



EUROPEAN UNION

DELEGATION TO THE REPUBLIC OF UGANDA

**Speech by Ambassador Kristian SCHMIDT
The Head of Delegation
of the European Union to the Republic of Uganda**

Europe Day, 9th May 2016

Hon. Minister of Foreign Affairs, Sam Kutesa, our guest of Honour,

Honourable Ministers (Byabagambi, Kamuntu),

Members of Parliament,

Presidential candidates (Mbabazi, Besigye, Maureen

Kyalya, M-G Biraro, Prof Baryamureeba, Mr Mabiziri, Dr Bwanika)

Your Excellencies, Ambassadors, High Commissioners,

Members of the diplomatic and consular communities

Ladies and Gentlemen of the Press,

Honorable Foreign Minister, it is an absolute pleasure and honor to host you.

Welcome to Europe Day. As you know, it is the anniversary of the Schuman Declaration. 66 years ago, it called for the unification of Europe. Today, we Europeans celebrate the vision of living together in peace.

Today, we stand united. Let me recognize my colleagues from the EU member states resident here in Kampala, from Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, Sweden, the UK and the head of Austrian Cooperation office.

And the honorary consuls of Spain, Hungary and Romania.

We are already many, but our Union is neither closed, nor are we united against anyone. On the contrary, new members may still join us. And we pray no-one leaves.

Thank you for sharing your energy and bless you all!

A special message to members of the press. Just a clarification: You are on EU territory here at the Residence. Therefore, should any of our guests here tonight engage in defiant behavior, you can still legally report it "Live".

Honorable Minister,

The world came together last year. Under your leadership as President of the UN General Assembly, the world reached three historic agreements in 2015. Let me salute the leader of Uganda's diplomacy, and say just how much the EU appreciates those achievements.

There was New York and the new Sustainable Development Goals. And in Paris, on climate change. You were also behind the UN conference in Addis, when the world agreed to look far beyond aid.

For sure, the EU is the global leader on development co-operation. In 2015, EU aid grew to €68 billion euros, or

0.47% of our Gross National Income (GNI), an increase of 15% over 2014.

And faced with an unprecedented migration crisis, the EU is stepping up support to give shelter and assistance in Europe and beyond. But this is not at the expense of cooperation with long-term partners like Uganda: We have increased both our support to refugees as well as our development aid to developing countries. In Uganda, the EU and its Member States will increase development cooperation to more than € 2 Billion over the next six years. EU solidarity with Uganda remains strong.

But we Europeans also applaud Africa rising. We see the shift from aid towards more trade and investment, and we are part of it. We are 28 countries, 508 million inhabitants, 7% of the world population, a quarter of the world's wealth, the largest economy in the world, and the world's largest exporter and importer of goods.

We are Africa's biggest trading partners and its prime source of imports and exports. No less than 37% of total African exports go to Europe.

Trade between Uganda and the EU has now reached 1 billion Euros. Since 2013, when I arrived, Uganda's exports to the EU has grown 13%, from 430 million to 485 million Euros. And our trade is getting more and more balanced. The Private sector in Europe and Uganda should take the credit for this.

Now, with the new Economic Partnership Agreement with the East African Community, the scene is set for further growth. Last week, a delegation from the European Investment Bank was in Uganda to look for public and private sector partnerships. A new European Business Forum has been set up to boost European private sector engagement in Uganda. This weekend, they hosted the 1st Food, Beer and Wine festival. So some of our guests here tonight worked long hours this weekend to strengthen EU/Uganda private sector collaboration.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Europe embraces the planet, and we take responsibility. On climate change, the EU is the world's most ambitious player. Not many years ago, we were virtually the only delegation calling for binding agreements to curb greenhouse gases. But one by one, nations joined the cause, to finally agree in Paris.

Because Europe is a constructive and ambitious partner in international diplomacy. We seek a rules-based world order within respected international borders, disarmament and non-proliferation, as seen in Europe's lead in nuclear talks with Iran.

The EU is also a key partner supporting Africa's security. We are the main sponsor of the AU Commission, providing more than 80% of its programme budget. We back African-led Peace Support Operations, with more than €1.7 billion since 2004. We fund the Burundi mediation efforts. And

the EU has funded AMISOM's deployment in Somalia since 2004. But our job is not yet done.

On behalf of Europe, I am proud of these efforts and the partnership with allies such as Uganda and the US. Let me pay tribute to those Ugandans who over the past year risked their lives fighting to preserve peace and promote development in Somalia, to bring stability to South Sudan and to fight Ebola in West Africa. Let me reiterate our deepest sympathy to Uganda, to the UPDF and to the families for the losses suffered over the past year, in particular during the Al-Shabbab attack on the Janale AMISOM base.

Honorable Minister, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Europe believes in multilateralism. We are not "neo-colonialists". The majority of the 28 EU member states have no colonial history whatsoever.

We have no imperialist agenda. In fact, many of our Member states liberated themselves from Soviet imperialism less than three decades ago.

We simply accept that many of the challenges facing our planet cannot be solved alone, not even by the most powerful nations. We welcome scrutiny on whether we are doing our part, and whether we do it well.

We're not perfect. We know it. And we know you know it. The risk is right in front of us: A Europe old, tired and scared, in the hands of populists.

But that would be a betrayal of our past, of 2000 years of humanity.

It is time to fight for Europe – the Europe of enlightenment, the dream of progress, the Europe of philosophers, artists, poets and scientists. Of rich culture and a global outlook.

We all know the world is crying out for more collaboration, not isolation and countries and dictators hiding behind nationalism and personal pride. Around the world, people aspire to jobs and opportunity, to peace, personal rights and freedoms, democratic governance, gender equality, women's empowerment, rule of law and a decent life.

The desperate migrants reaching for Europe's shores are fleeing regimes where these rights are denied. We respect the sovereignty of other nations, but we believe it is fair to speak up considering the human tragedy knocking on Europe's doors.

We have a lot of work to do – we know – to honor our values, our heritage and our international obligations. But let me also say this: Europe did not cause this calamity. It is caused by poverty, war, instability, failing states, and a population boom in Africa.

Honorable Minister,

We Europeans are proud of what we have built together. But as I said, we don't think for a moment that we have built an irreversibly perfect society. Constant efforts are needed, like it is said in "The Leopard", a classic film by the Italian director di Lampedusa; *"Se vogliamo che tutto rimanga come è, bisogna che tutto cambi"*. Which means that *"If we want everything to stay as it is, everything has to change"*

We live in turbulent time indeed. The only thing we can be sure of, is that we cannot be sure of anything.

Who could predict that Lionel Messi would be implicated in the Panama papers, or that Leicester would win the Premier League?

Can we even safely predict that Germany will win the European Championship next month? The way things are going, I think it could be Iceland?

So let me quote a famous European, who in 1975 said that *"At a time of uncertainty in world affairs, Europe gives us a far better chance of peace and security."* Her name was Margaret Thatcher.

Honorable Foreign Minister,

Let me conclude by thanking you for the excellent dialogue between Uganda and the European Union.

Following the recent election, you informed the diplomatic corps that the Government would embark on early reforms.

We applaud that commitment, and we think that – like the rest of the world – to preserve the legacy, to ensure peace and stability, to build the future, things have to change. Even if you just want steady progress, change is needed.

If you don't want unemployment to increase, if you don't want AIDS back, if you don't want to jeopardise Uganda's

progress on health indicators and literacy rates, change is needed.

If you want improved governance, better service delivery, victory over corruption, and free and fair elections, you should consider reforms. But for your own sake, of course – not because any outsider says so.

As your partner and friend, we worry when we see the freedoms guaranteed by the Constitution coming under pressure in the current political stand-off.

Curbing media freedoms, deploying security forces, or resorting to Courts to solve political differences – it may not be the solution.

We hope Uganda's leaders, political parties and civil society will come together and agree to put Ugandan national interests first.

As your friends, our only hope is to see you succeed! We seek a strong partnership with a stable and truly democratic Uganda. Our support will be for courageous policy change.

After all, the campaign mottos were "Steady Progress", "Go Forward" and "One Uganda, One People". Using one, sometimes two fingers.

And on that note, honorable Foreign Minister, please join me in a toast:

- To the good health and prosperity of the people of the Republic of Uganda, to your health, and to the health of His Excellency Yoweri Kaguta Museveni, President of the Republic of Uganda.

[End]

