



EUROPEAN UNION

DELEGATION TO THE REPUBLIC OF UGANDA

Speech by H.E. Ambassador Attilio PACIFICI
Head of the Delegation of the European Union
to the Republic of Uganda

On the occasion of the

“Commissioning ceremony of the
Kampala Northern Bypass Project”

23rd January 2022

- Her Excellency, Hon. Jessica Alupo, the Vice President of the Republic of Uganda,
- Hon. Gen. Edward Katumba Wamala, Minister of Works and Transport
- Hon. Fred Byamukama, Minister of State for Works and Transport (Transport)
- Hon. Francis Musa Ecweru, Minister of State for Works and Transport (Works),
- His Lordship Erias Lukwago, the Lord Mayor of Kampala City,
- Members of Parliament,
- Permanent Secretaries,
- The Chairman of the Board of Uganda National Roads Authority,
- Representatives of the Local Governments,
- Representatives of the European Investment Bank,
- Representatives of Development Partners,
- Fellow ambassadors from the European Union Members States,
- Representatives of Mota-Engil (the Contractor) and COWI (the Supervisor),
- Ladies and Gentlemen of the Press,
- Distinguished guests.

It is a great honour for me, just few months from the end of my assignment as Ambassador of the European Union to this beautiful country, to be able to accompany you, Your Excellency, on the commissioning of the **Capacity Improvement of the Kampala Northern Bypass** which is one of the most significant pieces of infrastructure in the metropolitan area of Kampala.

Your Excellency, this project is only one of many in the long and rich history of cooperation between the European Union and the Government of Uganda. Over the last 35 years, the European Union has supported Uganda's transport sector with grants amounting to approximately EUR 800 million or UGX 3 trillion. This support has taken the form of many investments in hard infrastructure like the Kampala Northern Bypass, as well as institutional capacity building and continuous policy dialogue.

At this juncture, I would like to highlight an often overlooked aspect of this project. First conceived in 1993,

the Kampala Northern Bypass was planned as a two-phase project whose first phase – which was solely financed by the European Union – was completed in October 2009. The second phase, which is the subject of this commissioning ceremony, started in April 2014 and was unique in the sense that a EUR 40m grant from the European Union was blended with a EUR 7.2m concessional loan from the European Investment Bank and a really substantial contribution from the Government of Uganda which in fact has become over the years the **largest financier of the project.**

This blended approach represents the future of the European Union's development cooperation wherein increasingly grants will be blended with concessional loans so as to leverage the vast resources of the private sector in a way that reduces the financial burden on developing countries while creating projects that are feasible, affordable and environmentally sustainable.

The European Investment Bank is a privileged partner in this setting, and we stand ready to look together at opportunities to support Uganda's priorities.

Your Excellency, I want to reiterate the crucial role played by the Government of Uganda who, in recognition of the strategic importance of this project, took over its financing when the European Union's funds had been exhausted, and who, for the last 2 years, **has been the project's main financier**. I would also like to thank the team at UNRA who have demonstrated the highest level of professionalism and commitment to this project. UNRA has undergone a tremendous transformation during the last 7 years and the effects of this transformation have been felt in the way this project has been handled despite its considerable challenges.

At the start of the project, land acquisition was a cause of major delays but this issue was cleverly handled by UNRA. It was also an uphill task to incorporate significant design

changes within the project scope while construction was ongoing alongside heavy traffic. Nevertheless, UNRA ably coordinated the collaborative effort between **Mota-Engil**, a very good contractor, **COWI** a very solid and reliable supervising consultant, the Ministry of Finance and my team. What we have now is a magnificent Northern Bypass that is fit for purpose and will serve Uganda well for many years to come. UNRA, Mota-Engil and COWI deserve a thunderous applause for a job very well done.

The European Union is satisfied with the quality of the work on this project: financial resources spent and time it have been well used. However, Your Excellency, three lingering concerns remain. In the first instance, the lack of lighting along the bypass has been a major concern for all of us and the recent spate of crime has only reinforced the needs in this area.

The second concern pertains to ownership of this road asset. A considerable amount of money has been spent to

build this Northern Bypass and yet we have observed deterioration in some of the sections caused, in part, by misuse of the road. We have seen boda bodas illegally crossing the bypass and ultimately damaging the edge of the road, especially in the section between the Gayaza and Hoima interchanges. This bypass, like all other roads in the country, are assets that have been paid for by the citizens of Uganda and that belong to all the citizens of Uganda. It is, therefore, my appeal to all Ugandans to treat this and all other infrastructure in the country with great care and respect and not to allow them to be vandalised! This is a civic duty

My last concern, Your Excellency, relates to maintenance. It is one thing to build a wonderful piece of infrastructure such as this, but it is quite another to maintain it. Indeed the severe deterioration of the section between the Hoima and Gayaza interchanges is evidence of this fact and, as it stands, considerable resources may now have to be dedicated to rehabilitation of that section.

Yet, timely periodic maintenance might have given the section a few more years of service. Over the years, the European Union has used the Transport Sector Working Group – now called Integrated Transport Infrastructure and Services Programme Working Group – and other fora to dialogue with government on the need for sustainable, adequate and predictable financing for road maintenance. This need increases as more lane-kilometres of road are added onto the network every year. Yet we have observed minute changes in the road maintenance budget, with some years witnessing a reduction. It is, therefore, my appeal to you, Your Excellency, that more funds are dedicated to maintenance of the ever-growing road network in this beautiful country.

Your Excellency, as I conclude my speech, I would like to make two comments that relate to the Northern Bypass which, I believe, are useful for future interventions in the transport sector.

The Kampala Northern Bypass is part of the Northern Corridor Route that links Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi and Eastern DRC to the port of Mombasa. The importance of the Northern Corridor Route cannot be overstated given that it links several landlocked countries in the Great Lakes region to this key entry point. As such, it is imperative that the construction of other complementary projects along this route be expedited.

One such complementary project is the **Kampala-Jinja Expressway** which, it is hoped, will add considerable capacity along this major trade route. Your Excellency, the European Union reaffirms its commitment of a EUR 90 million (approximately UGX 360 billion) grant towards the construction of this vital expressway. We are pleased to see that the procurement of a contractor via a competitive process has commenced, and have confidence that UNRA will see it through.

My last comment about the **Kampala Northern Bypass** relates to its intended purpose. As its name suggests, this road was originally meant to allow mainly the heavy traffic on the Northern Corridor to bypass the central business district on its way to Masaka, Mbarara, Kabale and beyond. Nonetheless, we have seen an explosion of passenger traffic using this bypass and this highlights the desperate need for **organised, convenient, scheduled and affordable public transport in Kampala**. We have seen a number of successful public transport schemes being implemented all over Africa, with the closest one in Dar es Salaam, so I am confident Kampala can emulate and even surpass her neighbours in providing such a desperately needed service. Your Excellency, I can assure you that the European Union is willing and capable of marshalling its considerable experience in public transport to support Uganda in this ambition.

With these few remarks, I would like to end by, once again, thanking all those who have made this project a

success. My thanks goes to the Ministry of Works and Transport who lead the sector, the Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development for the crucial role they have played in committing funds to this project, the Uganda National Roads Authority for ably coordinating project implementation, Mota-Engil, the contractor, and to COWI, the supervising consultant.

Thank you for your attention.