



THE REPUBLIC OF UGANDA

Speech By

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At the

Pre-CHOGM Symposium  
On Science and Technology  
**Science, Technology and Innovation): Key drivers for  
socio-economic Transformation**

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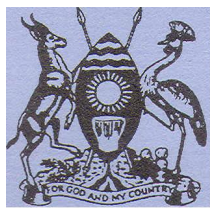


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I would like to thank Mbarara University of Science & Technology (MUST), Makerere University, the Uganda National Council for Science and Technology (UNCST), the Association of Commonwealth Universities (ACU), the Commonwealth Foundation (CF), the Royal Society of Chemistry (RSC), the British Council (BC), Uganda Office, for hosting this important symposium.

Science is the primer of civilization as we know it today. When early man invented fire, it changed his whole lifestyle. Initially, man lived in trees, using primitive tools for hunting and eating raw food. With the invention of fire, he was able to cook his food, warm and protect himself, light his cave and make tools out of iron. The original tree-dweller moved down into caves and his pattern of life changed. Another invention that changed the course of society was gun powder, that saw some people wielding power as masters and others becoming slaves.

Science, technology and innovation are central to any development process and, ultimately, social transformation. The transformation of society will ultimately mean the total liberation, emancipation and empowering of people; and this must be done by enhancing the technological capacity of nations.



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However, in spite of the emphasis placed on promoting sustained economic growth as the basis for poverty reduction in developing countries, technological change as a source of economic growth is not strong enough. This must be addressed.

It is imperative that national policies are formulated geared towards technological catch up with the more technologically advanced countries. This is best done through the deliberate enhancement of science and technology capacity. Uganda is moving very well at this front, making specific science and technology initiatives in all three levels of education - primary, secondary and higher education.

Indeed, the disarticulation between societal needs on the one hand and the provision of scientific knowledge and human resources on the other must be addressed if we are to realise the transformation we are targeting.

Uganda, like most Sub-Saharan Africa, has most of her population (82%) in agriculture. However, this is subsistence agriculture, based on manual labour. It is imperative that we restructure traditional subsistence agriculture into modern, commercialised agriculture and. this can only be made possible through intensifying science and technology application.



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This will include areas like mechanical harvesting, seed and breed improvement, food preservation, research, among other things.

Environmental protection is possible through the application of science, so that farming methods, industrial processing, energy use, are all done with a view to conservation. This will also greatly enhance the potential of tourism, which is one of our biggest sources of income.

The exploration, exploitation and processing of our mineral wealth is dependant on our science and technology capacity. Uganda has made great strides in the building of capacity for oil exploration. A deliberate effort to this effect saw a core team of 25 professionals trained to Masters Degree levels in Petroleum geology, Petroleum, geophysics, and subsequently systematic training in Petroleum exploration, Petroleum law, and Petroleum engineering. The oil discoveries that are now being made, therefore, can be handled at professional levels.

In the field of health, science and technology are central in the investigation and treatment of sickness and disease. Research into the manufacture of medicines, some of which are in our environment, will only be possible if we train our own people with a view of becoming self-reliant.



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The establishment of the Joint clinical Research Centre (JCRC) in Uganda, among other initiatives, for instance, was a major initiative that put Uganda a step ahead in the management of HIV / AIDs. However, we cannot afford to be complacent on this front.

We have registered impressive achievements in immunisation rates and infant mortality has been greatly reduced, thanks to our emphasis on these important areas. Our life expectancy has been increased owing to these major interventions.

The NRM government supports initiatives of global cooperation. Uganda, therefore, is ready to cooperate with governments and companies of other countries for the development of the Information Communication Technology (I CT) sector. I am proud to be associated with this conference because it enhances our inability to keep pace with the rapid technological advancements worldwide.

Government is fully aware of the increasingly important role of ICT in the economic development of nations. ICT is no longer a matter of choice, "but a necessity in today's world which is driven by technology and knowledge. ICT opens up business and job opportunities, largely contributing" to increase in national wealth.



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The NRM Government is placing great emphasis on the sustained and structured development of the ICT sector; the ultimate aim being the transformation of our people into an information society. Information and communications are at the heart of human life and social development.

The NRM Government is fully committed to providing stakeholders with opportunities to develop the ICT sector and make ICT one of the pillars of our economy, and has created an enabling environment to encourage the private sector to make investments into ICT services.

Uganda Government's decision to establish an ICT Ministry headed by a Minister with a full cabinet portfolio shall enhance the development of good policies and infrastructure for ICT.

The development of ICT infrastructure to enable connectivity to schools, health centers, agricultural extension units and administration and commercial centers throughout the country is crucial in the transformation process. Capacity building in this area will no doubt help us bridge the digital divide and set us on a more rapid course in development.



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Industrialization is a must if we are to make any headway in the much -desired transformation of society. If we are to add value to our produce in order to compete favourably in thee global market; if we are to provide jobs for our people; and, ultimately, if we are to increase the living standards of our people by increasing their incomes; we must industrialize.

We cannot have industrialization without science and technology. It is, therefore, imperative that we offer our people an education that is skill-oriented and functional. There is need to support small-scale industries and step up the skills of the people engaged in them, in addition to making deliberate efforts at imparting technological skills to our children right from the early school days.

The setting up of Mbarara University for Science and Technology is a manifestation of our dream and vision; of our resolve to promote science and technology.

There is need for an aggressive campaign for the appreciation of science and technology as key drivers for social transformation. I therefore call upon" all stakeholders to take interest in this field and join in the dissemination of its importance. Politicians, religious leaders, mass media, are all crucial channels that should partner with government in this very important challenge.



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The NRM government has already made deliberate initiatives towards this effort by making science subjects compulsory in schools.

Scientific and technological development must be enhanced through collaborative efforts of sharing experiences with peers and neighbours. As we work towards a Political Federation in East Africa, it is imperative that we harmonize our policies towards this end.

I am glad that the National science week has chosen this topic in consonance with the main theme for the upcoming CHOGM meeting in November, highlighting transformation. It cannot be disputed that science and technology are, indeed, key drivers in the transformation process.

I believe that the experiences you have shared through this symposium have been very useful; and that they have whetted your desire to make science and technology an integral part of every developmental effort.

Societies that have lagged behind others in technology have been marginalized, enslaved, or decimated altogether; at best, they survive at the mercy of others.



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That shall not be our portion, because with proper vision and focus, we shall catch up with the rest of the world.

Once again I would like to thank the hosts and organizers of this symposium for a job well done.

I thank you.