



Press Statement

By

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Minister of State for Labour, Employment and Industrial
Relations**

Commemoration of the 2023 International Labour Day

at the

Uganda Media Centre, Kampala,

Thursday, 27th April 2023

Distinguished Members of the Press,

1. It is my pleasure to address you about the upcoming International Labour Day celebrations for this year - 2023.
2. Uganda will join workers around the world to commemorate the International Labour Day on Monday 1st May, 2023. This day is commemorated in appreciation of the contribution of workers to national development and helps in raising national and international consciousness on the importance of promoting and protecting the rights of workers. The day is also used to reflect on our achievements, challenges and opportunities for enhancing productive employment.
3. The theme for this year's commemorations is: ***“Promoting Positive Work Culture and Ethics: A Prerequisite for Increased Investment, Employment Opportunities and Household Incomes.”***
4. Work ethics means the inherent attitudes that allow workers to perform duties with positive moral values, integrity, responsibility and high-level discipline. The choice of the theme is pertinent because it heightens national consciousness about appreciating that work culture is the general attitudes, norms, beliefs, values and traditions, which are particular to organization's or country's workforce.
5. Fellow Ugandans, positive work culture and ethics exists in an organization or country when it becomes a norm for workers to perform duties with high moral standards. Employees consistently apply the agreed work policies, practices and values even when no one is watching. Key among the values that should be espoused by employers and employees is strong work commitment where work is approached with diligence driven by passion to deliver results.

6. It is very pertinent for us a country to address the problem of poor work culture and ethics because it is one of the major factors contributing to inadequate employment and under-utilization of the youth. The National Labour force Survey 2021 reports that 48% of the working age youth (18-30 years) are underutilized. The report reveals that 41 % of the youth are Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET). Youth unemployment is also reported to be high at 17% with higher rates in urban areas (19%) compared to rural areas (15%). Female youth suffer the greatest blunt of unemployment at 20% compared to males at 14%. These figures can be turned around if we improve our work culture and ethics.
7. In order to address the negative work culture and ethics, the Government has included the Mindset change pillar under the Parish Development Model (PDM). The pillar is intended to provide public awareness, and sensitization for positive mindset change as a way of reducing negative cultural beliefs and practices that hinder people from participating effectively in development programmes.
8. It is also important to note that decent work deficits have been partly attributed to poor work- culture and ethics. For instance, according to the UBOS National Labour Force Survey, 2021, eight hundred ninety-eight thousand (898,000) persons of the working population had suffered accidents/injuries in the 12 months preceding the survey. Furthermore, three hundred fifty-seven thousand (357,000) of the 898,000 persons suffered serious accidents that caused absence from work.
9. Fellow Ugandans, it is very critical for us as a country to put emphasis on positive work culture and ethics because they are very central to the realization of Government aspirations of transforming our country into

the Upper Middle Income status by 2040. The positive work norms and ethical behavior will improve our country's reputation thereby attracting investment by both domestic and foreign entrepreneurs. The associated hard work and commitment will enhance productivity, profitability and competitiveness of products. The accountability exhibited by the workforce will promote transparent business decision making, which boosts enterprise growth, wages, taxes, employment and economic growth.

10. Unfortunately, as we commemorate this year's Labour Day, it is important to note that Uganda has poor work culture and ethics. This year's commemorations provide an opportunity for us as a country to do some soul searching if we are to achieve the Upper Middle Income status as envisaged under the Vision 2040.
11. It is more so important to improve our work culture as a country because negative work culture and ethics hurts businesses and the entire economy. Some of the most pronounced examples of poor work culture and ethics are: rampant culture of laxity at work, violation of ethical principles of fairness, honesty and integrity, and absenteeism in workplaces especially in public education and health facilities.
12. In view of the above, Government through the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development, and working with other Agencies, will step-up the following efforts to improve positive work culture and ethics in Uganda:
 - i. Development and implementation of Uganda National Work-culture and Ethics Strategy and Plan to provide strategic direction for enhancing positive work culture and ethics;

- ii. Undertaking continuous awareness raising and sensitization campaigns on the need for everyone to exhibit accountability in a workplace;
- iii. Establishment of a National Productivity Centre to instil a culture of productivity and improve the quality of the workforce to meet the challenges of a competitive global economy;
- iv. Expansion of work-based learning and integration of positive work culture studies in apprenticeship schemes;
- v. Integration of positive work culture and ethics studies in the education curricula from an early stage of learning up to higher institutions of learning;
- vi. Supporting Jua-Kali Enterprises to transition into the formal economy so as to expand adoption of standard business practices and enhanced accountability for results;
- vii. Undertaking regular Labour Productivity Surveys as well as Skills Anticipation/Forecasting for evidenced based programming; and
- viii. Design and implement the Youth Labour-force Professional Development Programme, focusing on leadership development for workplace culture and ethics transformation. This will help

organizational leaders to develop bonds of trust, motivate and empower workers through walking the talk.

KEY PREPARATORY ACTIVITIES FOR THE ILD 2023:

13. The Ministry together with Social Partners, namely, Employers' Organization (Federation of Uganda Employers) and Worker's Organizations (National Organization of Trade Unions and Central Organization of Free Trade Unions) have implemented the following pre-event activities:
 - i. we convened the Annual Labour Conference in Kampala this week;
 - ii. we undertook field visits to selected workplaces to understand employers' concerns on work ethics;
 - iii. we produced and disseminated a documentary on decent work best practices in the world of work; and
 - iv. we are also carrying awareness and publicity campaigns (Radio and Television Adverts) about decent work culture and ethics.
14. The venue for the National celebrations is selected on a rotational basis and each City/District/Municipality is eligible to host the celebrations. This year's celebrations will be in Eastern Uganda, in Namutumba District at the District Headquarters' Grounds.

15. The National celebrations will be broadcast live on all the major Television stations beginning at 8:00 am. I therefore urge all Ugandans to tune in and follow these important celebrations.

**Thank you
For God and My Country**