

Opening remarks at Sweden Makerere Days of Excellence, 17 November 2022

Honourable Minister Monica Musenero,

Vice Chancellor Nawangwe,

Distinguished guests,

Ladies and gentlemen

All protocols observed.

Thank you very much, Harriet, for the warm welcome.

Before I begin my remarks, given that today's event is about innovation and excellence, I wish to pay tribute to the fact that Uganda launched its first satellite into space last week. What an accomplishment, what a demonstration of Uganda's capabilities! Congratulations, Uganda!

So, I am very pleased to be here today – together with Vice-Chancellor Nawangwe – to inaugurate the first edition of the Sweden-Makerere Days of Excellence. These two days of Excellence will not only celebrate and showcase the results of the long and far-reaching cooperation between Sweden and Makerere University, but it also aims to inspire students and researchers to recognise the transformational power of research, science and innovation.

The launch of the satellite which I just mentioned was the highlight of the National Science Week which took place last week. The Sweden-Makerere Days of Excellence today and tomorrow will continue in the same spirit of celebration of the advances made in research, science and innovation. Let me also take this opportunity to thank our partners Ericsson and UNCDF for supporting the Days of Excellence – thank you!

A few years back (2017), the World Economic Forum published an article titled "Why Sweden beats other countries at just about everything". It included a variety of global indexes such as ease of doing business, competitiveness, equality and corruption but one factor that kept recurring was innovation and subsequently it should come as no surprise that in the 2021 European Innovation Scoreboard, Sweden again ranks at the most innovative country, as we have done ever since the measurement began in 2001. Sweden's strengths lie in its use of information technology, human resources, and attractive research systems.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Celebration is the key word today. We have many reasons to celebrate, but I will today focus on three of them.

The first one is perhaps the most obvious one. Makerere University celebrates 100 years of existence this year. So many brilliant minds, so many African thought-leaders from all disciplines have formed the proud history of this university. I wish to pay tribute to them, to their ideas and to the efforts they made to create a better future for generations of Africans who came after them – thank you.

The second reason for celebration is the 60 years of not only Ugandan independence but also of Swedish-Ugandan diplomatic friendship. On 8 October 1962 the then Swedish Prime Minister Mr Tage Erlander sent a letter to the then Prime Minister of Uganda Mr Milton Obote. On behalf of Sweden, he congratulated Uganda on her independence and sovereignty, and conveyed his sincere congratulations and best wishes for the future of Uganda and for the prosperity of its people. Our wish and hope for Uganda and the Ugandan people is still very much the same – we wish for prosperity and a bright future for all Ugandans.

Thirdly, so while we celebrate 60 years of diplomatic friendship between the two countries and Makerere university's 100 years of existence, we actually have one more important number to highlight. That number is 20. This year we celebrate 20 years of friendship and partnership between Sweden and Makerere University. It is certainly a reason to rejoice. The partnership between Sweden and Makerere started twenty years ago, with the aim to strengthen the university's capacities.

This joint effort has been centred around Institution-building, postgraduate training, and the promotion of an environment that is conducive for research and research training. I recognize that these words – institution-building, conducive environment – may seem abstract. However, Makerere students and researchers can see and feel its effects on a daily basis – often without knowing it.

The core pillars, the foundation, the ecosystem for research at this university has been reinforced and strengthened as a result of the cooperation between Sweden and Makerere and hundreds of scholars at Masters, PhD and Post-doctoral level have been trained. It's certainly something we all take great pride in. I am also

particularly delighted that the cooperation has established so many strong institutional, professional, and even personal bonds.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I have spoken about 100 years of existence for Makerere, 60 years of diplomatic friendship between Sweden and Uganda and 20 years of research cooperation between our two countries. What next?

I mentioned the word prosperity a couple of minutes ago. The challenges we are facing today are complex and global. They demand action, but the prerequisites for sustainable development, growth and prosperity are changing. It's clear that research and innovation are important factors for tackling societal issues. We need knowledge to find the right solutions.

I am confident that everyone here in this auditorium knows that it has been proven over and over again that research, science and innovation are fundamental building blocks for a country to create long-term prosperity and economic growth that bring dividends for all its citizens.

Other key building blocks are social stability, high degree of equality, the freedoms of thought and expression, as well as an environment which helps you to get up on your feet again if you fail.

I am sure we will also hear from ARIPO Director General Mr. Bemanya Twebaze how intellectual property rights support innovation and creativity and can be used as a bridge between research and commercialization.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Great Minds think differently. That was one of the conclusions I took from recently listening to Tobias Degsell, a former curator at the Nobel Prize Museum in Stockholm who not only studied all the Nobel laureates, but also memorized their creative processes. We need more people who dare to think, and above all to act in a new way, which requires a certain amount of risk-taking. But he also pointed to Collaboration as a key. It takes a team to win, and without collaboration, no innovations.

Sweden sees not only a friend in Uganda, but also a partner for research collaboration and for shared prosperity as manifested by the Sweden-Makerere Days of Excellence. Let's work together to fully realize its potential.

Thank you.