

SPEECH

BY

**H.E YOWERI K MUSEVENI
PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF UGANDA**

**ON THE OCCASION TO MARK
THE INTERNATIONAL DAY OF OLDER PERSONS**

***THEME: “UPHOLDING THE RIGHTS OF OLDER
PERSONS DURING COVID 19 PANDEMIC: A CALL TO
ACTION”***

STATE HOUSE ENTEBBE

1st October, 2020

Your Excellency the Vice President;
Honourable Ministers;
Your Excellencies - Ambassadors and High Commissioners;
Honourable Members of Parliament;
Older Persons of Uganda;
Ladies and Gentlemen.

I congratulate all the Older Persons on this day when Uganda joins the rest of the world to mark the International Day of Older Persons. The observance of this day gives an opportunity to Government and the Private Sector to reflect on the challenges that older persons continue to face. We also observe this day to evaluate the interventions made towards promoting the general welfare of our older persons and appreciate their contribution to society.

Unfortunately, this time we are unable to celebrate this Day as a public function due to the Corona Virus Pandemic that continues to threaten all nations across the globe.

The NRM Government cherishes the precious gift that this Country has in the older persons. We have succeeded in improving the life expectancy of Ugandans from 47 years in 1986 to 63.3 years today. Reaching old age alone is not enough and so we are committed to creating an environment that

guarantees older persons dignified and respectable lives through responsive policies, legislation and programming.

I am glad that older persons will be represented in the 11th Parliament as a Special Interest Group. This representation of Special Interest Groups is premised on the principle of equal representation of all persons in Uganda that was ushered in by the NRM Government. Until recently, only provisions for other special interest groups of the Women, Youth, Persons with Disabilities, Workers and the Uganda Peoples Defence Forces were in place, except for older persons.

Older persons will bring wisdom and vast experience into the August House to guide the young legislators. Older persons in Parliament will also educate the young people, especially leaders, on the importance of peace and stability of a country because they have passed through that phase.

The NRM Government has put in place social protection programmes which target older persons. For the first time in the history of Uganda, we have a grant to older persons, the Senior Citizens Grants which supports older persons from falling into destitution and deprivation. I congratulate them for this achievement and for patiently waiting for the programme to expand until it covered the entire country.

I appeal for the same patience from older persons as

Government mobilises resources to consider lowering the age of eligibility from 80 years to cover the entire population from 60 years.

The Government has now included drugs that treat age related diseases on the essential drug list. I, therefore, urge you older persons to adopt a positive health-seeking behaviour and seek medical care from the health facilities.

Government recognises the commendable role the senior citizens continue to play in shaping the future of Uganda. This is why the NRM is a composition of both the young and the old. This has enabled us to tap into the dynamism and vigour of the young, as well as the wisdom and experience of the older citizens.

The Bible, in the Book of Job Chapter 12: Verse 12, says, “Is not wisdom found among the aged? Does not long life bring understanding?” It is an African tradition to respect the elderly since they are our guiding posts to the future and bridge to the past.

I am pleased to learn that older persons have organised themselves and formed SACCOs. These SACCOs are the best alternative to the rigid financial sector which is discriminative.

I also want to use this opportunity to remind you to always observe the Ministry of Health Guidelines on prevention of COVID 19 especially for the older persons who have weak immunity and underlying health conditions. Always wear your mask when you are in public and seek medical attention when you feel unwell. The chain of this virus can only be broken if we all cooperate.

Government appreciates the Development Partners who have been key in piloting different programmes which have now graduated to national level programmes.

I thank the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO/UKAID) and Irish Aid, among others, for the technical and financial support they have provided to Government for the Senior Citizens Grants.

I further thank the National Council for Older Persons and Civil Society Organisations for the continuous efforts made towards improving the lives of older persons because they complement Government efforts.

I thank you all.