



UGANDA EPISCOPAL CONFERENCE

(UGANDA CATHOLIC SECRETARIAT)

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SIXTY YEARS OF INDEPENDENCE: GROWING AS A NATION

Message by the Catholic Bishops on the 60th Anniversary of Uganda's Independence

Dear brothers and sisters,

We congratulate you all upon reaching 60th Anniversary of our independence. We thank God for the protection and contributions by various stakeholders. We thank Him for protecting us from the devastating COVID-19 pandemic. We take this opportunity to renew our growth, guided by sacred scripture; and the National Constitution.

In 2012, during the 50th anniversary of Uganda's Independence, we published our Pastoral Letter, titled, "Fifty Years of Independence: Celebrating Our Heritage." In that letter, we identified the journey that our country had gone through, marked with successes and failures, opportunities, and challenges. We called upon every citizen of Uganda to contribute to the overall growth and development of our country in order to take the destiny of our country as a collective responsibility.

This Year 2022, we are celebrating sixty years of self-rule. In the last ten years, our country has continued on a positive trajectory in many ways. From a faith point of view, our nation has continued to be an oasis of faith in a world that continues to become more and more secular, seeing little or no need for God. Our churches and mosques continue to fill up with the faithful on days of worship. Religion has continued to be clearly articulated in the public square with no fears of reprisals or persecution or even feeling out of place. For this we thank God and continue to pray that this nation will continue to be the shining star on top of a hill that is becoming more and more secular. Remember our national motto: "For God and my Country".

Economically in the last ten years, we have continued to notice positive signs of growth. The government has continued to attract new investors in the country and more and more industries continue to crop up in the country. Different industrial parks have continued to grow, and the song of value addition is being sung everywhere in the country.

Agriculture, which is the backbone of our economy in the last ten years has seemed to be given center stage with focus on mechanization and adding value to our raw materials through the establishment of processing centres.

Other sectors of life have continued to show positive signs.

Unfortunately, as we mark 60 years of self-rule, the last ten years have also shown us a lot of dark spots that call for our attention and action as citizens of Uganda. Some of these dark spots have been our own making, while others have been caused by factors beyond our control.

The last two years of the ten years have been characterized by the global pandemic of Covid-19. Like the rest of the world, our country has been and continues to be affected by the effects of Covid-19. We cannot fail to mention the terrible consequence of Covid-19 to children who lost out a lot on their education. More so, many girls got pregnant and became children-mothers themselves. There is need to reach out and offer psycho-social support to these girls whose trauma will last for many years.

Currently, either because of the lasting impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, or probably the unfortunate war of Russia against Ukraine, our economy seems to be in a free-fall. Many businesses are at a standstill; the prices of basic goods are skyrocketing with no end in sight and global inflation is the cry of everyone in the world. Fuel prices are choking every sector of the economy, and these are indeed uncertain times for our country that need serious attention. With a failing economy, come the vices of insecurity, robbery and bribery that have risen everywhere in our country.

The last ten years have also been marked by an increase in land-grabbing which is very worrisome. We call upon all those concerned to do more to make sure that a serious solution to land grabbing and conflict is put in place.

In our pastoral letter we aspired for peace, reconciliation and harmonious dialogue among all religious, political, social and ethnic groups in the country. Ten years, down the road, we are still seeing

tribalism, nepotism, intolerance, and indifference. We are divided along political, religious, tribal, ethnic, and regional affiliation. This leads to individualism, greed, insecurity and corruption. Dialogue should present us the means for resolving differences and conflict.

We also desired a thriving democracy and good governance. But we find ourselves concentrating on our differences rather than what unites us. We should focus on what can make us grow together as a nation. Responsible democracy and issue-based politics is the way to go. The expected moral standard and expertise of our leaders are clearly stipulated in our laws; this must be upheld by our leaders.

Our aspiration is to attain transparent and accountable leadership at every level. This is a moral obligation for each one of us. It is sad to hear and read in some reports how we continue to struggle in our efforts to eliminate corruption. Transparency International (2021) Corruption Perceptions Index, ranked Uganda 144 out of 180 countries. We hope that by our next anniversary we shall be bereft of corruption.

Over the years, a number of policy and legal frameworks aimed at ensuring equitable access to quality education services for all Ugandans at the various levels of Uganda's education cycle, has been put in place. Nevertheless, our education system is still far from promoting: a sense of national unity, self-reliance, social justice, equity, cultural values, and a sense of social responsibility for the desired national growth. We hope the new curriculum will ensure integral development of the youth for social transformation of Uganda.

Significant progress has been made in the health sector. Nonetheless, there are still many people who die from preventable diseases. Most vulnerable are children and women. The human capital development programme in the National Development Plan III under pins the importance of having a healthy human resource to facilitate development.

While we appreciate the current road infrastructure, we believe that there is need for further development in this regard. There are limited roads, including connectivity in the rural areas. Although heavy

investments have been made in road infrastructure, our roads outside urban centres are still in poor condition (UBOS, report 2019/2020).

Our energy has increased more than six-fold reaching 254 MW of installed capacity by December 2019 (ERA, 2019). The installation of large-scale hydropower dams has contributed significantly to the increased capacity, accounting for 80% of the total installed generation capacity in 2019. Despite this heavy investment in the energy sector, access to electricity is still limited, with only 19% of the population using grid electricity (UBOS, 2019/2020). The need for clean energy for the growth of the country cannot be over emphasized as the use of wood for fuel has been destructive to the health of so many rural women and the environment.

The livelihoods of Ugandans are inextricably linked to sound natural resource management. Several policies and institutions have been put in place on environmental conservation, yet our natural resources continue to be degraded. This jeopardises both individual livelihoods and the country's economic development. Natural resource management should be at the centre of our good governance and economic development.

In 2015 Pope Francis challenged all of us to preserve our mother planet earth, in his encyclical, *Laudato Si*. In 2018, Uganda Episcopal Conference came out with a policy on the preservation of mother Earth. During their plenary in June 2022, the Bishops in AMECEA and SECAM, exhorted us to emulate the message of the Pope

We have concerns about insecurity in some areas in the country, where we find insensible killings of innocent citizens. We pray that human rights and dignity are respected more as we continue growing into a nation. Let us remember that we are created in the image of God (Gen 1:27). Ugandans are yearning for peace, unity, transparency and prosperity. And to avoid our nation being stunted, freedom of speech and movement should be promoted.

As we conclude our message on the occasion of the 60th anniversary, we call upon government and all people of good will to continue focusing on:

1. Forging national unity and harmony
1. Evolving democratic institutions and practices
2. Guaranteeing fundamental human rights
3. Creating national wealth
4. Upholding and maintaining national independence
5. Promoting moral and ethical values.
6. Preserving spiritual and cultural heritage, and
7. Promoting feelings of humanitarianism and cooperation.

As citizens, who cherish our motto "For God and my country" we need to continue taking our faith more seriously. Only God can continue to see us through our rather intractable challenges and only God can continue to consolidate the gains that we have made. Let us not slack off in our allegiance to God and faith in general. We pray for the development, growth and tranquillity of our country, so that we all proclaim Uganda as our mother land.

May God bless you all.

For God and My Country



Joseph A. Zziwa

Rt. Rev. Joseph Antony Zziwa

**Chairman of Uganda Episcopal Conference and
Bishop of Kiyinda–Mityana Diocese**

*Given at Uganda Catholic Secretariat – Nsambya, Kampala
Today 08th October, 2022.*