



EUROPEAN UNION

DELEGATION TO THE REPUBLIC OF UGANDA

**Speech by Ambassador Attilio PACIFICI
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of the European Union to the Republic of Uganda**

**at the EU-CSO Structured Dialogue meeting
Protea Hotel Kampala Hotel, 20 March 2019**

Excellencies and Representatives of Member States

Representatives of development partners

Colleagues from the CSO fraternity

Colleagues from the EU Delegation

Ladies and gentlemen

It is my great pleasure to warmly welcome you to today's Structured Dialogue. On behalf of the Delegation of the European Union, I would like to thank all of you for being here today for an open and constructive exchange of views over issues that concern all of us.

This is my second Structured Dialogue with Civil Society since my arrival to Uganda and I very much look forward to another robust and valuable

discussion. As always, I wish to thank colleagues in civil society, and in particular the Uganda National NGO Forum for their important contributions in preparing for today's event.

The key question for our discussion today is: **What can Uganda do to ensure gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls?**

Clearly, this is a crucial question for the country, and it encompasses many aspects of economic, social and political development. In order to make the most of our time together today, we will focus our discussions on how development initiatives in **three key areas** can impact gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls.

These are: **social protection, public service delivery and sustainable infrastructure**. As some of you may know, this focus mirrors the set of issues currently being discussed during the sixty-third session of the Commission on the Status of Women

taking place from 11 to 22 March at the United Nations in New York.

These issues also resonate with many of us in this room, given that the EU Delegation, EU Member states and many CSOs are actively involved in activities aimed at increasing social protection, improving access to public services and developing of sustainable infrastructure in Uganda.

It is therefore appropriate that we reflect critically on the impact that our development projects in these sectors has on gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls.

We might be tempted to think that we have already made good progress on improving gender equality in recent years. And indeed, as the European Commission's Gender Action Plan 2016-2020 makes clear, the situation ***has improved***. Globally, significant progress has been made towards achieving gender equality and girls' and women's empowerment. Girls' access to primary education and

women's economic empowerment have all significantly improved in recent years. More women have access to health care services and modern methods of contraception and fewer women die in childbirth.

While we should celebrate these successes, I think we can agree that we have **not yet gone far enough**. For instance, in 2016 the Uganda Demographic and Health Survey revealed that over half of all women had experienced physical violence, while over one in five women between the ages of 15 and 49 had experienced sexual violence.

And so, while we acknowledge the progress made, we need also to reflect on the remaining challenges and reflect on some difficult questions:

1. Do we take sufficient account of gender considerations in the design of development projects and programmes?

2. Are initiatives in the areas of social protection, public service delivery and sustainable infrastructure being used to advance the empowerment of women and girls? If not, what more can be done?
3. Is it possible that these projects, in some ways, actually hinder that empowerment or make the situation of women and girls worse?
4. How can development initiatives do more to change negative attitudes towards women and girls that are still held by some in Ugandan society?
5. What approaches do civil society take, what can we learn from each other and how can we work better together in these areas?
6. What innovative approaches can we adopt to improve on our commitments to gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls in these sectors?

7. What about the holistic agenda for young women?

These, I believe, are just some of the critical questions on which we should exchange views today. Soon, we will be hearing the views of three key speakers, but before that, please allow me to say a few words about how the European Union already puts these issues at the core of development cooperation.

For many years, the European Union has made gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls a central focus of our development cooperation worldwide. Since the European Commission '*Communication on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment*' in 2007, we have taken two main approaches to this: firstly, focusing on women's and girls' rights as a standalone goal through dedicated projects and funding; and secondly, incorporating gender issues into all aspects of development cooperation.

This twin focus continues under our current Gender Action Plan 2016 to 2020. That plan recognises both the moral imperative to promote the rights of women and girls, and also the need to promote these rights as a crucial part of the formula for economic success of any country.

For example, In Uganda we are providing support to women's empowerment through a European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR) call for proposals. This call, which is just about to be launched, allocates €1.5 million to combat violence against women and children in selected districts of Uganda.

On the other hand, we also have a strong focus on gender through the Development Initiative for Northern Uganda (DINU) programme, a €150 million programme heavily supported by the EU, which aims, amongst other things, to strengthen the foundations for sustainable and inclusive socio-economic development in Northern Uganda. As an important

part of this, DINU aims to strengthen women's empowerment in the agriculture sector where the workforce is largely female and support gender-responsive good governance at the level of local government.

Practically speaking, gender equity is mainstreamed in all programme activities, and this focus ensures, for instance, that local infrastructure projects are responsive to women's and girls' challenges and needs; that local governments are able to plan, budget, implement and deliver services using a gender-sensitive approach; that women and girls have a fair access to productive assets and that women's empowerment further leads to child nutrition improvement.

In an effort to address Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG), the European Union, in partnership with the United Nations have embarked on a new multi-year programme - **the EU-UN Spotlight**

Initiative – which is under discussion by the Ministry of Gender and which I hope will be soon approved.

Finally, in recognition that pursuit of ambitious objectives needs the allocation of financial resources, we have agreed with the Government of Uganda that a report on budget outturn for gender equality and women's empowerment is a necessary pre-condition for a future payment under our current sector budget support programme "Justice and Accountability Reform".

These are just a few examples of how the EU Delegation in Uganda is attempting to advance gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls in Uganda. But, of course, we do not do this alone – most projects are implemented in close consultation with other stakeholders, often civil society organisations.

And so today is a very valuable opportunity for us to learn from a wide range of perspectives and experiences as we attempt to do even more to

improve the lives of women and girls in Uganda through our development cooperation.

I encourage everyone to engage openly in this discussion and I would now like to hand over to Cedric Merel to introduce the next speakers.

Thank you.

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