

**THE OPENING SPEECH  
BY  
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**AT THE LAUNCH OF THE  
MID TERM REVIEW**

***14 – 15 OCTOBER 2003***

***HOTEL AFRICANA***

I sincerely thank you all for turning up in such a big number. This simply demonstrates that Ugandans are determined to fight even harder to defeat the AIDS epidemic.

Uganda is on record for being the first country in Africa to take the difficult step of accepting the existence of the AIDS disease. The dividends of that courage is that today Uganda is recognized and admired the world over for her ability to reduce the HIV infection rates.

Whatever Uganda has been able to do in the fight against HIV/AIDS has been done with the support and collaboration of many actors and partners. Indeed, the Government owes special thanks to all of you actors (civil society and government agencies, people living with HIV/AIDS as well as individuals who have made different contributions within their respective mandate and means.

Uganda's systematic national response dates way back in 1986 when a National AIDS Control Programme (ACP) was established in the Ministry of Health. The ACP, staffed with competent and committed personnel under clear guidance and leadership of the sector management team, developed and implemented a vibrant education campaign which created a near 100% awareness we are proud of up to date. Many of us remember the famous drum messages on radio.

When the Government of Uganda realized through experience and observation that AIDS had social and economic impacts that go beyond health aspects, the fight was expanded by starting a Multi-sectoral

Approach to the Control of AIDS (MACA) which was made operational by setting up the Uganda AIDS Commission (UAC) in 1992.

The UAC developed a National Operational Plan (NOP) in 1993 to provide a framework to guide the implementation of the MACA. The NOP gave guidance to national planning and it later gave birth to the first National Strategic Framework (NSF) 1994 –1998.

Further, with support and collaboration of key partners, the Commission spearheaded the development of a revised 5-year National Strategic Framework for the control of HIV/AIDS in the country. The NSF, covering the period 2000/1 to 2005/6 targets to achieve three major goals of:

- Prevention;
- Mitigation of the health and socio-economic effects of HIV/AIDS; and
- National capacity.

The NSF 2000/1-2005/6 was developed as a result of collective effort of many organisations and individuals represented in this room. It is your document. It is for that reason that we are here today to gain consensus over a process that is reviewing our framework to inform us; what we have done right, what we have not done, what gaps exist, where we need to improve and how we must move, etc. The process is participatory and as usual, will benefit from your wealth of expertise in the different themes.

At this moment, I wish to register government's appreciation to the Uganda HIV/AIDS partnership, which is supporting the mid term review including this workshop. I must tell you that this exercise is very expensive. As you

heard in the technical presentation, the review is organized into six thematic areas. This has called for a team of eight consultants.

The MTR is led by an external lead consultant from the USA who is not with us today and a Ugandan lead counterpart, working with six other local consultants. Let me take this opportunity to introduce to you Mr. Narathius Asingwire, the local lead counterpart. Mr. Asingwire is the Head of Social Work and Social Administration, Makerere University and he has an outstanding record in HIV/AIDS work in this country. Mr. Asingwire will introduce his team in due course.

We are gathered here as members of the partnership forum representing the different self-coordinating entities (SCEs) i.e. faith based organisations; people living with HIV/AIDS; UN and bilateral; private sector; decentralized government; local NGOs; international NGOS; parliament; government and research and academia. None of the constituencies can achieve the NSF goals in isolation. It will take a coalition approach to keep our young people AIDS free and to promote care including ARVs to PHAs. I have no doubt therefore that your contributions will guide the consultants to focus in the right direction and to draw a clear road map for the way forward.

The NSF review is happening at a time government is revising the Poverty Eradication Action Plan (PEAP). The timing provides us with an opportunity to articulate issues of access to ARVs, strengthening the human rights component, implementing the GIPA principle and accelerating the fight against stigma, among others.

Therefore the MTR specifically aims to achieve the following objectives:

- Setting the agenda for the update, implementation and monitoring of the NSF;
- Facilitating and harmonizing the HIV/AIDS policies and programmes implemented by actors in all the constituencies;
- Reviewing the national and district level indicators in relation to the implementation of NSF;
- Developing resource mobilization strategies for the implementation of the NSF to ensure that identified gaps are covered; and
- Reviewing national budgets and financial reports from various sectors/actors relevant to the NSF.

The NSF is a very important document because it is the platform around which partners plan and program interventions and resources. It is anticipated that in future, all existing and intending partners will buy into the NSF for all HIV/AIDS work in this country.

Another reason why the Commission regards this MTR exercise very important is that the findings will inform and feed into the revision of the NSF and form strategic priorities for Uganda's future direction.

I thank you once again for turning up and I appeal to you to sustain and even scale up your commitment to the fight until we win. Together we shall share the Challenge.

For God and My Country.

