**SYNOPSIS FOR THE 37TH NRA/M VICTORY DAY ANNIVESARY CELEBRATIONS**

Theme: **Our resolute effort to transform Uganda is a promise we shall fulfill”**

*“Seek justice from tyrannical governments not with your hat in your hands but with a rifle in your fist." -* [*Emiliano Zapata*](https://kidadl.com/famous-people-facts/emiliano-zapata)

On the 26th January 2023 the government of the National Resistance Movement (NRM) will be celebrating 37 years of liberation to motherland Uganda. Indeed, on January 26th 1986, President Yoweri Museveni together with fellow revolutionaries stormed Kampala, and ushered in a new chapter in our history. The sole driving ideology for those patriots, was to liberate Ugandans from the tyrannical regimes at the time. Needless to say, our immediate post-independence leaders had messed up governance in most of the previous years after 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 new 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 to State failure. As a result, Uganda today, previously a chronically unstable failed State; plays the most critical stabilizing role in this region.

During the Swearing in ceremony on 29January 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.*”

The above promise created a central rallying point within the population to pull together towards rebuilding Uganda after many years of despair. The country had gone through tough times due to bad governance from 1966 to 1986. This period witnessed unprecedented authoritarian rule characterized by institutional decay and political insecurity, which adversely affected the economy.

In response to the crisis, Wanainchi retreated from the Formal Institutions of the State and organized parallel informal structures as coping mechanisms.

Museveni’s promise of a fundamental change took cognizance of the fact that Ugandans had lost trust in the Institutions of the State and subsequently denied it legitimacy. His Excellency the President as a visionary leader knew that without restoring hope; it would be difficult to get popular support for the then young and fledgling government. Since then, we look back with pride to assess how far the NRM Government’s Resolute Effort to Transform Uganda have yielded fruit.

**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 then NRM guerrillas to guide them once they got in power. Key among the policies, was the introduction of participant grassroots structures, initially known as Resistance Councils (RCs) later (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 the first meaningful democratic climate since our Independence and how they wished to be governed 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; building of a disciplined army; allowing civil society to organize freely; and promulgating a new Constitution in 1995 among others. The political and economic reforms introduced in the first ten years of the NRM government popularized the new liberators and set the basis for the current longevity and mass support commandeered by the NRM.

**Economic Recovery**

According to data from the IMF, between 1986 and 2020 (35 years), Uganda sustained an average annual GDP growth rate of 6%. Uganda’s growth is the more remarkable because it is a landlocked country, and was politically unstable having experienced misrule through primitive military coups and civil wars. In fact, guns went silent in 2005 when the NRA which later became UPDF put to an end to the last group of insurgents.

Uganda has been able to sustain long term growth in large part because of policy innovation, policy consistence and sound management of Economic Policies pursued by NRM provides an assurance to investors that their investments are safe i.e., will not be subjected to the uncertainty of regular policy reversals.

Part of the problem is that many people misunderstand the process of economic development. Some think economic growth doesn’t matter. Economic growth matters because it is the foundation for economic development. In fact, economic development is economic growth over a very long period of time – usually generations. Why? Because growth is possible over the long term only through **technological change i.e., innovation.**  That is why H.E. the President has directed that the current term of Office and economic pursuit must be informed by Science and Innovation. To this end, H.E. the President has spelt out 8 priority areas to be pursued vigorously to further leapfrog the economy from its current state to a modern one with in a generation. These are;

* The Pathogen Economy: This includes Research, Development and commercialization for economic gain through innovations targeting disease control in the fields of various therapeutics and the attendant Eco-System.
* Mobility: This is concerned with spurring Economic Development of Uganda through research and Technological transfer of sustainable mobility solutions. It includes domestic manufacturing of motor vehicles; for example is the Kiira Motor Corporation.
* Industry 4.0 Plus: This includes Research development and Technology transfer to transform Uganda into a Regional and Continental formidable actor in the spheres of electronics; artificial intelligence; robotics; internet & big data analysis.
* Aeronautics and Space Science: Under this priority area for spurring our economic growth and development; the NRM government is pursuing an active role of innovation in aeronautics, space exploitation and earth observation systems. Fellow countrymen, as you may now be aware, for the 1st time in our history, Uganda launched into space its own satellite which will be used to gather information of weather patterns, mapping mineral wealth and Securing the Country among others.
* Infrastructure innovation: under this priority area the NRM government will seek to transform Uganda through commercializing and building sustainable and energy efficient Public Infrastructure i.e railroads, airports and Nano technology.
* Productivity acceleration: The NRM Government takes cognizance that Uganda is by nature gifted as an agricultural Country. To this end, in its effort to transform the lives of our country men, the NRM government will pursue innovation purposively targeting increasing Productivity in the key areas of our Economy i.e Tourism, Agriculture, the Service Sector and ICT. The understanding of NRM government is that no meaningful resolute effort can transform the economy without addressing these four critical productions sectors as basis for wealth and job creation.
* Import substitution: under this priority area, the NRM government has set out to commercialize innovations aimed at reducing our dependence on imports. The philosophy guiding this intervention, rests in the understanding that no meaningful transformation of a State can be achieved without pursuing programs that deepen value addition for economic gain with in Uganda. In this way, Uganda will be in position to stop the hemorrhage of our Foreign Exchange and the “Donations of jobs” abroad to the other countries.
* Export Promotion: The NRM government appreciates that no meaningful Economic Growth and Development can occur without a deliberate effort to grow national export portfolio. To this extent, H.E. the President set up a Presidential Advisory Committee on Exports and Industrial Development (PACEID). The strategic focus of PACEID has been to map out value chain for at least 13 products for which Uganda has an economic comparative advantage. It is the role of PACEID to undertake immediate market intelligence to address strategic bottlenecks that hinder our ability to penetrate Regional and Continental markets in products such as beef, milk, poultry, steel and horticulture among others.

**Access to consumer products/goods**

37 years ago is a long time. It is also possible that half of the readership of this synopsis today may well be below 37 year. However, many of the things in the worldofconsumer productsthat we today take were not sold then for instance in 1986, Ugandans had access to one Television Station (covering only five towns); one Radio Station, one University, two brands of soda, two brands of beer, etc. And even then, these services and products were not always readily available.

The NRM resolute effort to transform the country has seen the country raise from one Television Station to hundreds of TV and Radio stations, tens of universities and shopping outlets (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 and transformation which is a result of the NRM resolute efforts to transform the country.

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 transform 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 now 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.

The lesson to draw from this tour is that economic growth is primary, the rest is derivative. It is better to seek growth and then discuss growing income inequality in the context of a growing economy, not a stagnating one. This is because ultimately, for anyone, it is better to hold a small slice of a growing pie than to hold a large slice of a shrinking one.

**Investment in the oil sector:**

Uganda recently concluded the Final Investment Decisions in the oil production and export. We have signed with Tanzania a landmark agreement to construct an oil pipeline from Hoima to the Tanzania seaport of Tanga. Once accomplished, it is going to transform Uganda from an oil importing country to an oil exporting country with its related benefits. Uganda is hoping to add USD 2.5 billion to its annual revenues by the year 2025. These resources will be applied to further concretize the already ongoing efforts for a speedy and inclusive transformation of Ugandan Citizens.

**Social service sector revival**

The NRM government also boasts of dropping maternal mortality from 506 per 100,000 live births in 1986 to 336 to date. Access to and utilization of health services has significantly increased with the population living within a 5km radius of a health facility increasing from to 86 percent in the recent years. The health infrastructure network has improved in the country and currently consists of 2 national referral hospitals, 19 regional referral hospitals, 147 district hospitals, 193 HC4s (medical officers present); 1250 HC3s (clinical officers present), and 3610 HC2s (enrolled comprehensive nurses present).

Significant progress has also been made in the provision of specialized medical care in cardiology and gynaecology. A modern state of the art women’s hospital with a capacity of 320 beds was opened in Mulago in 2018. The Heart and Cancer Institutes of Mulago Hospital have also been expanded and improved. This has increased access and utilization of health services. In-patient malaria deaths have reduced tremendously largely due to the effective distribution of insecticide treated nets (ITNS). HIV deaths have been reduced by 64% since the peak in 2004.

**Integration of Africa beginning with EAC**

Finally, one of the priorities of the NRM government to extend opportunities to our people. H.E. the President is pursuing a deliberate 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. The government has scored tremendously by 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 in 1986.

As a result of efforts by H.E the President, 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.

Fellow Ugandans in conclusion as we celebrate 37 years of the NRM Victory Day Anniversary it is incumbent on all of you as citizens of this beautiful land “Uganda” to individually play our role by shunning corruption; managing our time better; offering full support and uptake of existing government programs for example Parish Development Model, Emyoga, Presidential Industrial Hubs among others. Short of which each one of us, should play our role to support the progress and resolute effort of NRM to transform Uganda could risk being laid to waste.

Wishing you happy celebrations of the 37th NRM/A Victory Day and a Happy New year

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