

**16th ITU PLENIPOTENTIARY CONFERENCE
(PP-02) MARRAKECH, MOROCCO
ADDRESS BY
HON. JOHN NASASIRA
UGANDA'S MINISTER OF WORKS, HOUSING
AND COMMUNICATIONS AND HEAD OF
DELEGATION**

Mr. Chairman,
Your Excellencies,
The Secretary General of ITU,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen

I am indeed honored to address this
global gathering of the communications
fraternity at this Marrakech 2002

Conference of the Plenipotentiaries of the International Telecommunication Union.

The people and government of Uganda as well as my delegation present here are indeed happy to be associated with this global event where policy, regulatory and development issues in the communication industry are developed.

On behalf of the government of Uganda, I wish to convey our gratitude to His Majesty, King Mohammed VI's Government for accepting to host this Plenipotentiary Conference and for the warm hospitality accorded to my delegation by the Government and people

of Morocco since we arrived in this beautiful and historic city of Marrakech.

I also wish to add my gratitude to the ITU for its leading role in coordinating the activities and logistics that have culminated into convening this conference. Special thanks go to the Secretary General and his team for the work of our Union in the last 4 years. In the same breath, I wish also to congratulate you Mr. Chairman for having been elected to this important office. We look forward to your wise guidance during the course of our deliberations in the coming weeks.

We in Uganda are pleased to note that this Plenipotentiary will focus on discussing issues that are pertinent to us in the Least Developing Countries. Issues such as Universal Access, ICT and Internet policies and the issues related to the reform of the Union are of vital importance to us. We shall be glad if this conference took decisions, adopted resolutions and recommendations that will lead to rapid development of telecommunications services especially in the developing world.

The government of Uganda adopted and put in place appropriate macro- economic and sectoral policies that have led to the creation of an enabling environment for

the sustainable development of the communication sector and the country at large.

I am glad to state that since the liberalization of the sector in 1997, the private sector participation and competition has been key to the growth and innovation in the telecommunications sector. Unprecedented expansion and modernization of the communication network and diversification of communication services has since been registered. We hope that the recent slump in the telecommunications industry globally will not impact negatively on the modest achievements we have so far registered.

In spite of our relative achievements in the growth of the telecommunications sector, penetration of services in the rural areas of Uganda where the majority of our people live still remains a challenge. Uganda has adopted deliberate strategies, based on public-private partnerships, which provide incentives to the private sector to invest in the development of communications in the rural areas. Within the next two years each district administration headquarters will access Internet and by 2005 the smallest administrative unit will have public access to communication.

Looking beyond our country, and more especially at the regional and global level, we wish to note that there are many examples of inequalities in the telecommunication services distribution. The current status of over capacity in the Developed world and inadequate or no capacity in the Developing and Least Developed World are now well known to us. Furthermore, we also know that historically, most of the development in countries or organizations has taken place through partnerships using deliberate support and investment. These and other factors have led us, as Uganda to make our humble contribution in the affairs of the African telecommunications Union (ATU) and the New Partnership for African

Development (NEPAD), an innovative approach to meaningful development for Africa. Africa now needs partnerships; Africa now needs investors, in order to eliminate this Digital Divide. This Divide helps no one but worse still marginalizes Africa globally.

The special needs of LDC's highlighted at Istanbul during the World Telecommunications Development Conference whose working Group Uganda had the honour to chair are of vital importance to us and we hope ITU will give these needs special attention in the interest of all humanity. We therefore urge this conference to empower the ITU to exploit such regional initiatives and

LDC's concerns by way of technical assistance for the development of ICT's. We urge our developed members and their private sector to invest more in parts of the world where there is inadequate or no capacity.

Mr. Chairman and distinguished delegates, this conference being the top policy making organ of the ITU will among other things elect office bearers to different portfolios and organs. On that note, I wish to offer Uganda's candidature for a seat on the ITU Council representing Africa (Group D).

Our bid is based on Uganda's ability to contribute to telecommunication sector

development as evidenced by what we have been able to achieve over the past five years, at home and our active participation in Africa and its regional groupings and at ITU as well.

Lastly, on behalf of the Government of Uganda, and my delegation, I wish ITU PP-02 all the success in its deliberations because we believe that this conference's success will be our success.

Thank you for your kind attention.