



PRESS STATEMENT

DELIVERED BY

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**MINISTER OF STATE FOR LABOUR, EMPLOYMENT AND
INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS**

ON THE

**COMMEMORATION OF THE INTERNATIONAL LABOUR DAY,
2026**

UGANDA MEDIA CENTRE, KAMPALA

TUESDAY 28TH APRIL 2026

Distinguished Members of the Press,

1. It is my honour to address you today on the commemoration of International Labour Day 2026.
2. On Friday, 1st May 2026, Uganda will join the rest of the world to celebrate International Labour Day to recognise and appreciate workers' contributions to national development, and to raise awareness about workers' rights and responsibilities. The national labour day celebrations, expected to be presided over by His Excellency, the President of the Republic of Uganda, will be held at **Nkoyoyo Boarding Primary School Grounds, Matale, Buikwe District**, under the theme: ***“Safeguarding Uganda’s Progress: Empowering the Workforce and Promoting Decent Work for Competitive Enterprises.”***
3. As we commemorate International Labour Day, it is imperative to reflect on the latest national data to better appreciate the opportunities and challenges within our labour market.

According to the National Population and Housing Census (NPHC) 2024, Uganda’s population stood at 45.9 million, and over 73% of the population is below the age of 30, underscoring the country’s predominantly youthful demographic structure. This demographic structure presents both an opportunity and a challenge, as the country must generate sufficient productive and decent jobs to absorb the rapidly growing labour force.

4. According to the 2025 Labour Market Survey, the working-age population stands at approximately 26.4 million (58.1%), with an unemployment rate of about 12%. Labour force participation

remains relatively low at 43.2%, reflecting structural constraints in labour market absorption. Youth exclusion is particularly pronounced, with 42.6% of those aged 15–24 not in employment, education, or training (NEET). Unemployment is also higher among females than males, pointing to persistent gender disparities.

5. Uganda's labour market is largely informal, with the sector contributing about 54.5% of GDP and employing nearly 88% of the workforce. As a result, the majority of workers remain in vulnerable employment with limited access to labour protection. This is compounded by gaps in awareness and enforcement of labour rights, as a significant proportion of workers continue to face hazardous conditions and workplace abuses.
6. Social protection coverage remains limited. Although 3.2 million workers are registered under retirement benefits schemes, with most under the National Social Security Fund, only a fraction are actively contributing, leaving many workers exposed to income insecurity in old age.
7. On productivity, performance has been mixed. While industry and services have exceeded their targets and agriculture has shown improvement, overall labour productivity remains below both regional and global averages. This underscores the need for sustained efforts to enhance productivity across all sectors in line with the ambitions of the Fourth National Development Plan.
8. In absolute terms, labour productivity in Uganda remains significantly below both global and Sub-Saharan African averages. In purchasing power parity (PPP) terms, real GDP per

person employed in Uganda stood at US\$ 6,162 in 2021, compared to US\$ 10,278 for Sub-Saharan Africa and US\$ 41,510 globally.

9. Addressing these gaps through targeted skilling, enterprise development, productivity enhancement, and labour market reforms will be central to harnessing Uganda's demographic dividend and advancing competitive and inclusive economic transformation.

10. Ladies and Gentlemen of the Press, notwithstanding the demographic pressures we continue to face, Uganda has made steady and measurable progress toward the attainment of middle-income status. We have successfully expanded the monetisation of our economy, significantly reduced poverty levels, and established a robust and coherent legal and policy framework to guide national development. These achievements have laid a firm foundation for sustained economic transformation, strengthened enterprise competitiveness, and enhanced productivity, while advancing the principles of decent work for all Ugandans.

11. Government, through the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development, continues to implement the following key programmes to promote decent work and enhance productivity:
 - i. Implementation of the National Apprenticeship Programme (NAP): The Programme aims to develop a pool of skilled manpower with practical and market-relevant skills. Since 2022, Government has supported 1,134 apprentices and 242 Graduate Volunteers, achieving an employment transition rate of 71.73 percent. The Programme will continue to

expand placements across districts, cities and municipalities to enhance youth employability and support the creation of an industry-ready workforce;

- ii. Empowering Informal Businesses into Formal Growth (Jua-Kali Programme);
- iii. Youth Skilling Programme;
- iv. Enhancing Labour Productivity for National Competitiveness and Human Capital Development;
- v. National Labour, Employment and Productivity Reporting Programme (LEAP);
- vi. Expanding social security coverage to boost national savings, investment, and secure retirement.

12. I therefore encourage the general public to obtain more information on these programmes and related interventions from the Ministry headquarters. Technical teams will be available to guide access and participation.

13. Ladies and gentlemen, this year's theme emphasizes that Uganda's future progress hinges on a workforce that is productive, empowered, protected, and engaged in competitive enterprises. It underscores the importance of investing in people, strengthening labour standards, and supporting productive businesses as critical pathways to inclusive growth and sustainable job creation.

14. The creation of decent work and productive employment opportunities remains central to Uganda Vision 2040, which seeks to transform the country into a competitive upper-middle-income economy. Furthermore, decent work entails productive and fairly remunerated employment, safe and secure working conditions, respect for labour rights, and access to social protection.

15. As has been the practice, in the days leading up to International Labour Day, the Ministry undertakes a series of activities to raise awareness on key labour issues. Among these was the Fourth Annual National Labour Convention and Expo, successfully held at the Kampala Serena Hotel from 15th –16th April 2026. In addition, the Ministry will conduct several activities in Buikwe District, including workplace inspections, barazas, workers' conferences, tree-planting initiatives, and public awareness campaigns.
16. As I conclude, I urge all Ugandans to participate in the celebrations as we recognise and honour the contributions of workers to national development. The event will be broadcast live on major television stations to enable nationwide participation.
17. I thank you.

FOR GOD AND MY COUNTRY

**HON. ESTHER DAVINIA ANYAKUN (MP),
MINISTER OF STATE FOR LABOUR, EMPLOYMENT AND
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