**SPEECH BY HER EXCELLENCY DOROTHY SAMALI HYUHA ON INTERNATIONAL WOMEN’S DAY, MARCH 8, 2025, CANBERRA, AUSTRALIA**

Ladies

Mothers

Sisters

Daughters

And Girls

**History:**

It is a great honor to address you today on the International Women’s Day, a day dedicated to celebrating the achievements of women around the world and advocating for gender equality.

The origin of International Women’s Day date back to the early 20th century when it was first observed in 1911. Originally a socialist political event, the day has grown to become a global celebration that transcends borders, cultures, and ideologies.

1975 is the year when the United Nations designated the International Women’s Year as marches and demonstrations supporting women’s rights began to be held in many different countries around the world on this particular day (March 8).

Over the years, International Women’s Day has evolved significantly in both Uganda and Australia, reflecting the unique social, cultural, and political landscapes of each country.

In Australia, for example, the first International Women Day was celebrated in 1928. In Uganda it was first celebrated in1984, and made a public holiday in 1991.

In Uganda, the day is marked by events and activities aimed at empowering women and advocating for their rights. It highlights the progress made in areas such as education, healthcare, and political representation.

In Australia, International Women’s Day is celebrated with a focus on addressing issues such as workplace discrimination, and domestic violence. Both countries use this day to reflect on their achievements and set goals for the future.

**Why celebrate:**

The purpose of International Women’s Day is multifaceted.

1. It serves as a reminder of the struggles women have faced and continue to face in their quest for equal rights.
2. It highlights the ongoing fight against gender-based discrimination and violence.
3. Promotes gender equality in all aspects of life.
4. Celebrates the remarkable achievements of women across various fields socially, economically, culturally and politically.

As we gather here today to celebrate International Women’s Day, we are reminded of the remarkable journey that women and girls around the world have undertaken to achieve their rightful place in society.

Women have made significant contributions in every field imaginable—science, technology, arts, politics, education, administration and many more.

**Examples:**

In Uganda, we have seen remarkable progress in women’s representation in politics and government. Some notable examples include H.E. Maj (Rtd) Jessica Alupo the Vice President of the Republic of Uganda, Rt. Hon Robinah Nabbanja Prime Minister including other 14 **Women Cabinet Ministers** constituting 45% out of 31 **Cabinet Ministers** and 24 **Women** State **Ministers** constituting 48% out of 50 **Ministers** of State.

At legislative level, we have Rt. Hon. Anita Annet Among the Speaker of the Parliament of Uganda joined by **189 Women MPs**  constituting 34% of Women in the11th Parliament, including  146 seats reserved for women, with one seat per district.

In diplomacy, Uganda is represented by **14 Women Heads of Mission out of 35 making 40%** of Diplomatic envoy.

**The High Commission has organised this event to commemorate International Women’s Day, provide a platform for networking, and draw inspiration from one another’s resilience and determination in advancing women’s rights, thereby paving the way for future generations**.

This year’s theme, **"Accelerate Action,"** underscores the urgent need to take swift and decisive steps towards achieving gender equality and empowering women everywhere.

The theme emphasizes that achieving gender equality requires collective effort. Governments, organizations, communities, and individuals all have a role to play.

1. **EMPOWERMENT**

This year's theme, "Accelerate Action," calls on all of us to champion initiatives that drive real change.

1. **Empowerment begins with education**. Ensuring that girls have access to quality education is fundamental to breaking the cycle of poverty and opening doors to opportunities. Education equips girls with the knowledge, skills, and confidence they need to pursue their dreams and make informed decisions.
2. **Economic empowerment** is equally important. Women must have the resources and opportunities to participate fully in the economy. This includes access to capital, mentorship, and networks that support entrepreneurship and career advancement. By removing barriers to economic participation, we unleash the potential of half the world's population, leading to greater innovation and prosperity for all.

According to recent data, around 38.4% of businesses in Uganda are owned by women, which is considered one of the highest rates globally, with many sources citing this figure as the percentage of women with small-scale businesses in the country.

**However,** despite the high number of women entrepreneurs, they often earn significantly lower profits compared to male business owners.

**Challenges faced:** Access to capital, market limitations, and gender-based barriers can hinder women's business success.

Therefore, empowerment means providing women and girls with the tools, resources, and opportunities they need to succeed and thrive. It means fostering an environment where their voices are heard, their choices respected, and their contributions celebrated.

1. **ACHIEVING EQUALITY**

True equality ensures that women and girls have the same opportunities as men and boys. This includes closing the gender pay gap, equal leadership representation, and removing systemic barriers. It also values the diverse experiences of all women, regardless of race, ethnicity, disability, or socio-economic status.

**Women in the diaspora**, we can all make a difference back home and here in our host country. We can educate ourselves about gender issues, speak out against inequality, and support women in our lives. By being allies and advocates, we contribute to a more just and equitable world.

**As Uganda High Commission, we have.**

1. Established a gender desk with an appointed gender focal officer.
2. Planned and budgeted for the commemoration of International Women’s Day.
3. Created children’s centre for working mother to keep and tend to their children while on duty.
4. Supported gender-based programs in the community like Breast Cancer Fundraising activities.
5. Offer maternity / paternity leave for working staff as required by the law.

Let us commit to accelerating action towards gender equality. Let us honor the women who have paved the way and support those who continue to break barriers. Together, we can build a future where every woman and girl has the opportunity to reach their full potential.

Thank you to the Uganda High Commission team for organizing and hosting the event at the Chancery. **\* Introduction of Mission Staff\***

Finally, I wish to extend my sincere appreciation to all of you for accepting our invitation and attending this event. Please feel at home.

**FOR GOD AND MY COUNTRY.**