers are motivated to teach. Your concerns are known, but all cannot be addressed at once. To start with, Government has met its commitment on salary enhancement for the teachers, and has plans in the Teacher Incentive Framework to motivate you to work, including capitalizing Teacher’s SACCOs.

Government developed a National Teacher Policy that aims at streamlining most of the teacher issues that we are faced with and we hope to improve delivery of education as we implement this Policy. However, as Government strives to improve on your status and welfare, I call upon you also to do your part. Put the learners entrusted to you at the centre of your work by attending to their learning needs. Teachers, since time immemorial are proud of their products and the success of the products is their source of satisfaction. I pray that you nurture success in your products for your own satisfaction and for this nation. Many of us are proud of our teachers and you should strive to nurture children who will be proud of you.

The Social Dialogue Framework developed by the sector to promote communication and dialogue on education matters should empower you to share policy perspectives and decision-making in pursuit of educational development and reforms. For example, one of the major reform activities has been the review of lower Secondary School Curricula in pursuit of relevant education for our country. This Curriculum is now being rolled out and you should embrace and implement it as the key change agents.

The process of this curriculum review was very consultative involving all stakeholders including teachers and myself. I now call upon you to champion a paradigm shift and lead the change process.

Finally, I wish also to make a call to our teachers to be patriotic and actively play your role in grooming our nation’s children.

Once again, I congratulate all teachers of Uganda upon this year’s World Teachers’ Day and wish you happy celebrations.

Before I launch the Nation-wide Tree Planting Campaign, I need to inform you that 40% of the rain Uganda receives comes from the local wetlands, water bodies and forests through evaporation and transpiration. Evaporation and transpiration are caused by plants sucking water from the soil or from the water bodies and throwing it into the atmosphereas moisture. Therefore, destroying water bodies and forests, means destroying the 40% of our rain. I want to see restoration of forest and wetland cover to a meaningful level and I am glad the teachers are with me in this campaign.

It is now my pleasure to launch the Nation-wide Tree Planting Campaign in Schools and Education Institutions.

I thank you all.