

**SPEECH BY HON. MWESIGWA RUKUTANA
MINISTER OF STATE FOR HIGHER EDUCATION
ON THE FIRST CONSULTATIVE MEETING ON FORMATION OF THE NATIONAL
REMOTE ENGINEERING CONSORTIUM**

The Permanent Secretary, Ministry of ICT,
The Vice Chancellor Makerere University,
The Vice Chancellors of other Universities Present,
The Deputy Vice Chancellors Makerere University,
Deans of Faculties and Colleges,
Heads of Secondary Schools,
Representatives from the Private Sector,
Representatives from National Instruments,
Ladies and Gentlemen;

It is indeed a privilege for me to be present at this meeting today. I wish to extend a warm welcome to representatives from all Educational Institutions present, and to all delegates. Your presence shows that we are united with a common goal of improving the teaching and learning experience in this Nation. I recognize the effort and commitment of Makerere University, and the Faculty of Technology in particular in bringing us together to share experiences and learn from each other. I am sure that all of us will benefit from today's deliberations.

With so many experts in diversified fields represented here, we have the opportunity to focus our minds and redouble our efforts on the challenges facing the education sector in order to improve the quality of education on offer in our institutions. Together, we must seize the opportunity to strengthen our commitment to education for all and the Millennium Development Goals (MDG). The Government of Uganda remains committed to making education for all a reality and prepare all citizens to meet the challenges of the 21st century: globalization, modernization, the dawn of the ICT age and knowledge based economic competition. This is why deliberate macro development policies and reforms like Universal Primary Education (1997) and Universal free Secondary Education (2007) were introduced as a key ingredient of the Educational Strategic Plan. Although free education in Tertiary Institutions seems far-fetched, it is evident that efforts to utilize Remote Engineering, enabling economical sharing of resources, is intended to make quality Higher level education affordable with the increasing spur of students from the lower levels.

The government recognizes the particular challenges faced in providing a good education environment to our students. High student numbers in secondary schools make adequate experimentation almost impossible. It is a common scenario that some schools lack libraries and experienced staff. As we discuss today, my interest is in how remote engineering can be used to supplement curricula in secondary schools. My ministry will provide the necessary support because such activities as promotion of ICT to improve the educational experience are enshrined

in the National Science Policy. The education sector is focusing on both human and natural resource development through expanded and revised curricula at all levels to focus on scientific and technological orientation in education, access to and use of information amongst other areas. Remote Engineering can form a core aspect of this strategy.

Less talked about is the utilization of Remote Engineering in combating other social problems like the burden of poverty and of HIV/AIDS. These are challenges we are facing across the nation, whose prevalence would be less with improved information dissemination. Skills in Remote Engineering will also inevitably promote the proprietary and self employment skills of Graduate students.

The government realizes the need for coordinated and practical action geared towards addressing the challenges facing the education sector, and it has introduced many measures to improve equity and quality at all levels of education. However, part of the solution lies with us. Despite comparable or even better commitment to education, research and innovation, we do not generate as many innovations, new business ideas and new jobs as some other African countries. Today gives us a chance to take a huge stride in the positive direction. Our motivation is that in order to measure up to the rest of the world in the generations to come, there will certainly be no lack of challenges ahead of us. But I hope we will be able to look back and say today is the day we changed the course of our Nation.

I wish you fruitful deliberations. Thank you.