**Speech EU Human Rights Defender Award**

**25 May 2017 Delivered by H.E Henk Jan Bakker, the Ambassador of the Netherlands to Uganda**

Human rights defenders

Human rights organizations

Government officials

Representatives of civil society

Media

Diplomatic missions

Dear guests

Ladies and gentlemen,

Welcome to the Dutch Residence and thank you for accepting my invitation to attend this EU Human Rights Defenders Award Ceremony 2017.

As you know, this is an annual event and this time I have the honor and pleasure to host it on behalf of all my EU colleagues.

We have prepared a program that consists of two parts.

The first part is the award ceremony itself and a cocktail.

The second part, at around 19.00, is the screening of a fascinating and very powerful movie - no, not that movie!

This documentary is about four Afghan photo journalists, and if this movie is glorifying anything, it is their incredible bravery and commitment.

I personally know a few of them and I can assure you it’s worth your time.

So all of you are more than welcome to stay and watch it.

Ladies & gentlemen,

First, let me say a few words about how the EU and the Netherlands pursue the Human Rights Agenda in Uganda.

Last year the European Union and its Member States defined the Human Rights and Democracy Country Strategy for Uganda 2016-2020.

The strategic priorities are:

* freedom of assembly, freedom of association, freedom of expression and press freedom
* Accountability and anti-corruption
* Transitional justice
* Human Rights Defenders and abolition of the death penalty
* Children’s Rights
* Women rights and gender equality
* Anti-discrimination

These priorities constitute our European Human Rights Agenda for the coming years.

What does this mean in practice?

It means that the European Union will continue to support the Democratic Governance Facility (DGF), together with the Netherlands and a number of other countries.

Through the DGF we support many organizations who are working on Human Rights.

It also means that the European Union, its Member States and Norway, will continue with HR advocacy and diplomacy in our political dialogue with the Government of Uganda.

As for the Netherlands, Human Rights are one of the pillars of our foreign policy.

Apart from our participation in DGF and Human Rights advocacy, we have our program of Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights which centers around the rights of women and girls and addresses sexual and gender based violence (SGBV).

And through our support for DefendDefenders, individual Human Rights Defenders and HR organizations in Uganda get protection and support if circumstances such require.

Ladies & gentlemen,

Let’s get started

My main task this afternoon - apart from hosting this event - is to announce the winner of the EU HRD Award 2017.

Before we go to the announcement, let me first briefly explain the procedure.

The EU Human Rights Defenders Development Partners Group under the leadership of Ms Patricia Nsanze of the British High Commission has reviewed the list of 14 candidates who were nominated.

Each member of the Committee prepared his or her rating of the nominees. In some cases additional information about the candidates was collected.

Thereafter, the individual ratings of the members of the committee were put together and the five candidates with the highest scores were shortlisted.

Thank you Patricia and your Committee for a job well done.

After this, the Ambassadors of the EU Member States in Uganda and the Head of the EU Delegation reviewed the shortlist and decided who would get the award.

So, now we are slowly getting there. Who are the 5 shortlisted nominees?

The first is Ms. Joyce Rosemary Nangobi of the Slum Women’s Initiative for Development.

Please, Ms. Nangobi, join me here.

Ms. Nangobi has done tremendous work for women and vulnerable persons in slum areas in Jinja.

Thanks to her leadership and endurance many women have attained their right to land and hence to their livelihood.

Ms. Nangobi, thank you so much for all the remarkable work you have done.

The second nominee is Mr. Gard Benda, founder of World Voices Uganda.

Please, Mr. Benda, join Ms. Nangobi and myself here.

Mr. Benda has been at the forefront of campaigns against land grabbing in the oil rich Albertine region.

He also led various campaigns against defilement and impunity and mobilized lawyers to provide free legal services.

Mr. Benda, thank you for your leadership by example, your courage and sacrifices.

The third person on the shortlist is Mr. Crispy Kaheru. Unfortunately, Mr Kaheru could not be here since he is on duty travel abroad.

Nonetheless, let me share a short brief about him with you.

Mr. Kaheru is the personification of the Citizen’s Coalition for Electoral Democracy in Uganda, CCEDU. The campaign that he and his team headed towards the elections of 2016 was unprecedented.

His commitment to electoral democracy and courage to take a stand against electoral injustice are internationally recognized and well documented. But he also has paid a price as we all know. In absentia, we thank him for his selflessness and hardworkin an extremely political terrain

Still two to go…

Next, may I invite Ms. Pamela Judith Angwech to join us here?

Ms. Angwech has a long track record in the North of Uganda as the co-founder and executive director of the Gulu Women’s Economic Development and Globalization.

Ms. Angwech and her staff have brought hope and self-confidence in the lives of many women and girls.

Peace building and post-conflict development after the civil war had ended has been the main drive in her work.

Thank you, Ms. Angwech, for all the admirable work that you’ve done.

Finally number 5. May I invite Mr. Adrian Jjuuko to join us?

Mr. Jjuuko is a lawyer and human rights activist. He is one of the founding members and executive director of the Human Rights Awareness and Promotion Forum.

He is one of the biggest advocates for the rights of LGBTI and sex workers in Uganda.

He coordinated the successful legal efforts to challenge the Anti-Homosexuality Act 2014 in Uganda’s Constitutional Court.

Ladies and gentlemen, here we have the candidates who were shortlisted for the Award 2017.

I think they deserve a big round of applause for their extraordinary work.

They are all winners, movers and shakers in their own right.

You are all very special indeed and that’s one of the reasons why we decided to have your pictures taken by participants of the Uganda Press Photo Award.

Thank you to UPPA’s program manager, Ms Stella Natongo, for organizing this!

And the pictures are yours to take home tonight.

As you’ll understand, the final decision of who would be the winner of the award this year was not an easy one.

Each of you is doing incredible work

* defending women and girls rights;
* defending the rights of sexual minorities;
* promoting transitional justice and peace;
* defending democratic rights, fighting land grabbing and promoting environmental justice;
* strengthening linkages between the formal and informal justice systems.

But there can be only one winner.

Ladies and gentlemen, dear guests,

It is my privilege and pleasure to announce on behalf of the Delegation of the European Union, the EU Member States and Norway represented here in Uganda, that the EU Human Rights Defenders Award 2017 goes to …….

**Pamela Judith Angwech**!

(*You handover the Award; photo moment of you and Ms Pamela; thereafter, a photo moment of her, you and the other candidates; after the photo’s the candidates leave the podium).*

Let me take this opportunity to be the first person as the host of this Ceremony to congratulate you with winning this prestigious Award.

It is a token of appreciation of your Ugandan and European friends and colleagues of your work, your commitment, your energy and above all your leadership.

Allow me to say a few more words about Pamela.

It was just coincidence that the Saturday Monitor of 29 April dedicated a one-page article about Pamela under the title ‘Phenomenal’, written by Alice Adikin and Joel Tooyeronga. By then, we had already decided to give to Award to Pamela.

The article confirmed that we had made the right decision. It also told me some other interesting details about Pamela that I wasn’t aware of.

For example, the famous 2006 advocacy rally of Northern women under your leadership to Garamba for peace talks with the LRA rebels.

There, in Garamba, you and the other women decided to undress to express your anguish at the effects of the war in the region.

It was in that same year that you left the UN and started the Gulu Women Economic Development and Globalization (GWED-G as it is commonly known in Gulu), under a mango tree in Awach sub-county.

It was the start of a long journey of more than 10 years, without knowing where it would bring you.

But it seems to me that you knew very well that the road you take is not important, but the traces you leave behind.

And you’ve left many, many positive traces behind.

Your voice is loud and clear, not only in Northern Uganda but also in various human rights platforms in Uganda and abroad.

We, your European allies, are listening and we remain committed as your diplomatic advocates

The war in Northern Uganda is over but the pain is still felt and the scars are still visible.

You continue to be passionate about peace building and conflict resolution, working with war victims and survivors on trauma coping mechanisms.

On behalf of the European Union ,its Members States and Norway, I wish you and your team many more meaningful and successful years for the benefit of the people of Northern Uganda.

Congratulations once again, and I thank you all for listening to me.

Please enjoy the rest of the evening.