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**The Republic of Uganda**

**Address by Hon Janet. K. Museveni,**

**First Lady and Minister of Education and Sports**

**At the Release of Results for the 2022 Primary Leaving Examination (PLE)**

**Friday 27th January 2023**

**State House Nakasero**

**My Colleagues, the Ministers of State**

**The Permanent Secretary, Ketty Lamaro and your team,**

**The Chairperson of UNEB, Prof Mary Okwakol,**

**The Executive Director, UNEB, Mr Dan Odongo, and your team,**

**The Media fraternity,**

**Ladies and Gentlemen.**

Happy New Year to you all!

Our hearts are full of gratitude to God for bringing us to this day as a Sector and as a Nation. Our children returned safely back to school and were able to complete the year despite a number of challenges, including the Ebola outbreak that affected our people. Indeed, we no longer take these achievements for granted!

Today we celebrate a total of **832,654 candidates who registered for PLE, compared to 749,761 in 2020**. Despite the disruptions occasioned by the COVID-19 Pandemic and the Ebola outbreak especially on the girl child, we continue to register good numbers at this and other levels of education and we cannot thank God enough for this.

What is even more gratifying is that of the registered number, 583,768 (70.1%) from 11,306 centres, were Universal Primary Education (UPE) beneficiaries, and 248,982 (29.9%) of the candidates were Non UPE.

These statistics are indicative of the rising confidence the people of Uganda have put in UPE, since the proportion of candidates benefitting from the Universal Primary Education programme has increased by 1.7 percent. So, as UPE marks 25 years this year, it is very heart-warming to know that our people have and continue to benefit from this program.

We are all grateful to God for the fact that registration for the PLE in 2022, increased by a larger percentage than ever before, despite the fears voiced by many, over the possible massive drop-outs of the learners, due to the circumstances prevailing at the time.

I am also pleased to note an increase in the registration of candidates with **Special Needs from** **1,599 in 2020 to 2,436 in 2022, which is an increase of 52.3%;** representing the largest rate of increase of children in this category, witnessed in the PLE registration. Of these children, 1,153 (47.3%) are females and 1,283 (52.7%) are males.

Consequently, I acknowledge with gratitude, the fact that more parents are realizing the value of educating the girl child with Special Needs. Thank you for the investment you have made in your children and for believing in them.

Indeed, your encouragement gives them the confidence that they can rise and shine to fulfil God’s destiny for their lives, just like any other child can!

At the national level, I must pay tribute to the Chairperson, the Board and staff of UNEB for successfully conducting the PLE 2022 in the face of several challenges.

Furthermore, my sincere appreciation goes to: The Security and field personnel, District Local Governments and all the stakeholders that tirelessly serve our nation by supporting the PLE execution and roll out. They achieved this during the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic, and they have done it again. Thank you!

On behalf of the Ministry of Education and Sports, I would like to express our gratitude to His Excellency the President and all the key stakeholders in the Health Sector for their support in ensuring the safety of learners as the country faced yet another outbreak of the Ebola virus,

at a critical time when our learners prepared to write this examination. This outbreak had the potential of disrupting the education system as a whole and in particular the examination period.

Now let me turn to my observations of the results we release today. I have noticed from the Statement of Results that the rate of absenteeism of learners who had initially registered for the PLE and which has been steadily declining in the last four years, has increased by 0.8 per cent (approximately 8,000 learners).

There is need to inquire into the cause of this increase in absenteeism, since it does a great disservice to the nation, families and in particular the children who make the effort to invest resources, time and their energies to attend school for seven years. For these young people to miss out on sitting their examinations and the opportunity to move to the next level of their education, is very unfortunate, painful and cumulatively a loss to all of us.

Similarly, the Ministry is concerned about the low rate of completion at primary school level, which currently stands at 32 percent. I appeal to you all to note that completion of the learner’s education cycle should be considered a priority and a collective effort of the schools, parents and guardians, as well as the community in general. I therefore call upon all schools and the Education Sector stakeholders, in every district to look into this matter and address the root cause. As a Ministry we are going to take this on and find some solutions.

I also appeal to the parents and guardians to play an active role in providing both the physical and emotional support children require, during the course of their education and the examination period.

Please work together to ensure that no child loses the opportunity for a bright future by missing classes, dropping out of school or being absent during the examination period.

**Once a child is enrolled in school, they must complete their education cycle. Once a child is registered for an examination, that child must sit for that examination. No child should be disadvantaged.**

Ladies and Gentlemen, I am happy to note that compared to the previous year 2021, this year the Candidates’ performance has generally improved, as is evidenced **in higher percentages of scores with distinction and credit grades.**

In particular, the English language Examination registered significant improvement in performance at the distinction and credit levels. Likewise, there is an increase in performance in Mathematics at the distinction and credit pass levels, compared to the previous year.

Hence in terms of numbers, many more children passed the 2022 PLE compared to the previous year. This is gratifying as we steadily recover from the effects of COVID-19 on the economy and wellbeing of the people. So, I applaud the stakeholders in the education sector for this achievement!

As Government, we assure the parents and guardians that we will continue to work with our institutions and the private providers of education, to ensure that those who qualify for admission into post-primary institutions, are placed in the secondary schools and the post-primary vocational institutions.

Now sadly, I have to address the problem of Examination Malpractice, as the Ministry of Education, we continue to express our deep concern over this vice. This year there were a number of suspected incidences of external assistance of candidates.

Unfortunately, this includes teaching staff who should be the custodians and role models of integrity and trustworthiness. I would like to remind all our teaching staff, that these young people look up to you and replicate what you model before them. We must therefore demonstrate utmost discipline when fulfilling our roles and functions. Indeed, this is a universal requirement of humanity and in particular the education profession; furthermore, none of our cultural or religious beliefs condone cheating or dishonesty.

In Titus 2:7-8 the Bible states: **“You yourself must be an example to them, by doing good works of every kind. Let everything you do reflect the integrity and seriousness of your teaching. Teach the truth so that your teaching cannot be criticised…”**

I therefore sound a strong warning to all Head Teachers who have been found attempting to institutionalise cheating, by cutting open questions paper envelopes to access the question papers,

prior to the designated examination time, to desist from this evil. **The Ministry of Education and Sports will not tolerate examination malpractice.**  As was witnessed during the 2022 PLE, our Scouts and the Security personnel assigned to oversee examinations, will cause the arrest of all those engaged in examination malpractice.

Please know that it will not be business as usual now that the UNEB Act of 2021, provides for punitive action for those found guilty of participating in, and condoning this practice. I have the faith and confidence that our judicial officers will accord appropriate sentences to those found guilty.

I also acknowledge the fact that prevention is key to ending this vice, consequently, I strongly appeal to the UNEB officials to purposefully engage all the relevant stakeholders and duty bearers, in order to identify the areas of weakness and gaps that facilitate this vice,

and address them. We must exert a deliberate and concerted effort in order to bring an end to these practices.

In the meantime, we make the commitment on our part as the Ministry of Education and Sports, to provide unwavering support to the efforts of UNEB, in this direction.

I should also sound a word of caution here to the private providers of education, who fail to present candidates to sit the examination that they were registered for, as was the case in Kakumiro District. This is no less than a criminal act and I hope that by now, the perpetrators have been brought to book.

District education officials throughout the country must monitor such schools and consider them for closure before they do more harm to our children. No school should put their self-interests, before the future and the development of our children in this manner.

Actions such as these can have lifelong implications on a child’s development and academic performance. They cause insecurity and impact negatively on the self-confidence of children.

In this regard, I express my sincere gratitude to the UNEB officials for their consideration of the plight of the 23 learners who almost missed out on the year’s examinations, out of no fault of their own. I also affirm the Chairperson’s position that this act of offering an alternative examination, does not create a precedent because the situation in this instance was unique.

Finally, and very important, let me appeal to the nation that as a Sector we are not blind to the plight of parents and guardians as they grapple with the exorbitant school fees and charges in our schools. This has been our burden for some time now.

We recently worked in partnership with the Norwegian Embassy to carry out a study on the UPE program with the main aim of determining whether we need to charge fees or not in our schools. You may wonder why we focus on the UPE program. It is because this is where many of our vulnerable families take their children and we are concerned that all our children access education.

Still on the issue of regulating school fees in our schools, we constituted a committee headed by Prof Kayanja to conduct a study on the hiking of school fees and charges to help us make an informed decision on the way forward. This study brought a number of issues to the fore and is guiding our discussions at Sector level.

**This week on Monday, we sought Cabinet’s guidance on this issue. Cabinet has guided that all schools maintain the fees structure for third term of 2022 as we await further guidance on the matter.**

Please know that we are aware of the high commodity prices that have greatly affected the cost of running schools. But we must also be considerate of the plight of parents and guardians.

It is my prayer therefore, that our schools, government schools, government aided schools and private schools **will adhere to our guidance not to increase school fees in the next term** as we all seek a fair and lasting solution to this matter.

In conclusion, l congratulate all the candidates who sat for the PLE. I congratulate the learners who have performed well. My appreciation goes to the school administration, parents and guardians for the support and sacrifices that you rendered to our children, that led to their success. I am also grateful to all the stakeholders in the education sector, district leaders and security personnel who played various roles in ensuring the success of the examination.

For those who were not successful with the PLE, I appreciate your courage, hard work and the effort you made to sit your exams. While you have not achieved the grades you desired, I encourage you not to lose hope, but to trust in the Lord and believe that this is not the end of the road for you. Therefore, do not give up and continue to focus on achieving your goals. Seek counsel and take advantage of the other opportunities as well as avenues in the education Sector to advance yourself. You could also consider repeating so that you get better grades to enable you achieve your academic goals.

With regard to the **Selection Exercise for Senior One**, this will be held on **2nd and 3rd February, 2023** at the Uganda Manufacturers Association (UMA) Exhibition Hall. **The date for reporting to school for Senior one will be 20th February 2023.**

**It is now my pleasure to release the 2022 Primary Leaving Examination Results to the public.**

***Thank you and God bless you!***