

**SPEECH**

**BY**

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PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF UGANDA**

**AT THE**

**OCCASION OF THE**

**WORLD HEALTH SUMMIT REGIONAL MEETING**

***27<sup>TH</sup> JUNE, 2021 - SPEKE RESORT - MUNYONYO***

The Director General of the World Health Organization;  
Your Excellencies, Ambassadors and High Commissioners;  
The Director, Africa Center for Disease Control and  
Prevention;  
The Executive President Siemens;  
The Vice Chancellor and All Academics;  
The Country Representative, World Health Organization;  
The President of the World Health Summit;  
The International President World Health summit;  
Delegates from the M8 Alliance;  
Cabinet Ministers;  
Participating Ministers of Health;  
Members of Parliament;  
Ladies and Gentlemen, both physical and virtual.

I greet you all and congratulate you upon organizing and hosting this World Health Summit Regional Meeting. I also wish to congratulate the Makerere University Administration and Staff for the work done to ensure that this World Health Summit Regional Meeting is hosted, for the first time, in Africa, particularly in Uganda. Congratulations.

I wish to thank the leadership and scientists of Makerere University for quickly mobilizing human and other resources to start developing a Ugandan COVID-19 vaccine. We have a long history and experience in dealing with such major disease outbreaks including Ebola.

We know that the ultimate solution to COVID-19 lies in vaccinating all our people. The government, with the help of the African Union and other partners, will fast track the acquisition of sufficient doses of vaccines to cover the entire population alongside efforts to develop our own vaccine. We are continuing to talk with India, the USA for the Johnson-Johnson vaccine, China and Cuba.

The importance of medical research cannot be overemphasized. Progress in medicine depends largely on the work of medical research. Research into the causes and treatments of illnesses is perhaps the most important weapon in the fight against disease.

Research into traditional medicine is particularly important in Africa in making good use of our naturally and richly endowed environment. Countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America use traditional medicine (TM) to help meet some of their primary health care needs. In Africa, up to 80% of the population uses traditional medicine for primary health care. The age-old cures that kept our forefathers disease-free must be given enough attention so that we improve on them and preserve their use.

The Government remains committed to funding research and innovations by our scientists especially those in the Universities. We have demonstrated this by earmarking US\$ 30 billion every financial year to the Makerere University Research and Innovations Fund (Mak-RIF). However, I challenge Makerere not to only publish, but to translate research into products that spur our Industrial development and catalyze pharmaceutical industrialization to stop the massive dependence on outside pharmaceuticals. We want tangible results and our ordinary Ugandans have hope in our scientists to come up with solutions for different ailments like cancer and many other diseases.

With the therapeutics, one of our products has been tried among some patients and most of them have fully recovered, while the others are still on treatment. We target to reach 124 patients before we are sure that this medicine treats Covid-19 patients. I salute the few outsiders that helped us. I, therefore, appeal to our regional scientists to work together and put up a united front.

Making a vaccine involves 9 or 8 phases if WHO allows you to skip one phase. Our researchers are now entering stage 4. We hope to get to stage 8 by November, 2021. I can assure you that by the end of 2021, we shall no longer be waiting for outsiders to rescue us from mass death.

The role of Science and Innovation is recognized from the pre-industrial and early stages of the industrial revolution between 1750 and 1830; and is still key to the 4th Industrial Revolution today.

There is strong evidence indicating that all the developed nations we see today came to be what they are because they invested in Science and Research and stimulated their population to be more

innovative, built enterprises and industries to produce goods, services and solutions to address societal challenges. A scan of the developed world indicates that Science, Technology, Innovation and Research enabled economies to increase productivity, reduce costs, improve product quality and gain a competitive advantage.

While civilization started in Africa, the biggest problem was that it was never institutionalized and regulated. It remained an individual/tribes skill/trade. For example, we have skilled people in Uganda called “abaheesi” – blacksmiths. This is a whole industry that has not been developed, mineralogy and gemology (the Science of dealing with gemstone materials) as we continue exporting our minerals in raw form. This may also explain why we have missed the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Industrial revolutions. As Mwalimu Nyerere said, Africa “*needs to run while others walk*”, if we are to catch up. Some parts of the world are on the verge of the 4<sup>th</sup> Industrial Revolution while many parts of Africa have not entered the 1<sup>st</sup> Industrial Revolution.

As we usher in the 4<sup>th</sup> Industrial revolution where the physical, biological and digital technologies are converging, we are seeing technologies like Artificial Intelligence (AI), Robotics, Biotechnologies, etc. These technologies are efficient and can innovatively be used to address societal challenges. For example; scientists have used modern Biotechnology to come up with plant varieties that are resistant to drought, pests and disease and rich in nutrients through bio-fortification.

Technology and Innovation are very dynamic and developing countries cannot afford to lag behind or to go through the whole evolution cycles to the 4<sup>th</sup> industrial revolution technologies. This can only be possible by establishing strategic partnership with the advanced countries like Japan. All the countries that have transformed their economies in record time have done so through deliberate and focused strategic partnerships; Japan with the USA, China and Korea have all leveraged strategic partnerships and technology transfer in the fields of science, technology, innovation and research.

Finally, I wish to assure everybody that we are optimistic and we shall overcome this challenge of Covid 19. As I have mentioned several times, our scientists; doctors, researchers, innovators, etc., will move Africa to another level, scientifically.

It is now my honor to declare the World Health Summit Regional Meeting Uganda officially open. I wish you all a good stay and fruitful proceedings. I strongly urge you to continue observing the Covid - 19 Standard Operating Procedures.

**STAY SAFE!**