



THE REPUBLIC OF UGANDA

**MINISTRY OF INFORMATION, COMMUNICATIONS
TECHNOLOGIES AND NATIONAL GUIDANCE**

**REMARKS BY THE MINISTER OF ICT AND NATIONAL
GUIDANCE AT A MEDIA CONVENTION TO MARK WORLD
PRESS FREEDOM DAY: 3rd MAY 2021, MAKERERE
UNIVERSITY, KAMPALA**

Organizers of this Media Convention,
Distinguished Scholars,
Members of the Press,
Other Dignitaries Here-Present,
Students of this University,
Other Distinguished Participants,
Ladies & Gentlemen.

On behalf of the Government, and on my own behalf, I thank you for inviting me to this Media Convention, which I am happy to note, is an annual event. The convention is even more significant, now since it is part of the activities for the World Press Freedom Day, which we are also observing today.

I congratulate our media fraternity upon this important day, on which^{ive} we reflect on the status of press freedoms, here and across the world. I would like to thank the Department of

Journalism and Communication, for hosting this Convention, and for the efforts that have ensured that it is an annual event. This presents us with a platform, to jointly take stock of the issues at hand, as we continue to explore ways of growing the media by, among others, promoting freedom of the press.

I commend the sponsors, for the generous support, which has ensured we converge here, again for this Media Convention. I encourage you to continue with the support, which we value, as we strive to build our press. Such fora enable us to review real life issues affecting the press, and explore further practical actions required, in our collective efforts to deepen freedoms of the press.

In this regard, I am happy to note that we have with us here, scholars, media practitioners,

students, and other participants, whose ideas should yield rich and insightful discussions. This should strengthen our aspiration for a free, vibrant, professional and responsible media. As the Ministry responsible for formulating media policies, we fully associate ourselves ^{with} such engagements, and remain available to take part, to listen and to learn. This is in the spirit of our commitment to a participatory and inclusive policy regime, in as far as press and media freedom is concerned.

As you are aware, we are in a digital era whereby advancements in technology have aided rapid growth of social media and citizen journalism. This has associated challenges like dissemination of distorted, false, insensitive and sometimes inflammatory content. We, therefore, need a robust and professional mainstream media, more than ever, to provide verified, fair,

balanced and objective news. We also have daunting challenges like COVID-19, which are partly manageable by providing the public with timely, relevant and accurate information. Government applauds the media for the support towards our COVID-19 sensitisation efforts, which has ensured that we keep the pandemic under control.

The spirit exhibited by our media, in this regard, is indeed, consistent with the theme for this year's World Press Freedom Day i.e: **"Information as a Public Good"**. We similarly recognize, and salute our media for informing and educating the public, about other Government programs, designed to transform Uganda, and empower our citizens. We continue to look up to the media as a partner, as we roll-out our National Vision, and the various

programs, under the National Development Plan (NDP III).

I am aware that we still have challenges like poor remuneration and facilitation of journalists, inadequate tools and infiltration by unqualified practitioners. We have also had case of assault of media personnel, by individuals from security agencies, political actors, and sometimes, members of the public. We saw more of these in the build-up to, during and just after the 2021 elections. Assault of journalists, is regrettable and unacceptable, more-so if occasioned by security personnel.

I would like to stress that where security personnel have been involved, their actions are individual, and not institutional. In this regard, we insist that individual perpetrators are

apprehended and sanctioned. We also continue to urge our security agencies to act with discretion, engage with, and endeavor to maintain cordial relationships with the media. It is in this spirit that Chief of Defence Forces recently issued an apology, and continues to take measures to diffuse tensions with the media. My Ministry will also continue working with media owners and other actors, as we seek solutions about welfare and other issues affecting journalists.

My pledge on behalf of Government, is that we are available to continue engaging with all stakeholders, to promote a free, professional and responsible press. This includes formulating and/or reviewing the policies and laws that provide for the practice of journalism and functioning of the media in Uganda. This is because the media remains our vital partner in

shaping Uganda's development and governance trajectory, now and in future.

As we mark this year's World Press Freedom Day, let us collectively re-commit ourselves to building a press that is free, and a media that works for all. I hope this Media Convention will offer more insights towards this cause. On behalf of the Ministry of ICT & National Guidance, and on my own behalf, I wish you lively, productive and enriching deliberations. I thank you for listening to me.

For God And My Country.

HON. ^{Judith Nabakooba} JUDITH NABAKOOBA.