

Ambassador's speech at Makerere – Sweden Research cooperation Annual Review Meeting, Makerere University 2nd October 2017

Vice- Chancellor, Prof. Barnabas Nawangwe

Makerere university staff

Regional partner university staff

Swedish university partner representatives

Distinguished participants, ladies and gentlemen,

It is my pleasure to address the Annual Review Meeting of the research collaboration between Sweden and Uganda.

Let me start by congratulating Prof. Barnabas Nawagwe on his new assignment as the 11th Vice chancellor of the Makerere University, Uganda's oldest and largest research university. Indeed, a both important and prestigious position.

I appreciate that you already are familiar with our bilateral research cooperation through your involvement with the program in various capacities from its very start in 2000. This is indeed an advantage and will be of great help for you in ensuring that the Makerere University will be able to provide innovative teaching, learning and research services that are needed for effective implementation of our cooperation. The Swedish Embassy is looking forward to working closely with you in this endeavor.

I also would like to pay tribute to your predecessor, Professor John Ddumba Ssentamu, for very good cooperation – also during some challenging times - and all his efforts to further strengthen our bilateral cooperation.

Higher Education constitutes the backbone of economic and social development. No country can achieve sustainable economic development without substantial investment in human capital. Higher education has become

increasingly important on national agendas and has undergone profound changes worldwide over the past decades. This is also the case here in Uganda.

Uganda continues to face the challenge of being able to provide the necessary resources to meet the increasingly high demand for Higher Education, which has resulted in soaring enrolments. At the moment, limited capacities and inability to keep pace with increased resource requirements are some challenges that urgently need to be addressed. In this respect, I would like to emphasize the link between research and development, and hope that the commitment by the Government of Uganda to university research and research training also will be reflected in the national budget with increasing resources allocated for research. This is indeed a prerequisite for the much needed modernization of the higher education system taking into consideration changing needs and technologies.

We all know that production, accumulation, transfer, and application of knowledge are central factors to socio-economic development. *Because development requires knowledge.* Something which is reflected in the majority of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals and has been recognized in Uganda's transformation agenda to a middle income country.

Improving higher education is a complex challenge, but it is essential to the countries development. I strongly believe that it is time for Uganda to re-assess its higher education policies and re- equip the sector with the policies and resources required to make it a dynamic engine that can help power the Ugandan economy for decades to come. Increase government funding, close supervision and serious attention to solve the challenges are essential in overcoming the multifaceted problems affecting higher education in Uganda.

The Swedish strategy is based on funding institution building, post-graduate education, and research in one single effort. No part can function without the others. The holistic approach to higher education and research taken by Sweden will, I believe, help in addressing some of the challenges that I mentioned earlier.

The Swedish support to Uganda was initiated in 2000 with the objective of promoting research and research training and to develop sustainable institutional capacity in an effort to strengthen higher education in Uganda.

Sweden remains the largest donor to research capacity in Uganda. The current agreement mainly focuses on postgraduate training of 337 staff members from five universities in Uganda. This is a very ambitious program and its success is highly dependent on quality local supervision capacity, which needs to be monitored regularly.

I understand that despite the challenges faced during the academic year 2016/2017 in the program implementation, you have been able to jointly recruit 299 scholars at different levels out of planned 337 for the current agreement period. This is quite an achievement and I congratulate you.

We are also pleased to note that the Swedish partner universities are now firmly on board, assuming a larger role in this phase than previously. They are devoting more time to support curriculum development and providing coaching in supervision, pedagogics, and research methods.

The Swedish government is proud of the results so far of the research collaboration, which also Sweden has benefitted from, both in terms of science discoveries and institutional exchange.

Let me reiterate one point that I also emphasized last year, namely the importance of bringing your research results outside the university lecture halls and laboratories. It would therefore, I believe, be interesting if you in your presentations could highlight the research results that can be used in the society in different ways. The purpose is thus to show new knowledge gained and USE it to influence the policies, strategies and actions Uganda need to take to develop in line with its strategic direction outlined in the NDP II.

Forging links outside the university should be part of your long-term planning.

In conclusion, I would like to wish you all success with the Annual Review Meeting and the Science Day. I can see in the program that you are going to

discuss a broad spectrum of subjects and themes. It will indeed be an intense week for all of you but at the same time, I am sure, fruitful and enriching.

This meeting will hopefully also demonstrate a key Swedish government position: that research cooperation is building a long term commitment beyond aid - a collaboration focused on scientific cooperation on equal footing between partners.

Thank you very much for your attention.