



**PRESS STATEMENT FOR THE 37th NRA/M VICTORY DAY
ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS**

DELIVERED BY THE MINISTER FOR THE PRESIDENCY

January 20, 2023

Good morning members of the press.

Today I am here to inform Ugandans through you members of the press that we shall be celebrating our NRA/M Victory Day Anniversary on the 26th Jan 2023.

Unlike in the previous years since COVID-19 outbreak in 2020 that had forced such celebrations to be limited to few invited and tested guests, this time round, the general public is invited to come in big numbers.

This year's celebrations will be held at Kakeeka Grounds in Kakumiro District beginning at 8:00am. The chief guest will be President Yoweri Museveni who will be joined by many other invited guests.

There will be a number of activities including a parade mounted by the officers and men of the UPDF, Uganda Police, Prisons, and Uganda Wildlife Authority.

Testing for COVID-19 will only be limited to the 600 guests that will be sitting in the VVIP tent, the journalists and parade participants. The rest of the members of the public do not require testing for COVID-19.

This year's theme is, "**Our Resolute Effort to Transform Uganda is a Promise We Shall Fulfill**". President Yoweri Museveni will on that day award 50 various categories of medals to those that have been selected.

Why do we celebrate this day?

On January 26th 1986, President Yoweri Museveni together with fellow revolutionaries stormed Kampala, captured state power and liberated Ugandans from the tyrannical regimes that had messed up governance in most of the previous years since 1962 when Uganda attained independence.

Uganda's post-independence period, like in most other African states, was afflicted by authoritarian rule, which led to a development crisis. All previous transitions since 1962 had been characterized by chronic instability and violence.

By giving Uganda a very long period of political continuity and stability, President Museveni helped resolve the biggest source of state fragility that had led Uganda into a state of failure.

As a result, Uganda today, previously a chronically unstable failed state, plays the most critical stabilizing role in this region, helping prop such countries as Somalia, Central Africa Republic, South Sudan and DR Congo.

During the swearing in ceremony on 29 January 1986, President Museveni promised Ugandans a fundamental change: *"No one should think that what is happening today is a mere change of guard; it is a fundamental change in the politics of our country."*

Museveni's promise of fundamental change took cognizance of the fact that Ugandans had lost trust in the state and subsequently denied it legitimacy. He knew that without restoring hope, it would be difficult to get popular support for his young and fledgling government.

Political reforms

The NRM government embarked on a number of reforms as outlined in the *Ten-Point programme*—a policy document written in August 1981 by the NRM guerrillas to guide them once in power.

Key among the policies, was the introduction of participant grassroots structures, initially known as Resistance Councils (RCs) later (in 1993) renamed Local Councils (LCs).

The RC structure had five hierarchically-linked tiers namely, the village council (RC1), parish council (RC2), sub-county council (RC3), county council (RC4) and district council (RC5).

While council members for RC1 were democratically elected through adult suffrage, the councils of the remaining tiers were indirectly elected. In essence, the adoption of the RCs helped to rebuild the administrative structure of the collapsed state. The RCs also provided a democratic climate for citizens to effectively participate in public decision-making.

Other reforms included the decentralization of power to local governments, election of people's representatives to the national legislature, affirmative action for women and other marginalized groups, establishment of the offices of ombudsman and Human Rights Commission, pacification of the army, allowing civil society to organize freely, and writing a new constitution among others.

The formal-legal democratic institutions showed that the NRM government was on the right path to democratic rule.

It is therefore not surprising that the NRM government got international acclaim. Therefore, the implementation of popular governance reforms improved the country's image at home and

abroad. This helped to stabilize the country internally and attracted the full support of our development partners.

This process culminated into the writing of a new Ugandan constitution of 1995, which was a product of wide consultations that represented a broad spectrum of Ugandan political views.

The Constitution of Uganda recognizes the sovereignty of the people, clearly asserting; "All power belongs to the people who shall exercise their sovereignty in accordance with the Constitution." And that "the people shall express their will and consent on who shall govern them, and how they should be governed, through regular free and fair elections of their representatives or through referenda.

Economic Recovery

According to data from the IMF, Uganda has sustained an average annual GDP growth rate of 6%. Uganda's growth is the more remarkable because it is a landlocked country, has had no rich minerals, and was politically unstable country since it experienced misrule through primitive military coups and civil wars.

Uganda has been able to sustain long term growth in large part because of policy innovation, policy consistence and sound management of policy. This assures investors that their investments are safe i.e., will not be subjected to the uncertainty of regular policy reversals

In 1986, Ugandans had access to one television station (in only five towns), one radio station, one university, two brands of soda, two brands of beer, etc. And even these were not always available.

Today there are hundreds of televisions and radio stations, tens of universities, and supermarkets and shops (even in the remotest parts of the country) are fully stocked with a large variety of essential and non-essential goods. This variety of choice is an essential indicator of economic development. To be poor is to have little choice available and this increase in possibility is the most important aspect of escape from poverty.

So, when we feel frustrated by less change in incomes, it is not because NRM has performed poorly but because economic transformation takes generations. Yet in spite of our justified frustrations, economic growth has led to growth in private incomes and state revenues.

Growth in private incomes has made it possible for many of our citizens to improve their lives by living in better houses, dressing better, eating better and accessing other essential and nonessential goods and services that make modern living comfortable.

No wonder life expectancy has improved from 39 to 65 years; the number of people living in poverty has reduced from 56% in 1992 to 20%. Growth has also led to over 60% of Ugandans having access to electricity (22% on grid and 38% on solar), up from 1% in 1986.

Conversely, growth in state revenues has improved the capacity of the government to serve our citizens better through the supply of public goods and services. Today, every border of Uganda with her neighbors is connected by a paved road. Up to 80% of the population has access to an improved water source. The country is largely secure and one of our vital exports to our struggling neighbors in this region is security.

This is a great transformation given that 40 years ago, Uganda was insecure and exporting refugees to her neighbors and now is a big host of refugees.

Finally, one of the priorities of the NRM government under President Museveni is the integration of the East African region in order to create synergies for strategic security and to expand the market for the goods and services produced by our people.

When President Museveni took oath in 1986, he noted that the African market was very small to take everything that was produced on the continent. He advocated for a bigger market and export promotion became his priority. While the government has scored tremendously on this, growing Uganda's export value to \$6.34 billion, representing 15.69% of the country's GDP in 2021, up from \$5.80 in 2020, all compared to \$0.50 billion (12.81% of GDP) in 1986.

As a result of efforts by Mr Museveni the East African region has grown into one of the biggest economic blocks spanning from the Indian Ocean to the Atlantic Ocean, covering 7 member countries with a population of more than 280 million people.



I thank you all for listening to me.