

**SPEECH BY THE UNEB CHAIRPERSON,
PROFESSOR MARY OKWAKOL,
AT THE ANNUAL SEMINAR FOR DISTRICT/CITY/MUNICIPAL
INSPECTORS OF SCHOOL
20TH – 21ST SEPTEMBER 2022
AT SILVER SPRINGS HOTEL, BUGOLOBI**

Hon Minister of State for Primary Education

The Executive Director, UNEB

Senior Members of staff from UNEB and the Ministry of Education and Sports

The Chairperson, Uganda National Inspectors of Schools Association

District, City and Municipal Inspectors of School

Members of the Press

Ladies and Gentlemen

Hon Minister, we are greatly honoured to receive you as our Guest of Honour in this Seminar, more so as this is the first time you are meeting the Inspectors in connection with UNEB examination activities.

Today we are meeting a team of senior and experienced officers, who coordinate the field conduct of the Primary Leaving Examination on behalf of the Board. The Primary Leaving Examination is both an intensive and extensive exercise that touches every household throughout the country. As the Executive Director has indicated in his remarks, the candidature at PLE has significantly increased compared to that for the last examination. The increase requires the Board to deploy more personnel that are required to handle various aspects of the field conduct of the examination. Hon Minister, this places enormous resource requirements on the Board. We are, however, very optimistic that with your usual support and proactive planning by the Board, we will, as before, measure up to the task.

Hon Minister, I wish to thank the Secretariat under the able leadership of the Executive Director for successfully handling the 2020 PLE examination which took place during the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic period. In spite of this challenge, UNEB was able to successfully administer the examination; process and release the

candidates' results in time. I applaud the Executive Director and all the staff for this achievement.

The conduct and marking of the examination was done under strict observance of the Standard Operating Procedures put in place by government to control the spread of COVID-19. This required extra funding, and I am very grateful for the strong support by the First Lady and Hon Minister of Education and Sports, and yourself, Hon Minister, for the Board to secure the needed supplementary funding.

The Board emphasises the need for validity, reliability and equity in the conduct of its examinations, as espoused in its mission statement. The Board also remains cognizant of the fact that COVID is still around, requiring continued vigilance. Therefore, the UNEB Theme for this year's examination period remains as for the previous examination, and continues to remind us about our concerted responsibility for three important aspects; the integrity of those who will handle the examination; the security of the examination and the health and safety of the learners. I take this opportunity to call upon the Inspectors and all other persons who will have a role to play in this examination to apply this theme in all our examination related activities as we strive to conduct a PLE free of malpractice, and the results of which will reflect the true ability of the candidates. I trust that we can count on our Inspectors on this.

As the Board, we are aware that efforts to curb examination malpractice have generally been successful except for cases of external assistance given in the examination rooms and attempts to access the examination questions during distribution. These occur at the operational level for which you, Inspectors, are in charge. I would like to implore participants at this seminar to devote a lot of time laying strategies on how to stamp out these remnant examination malpractices in our system. This, unless checked remains the only dent on our highly respected education assessment system.

Hon Minister, the registration of candidates is done by UNEB centres. The Regulations require each centre to register its candidates by forwarding information through the UNEB registration portal. We have, however, had many incidences where schools have been denied chance to do that. Some of the officers in the Local Governments choose to do this work on behalf of the schools, but because they do not know the candidates,

the exercise is not done well. They miss or interchange candidates' photographs or mix candidates of different schools. This has in the past caused the Board a lot of problems, including loss of results by candidates. Many heads of examination centres for PLE do not even know the passwords to their school portals with UNEB because, we are told, the DIS or some other persons keep them. The heads cannot, therefore, access information that UNEB puts on the school portals from time to time.

I wish to strongly remind the Local Government officials in this forum that the registration of candidates must be done by the heads of centres because they know their candidates more than anyone else. Your role as Inspector should be strictly supervisory and administrative. Where there is a deficiency of IT skills, you should plan to build capacity.

On behalf of the Board, I wish to extend our unending appreciation to the Government of Uganda for the financial support extended to us during the various processes of planning and conducting these examinations. With this continued increase in the number of candidates; operating costs of running these examinations correspondingly follow. As UNEB we shall continue to rely on you for more financial support amidst the competing sector budgetary demands. When candidate numbers increase, expenses on invigilation, supervision, marking and such other key activities increase in equal measure; thus requiring more resources.

Hon Minister, I wish to point out the likely risks anticipated in the coming field conduct of examinations. I note that, if this weather trend continues, so many areas, especially in the highland zones, will be affected by floods causing blockages of roads and making them impassable. The Board will assess the situation together with our partners, the District Inspectors of Schools, and come up with requests through you, Hon Minister, to the emergency response agencies for logistical support in those areas where such support will be needed.

We are unrelenting on examination malpractice and any forms of unprofessionalism. The Board is committed to eradicating all forms of examination malpractice. In this connection, I wish to draw attention to the new UNEB Act, 2021 which has widened the powers of the Board, expanded the range of examination malpractice not

previously covered, and provided for much stiffer penalties and other sanctions. The Act has also provided for other regulations to be made for the conduct of the examination. Unlike previous regulations, those to be applied to the 2022 examination have the force of law. Details of the legal provisions are in one of the presentations that will be made in this Seminar.

I urge the Inspectors to ensure that heads of examination centres adequately prepare for, and provide conducive environment for the candidates. The Board will continue to support the work done by the Local Governments in the field conduct of examinations to the best of its abilities.

Once again thank you Hon. Minister for honouring our invitation to this occasion and for sacrificing your valuable time to be with us today.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION