



REPUBLIC OF UGANDA

KEYNOTE ADDRESS BY AMB. ARTHUR KAFEERO

**DEPUTY PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE
PERMANENT MISSION IN GENEVA**

AT

THE 6TH PHENOMENAL WOMEN GLOBAL LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE

AT THE

MARRIOTT HOTEL, GENEVA

SATURDAY 23 SEPTEMBER 2023

[Please check against delivery]

Good morning to you all.

It is a pleasure to be here, and I thank Ms Liza Ssekagya and the Phenomenal Women Global Organisation, for inviting me. I bring greetings from the Permanent Mission of Uganda here in Geneva.

Today's conference has a catchy and powerful theme. It is appropriately themed '*Her Voice*' which, from what I read, celebrates the resounding power of women's voices in shaping our world and, recognises the need to harness those voices to bring positive change.

Looking at the program layout, the resourcefulness of the resource persons and participants, I believe this conference will be impactful.

In May this year, shortly after my arrival in Geneva, I got a glimpse of Phenomenal Women Global and the work it is doing. I commend the organisation on the important work you have done over the years and continue to do to advance and empower women and girls through your various activities.

Just stepping back, I remind myself that am a child of a woman called Joan. Am a sibling of three girls Joy, Mercy, and Grace. I have a daughter called Shirley. I have a spouse called Margaret.

I therefore feel and have a deep attachment and connection to this work and the theme for this conference.

I looked at the theme: "Her VOICE" and "Elevating women's voices" and pondered, when invited.

What is "her voice", who are we referring to? Why does she need a voice? Who is the conduit or agent for this voice? What do we want to elevate in this voice? How can we do that in the most effective way so that this voice is clear and consequential? What do we hope to change in this voice? What can that voice do?

These are all questions and there could be many more.

I see two voices that require elevation:

First, our voices: The voices of those, all of us (women & men) charged with a duty of empowering and elevating others. Phenomenal Women Global among them.

Second, their voice: The majority of women and girls who are voiceless; they need us to be their voice before they can have their own voice.

Working here in Geneva, and my work experience over the years especially at the United Nations pushes me back twenty-eight years. I recall the adoption of the famous Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in on 15th September, 1995 considered the most progressive blueprint for advancing women's rights.

Coincidentally, exactly twenty years after Beijing, on 15th September 2015, the United Nations General Assembly in New York adopted the 2030 Agenda with 17 Sustainable Development Goals. Goal 5 concerns gender equality and achieving gender equality and women's empowerment, which is integral to each of the 17 goals.

From the above, it is evident that at a multilateral level, voices have been raised by the collective 193 member states of the UN family. Considerable work has been done and many accomplishments have been made in the areas of gender equality and empowerment of women and girls. However, despite these successes, many challenges remain.

While women and girls are key drivers of development, the scourge of gender violence, inequality and discrimination continues to hinder the promise of better life for many of them across the globe. This is a sobering reminder of the work that remains to be done.

As we meet here in 2023, the world population is clocking about 8.1 billion and women and girls are more than 4 billion representing half of the world's population and therefore also half of its potential. But gender inequality persists everywhere and stagnates social and economic progress.

These gaps in equality are a global challenge and have deep consequences for us all. We need to address the barriers that prevent women and girls from realizing their full potential including through economic empowerment, education, employment training and job opportunities and technology increased participation, in public and private institutions and with decision making roles. A conference like this is an important platform to have this conversation.

We cannot and must not shy away from having frank conversations. That is why these voices are important. Those in authority at whatever level, grass roots all the way to the top, in public and private sector, must raise

their voices, speak out, hold their hands to bring them up but most importantly take bold decisions on prevailing issues that inhibit the realisation of the commitments made at Beijing and in New York.

Uganda has achieved some milestones in empowering women and elevating their voices. You are familiar with some of them, but more needs to be done. We made history in 2011 with the first ever female Speaker in Uganda and Africa at large. We have a Vice President, a Speaker and Prime Minister who are women. Uganda's parliament, has 189 Women Members of Parliament which is 34%. We have many women leaders in business and civil society too. I am proud to see some of them here with us. Hon Jovah Kamateeka played an important role as a legislator in our parliament. Mrs Margaret Sekkagya, led our National Human Rights Institution and was a UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights

There is no shortage of evidence that when we support the lifting of these voices, women and girls, can realize their full potential to engage in, contribute to and benefit from sustainable development. In doing so, we will all reap the benefits, in our homes, throughout our communities, and across our nations.

Therefore, each one of us has a role to play in this effort – voice. From those in multilateral organisations like the United Nations, Government sector, Private sector, civil society, academia, media, politicians, religious leaders, teachers, law enforcement, farmers, including men and boys; we must all band together.

We MUST lend our voices to the voiceless.

I thank Phenomenal Women Global again for this opportunity and reiterate the support of the Permanent Mission of Uganda here in Geneva to these endeavours.

Finally, I thank Ethiopian Airlines for supporting and partnering with Phenomenal Women Global in this endeavour.

I wish you all fruitful discussions.

I Thank you.