

6 June 2015

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Sam Kahamba Kutesa,  
President of the 69<sup>th</sup> Session of the General Assembly,  
at a Lecture to Algerian Diplomats on the Theme “The United  
Nations at 70: Towards a Transformative Socio-Economic  
Development Agenda”**

**Your Excellency Ramtane Lamamra, Minister of State, Minister of Foreign Affairs and  
International Cooperation of Algeria,  
H.E. Mr. Abdelhamid Briksi, Secretary General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs,  
Excellencies,  
Distinguished participants,  
Ladies and gentlemen,**

It is my great pleasure to be here with you at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Algeria. I am delighted to give a lecture to this distinguished audience, on the theme: “The United Nations at 70: Towards a transformative socio-economic development agenda”. Thank you for inviting me to share some views on the work of the United Nations.

I would like to pay a special tribute to Algeria for its outstanding role in Africa’s liberation struggles. Algeria has continued to play an important role since independence, in the promotion of universal values of freedom, human rights, peace and security and sustainable development all over the world, and in particular Africa.

Indeed, the young generation of Algerian Diplomats have a heavy responsibility of upholding this lasting legacy of great successes and achievements. Algeria has played a central role in the consolidation of solidarity amongst developing countries, within different groupings, such as the G77 and China, the Non-Aligned Movement and the African Union.

In October this year, the United Nations will celebrate its 70th Anniversary. As you know, it has not been smooth sailing. We have registered many success stories but also faced and continue to grapple with several challenges. In my talk today, I will focus on some areas of the work of the United Nations some of its major accomplishments and challenges. I will also share with you highlights of my key priorities as President of the 69th Session of the General Assembly.

Looking back at the last 70 years, especially in the face of today’s challenges, the importance and legitimacy of the United Nations has been questioned by some. Is it still relevant to today’s world? As I will highlight shortly, the United Nations, as a Member States organization, has accomplished a lot within its limitations, and will continue to do so.

Our collective challenge is how to keep aligning it to cope with the changing circumstances, to ensure it delivers better.

According to its Charter, the United Nations was created to address challenges of the time, especially to ensure international peace and security. In the words of the Charter, it was to “save succeeding generations from the scourge of war”. It also sought to enhance socio-economic, cultural and humanitarian cooperation among nations, through promotion of human rights justice and respect for international law and treaty obligations. Through its agencies, funds and programmes, it continues to seek global solutions to global challenges.

In the area of peace and security, the United Nations engagement is not in question. Its involvement in disarmament issues, including of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons is on the rise. It has championed international efforts towards the fight against terrorism and extremism. It has been in the whole spectrum of activities for peace and security, including mediation and conflict prevention, peacekeeping, peacebuilding and post-conflict reconstruction. The sixty nine peacekeeping operations it has deployed since 1948, have contributed to restoration of hope and protection of civilians in conflict.

A look around the world, especially in Africa, illustrates that there is still work to be done to fulfill the noble 1945 aspiration of saving generations from the scourge of war. We owe it to ourselves, and to succeeding generations, to address the socio-economic and political issues that ferment conflict and violence in our communities and countries. The shortcomings of the United Nations on this matter, can be attributable to lack of political will and sometimes vested geopolitical interests. These are issues that Member States have to address.

The United Nations has accomplished a lot in the socio-economic area. Such successes include assisting countries and regions to fight diseases across the world, such as HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis, Malaria and Ebola. It has, and continues to feed the hungry and provides a wide range of humanitarian relief and assistance to individuals and countries affected by conflict and disasters, including refugees and internally displaced persons. It promotes gender equality and empowerment of women. It deals with transnational organised crime, such as drugs and human trafficking. It promotes and supports respect for and protection of human rights, among other areas.

I will just highlight some of the flagship achievements of the United Nations that I consider salient:

- First, the most unequivocal achievement has been decolonisation. At the founding of the United Nations in 1945, its membership was only 51 countries. Most countries in Africa and Asia Pacific were still under colonial rule. The United Nations, through the General Assembly’s Special Committee on Decolonisation, played an important role in achieving self-determination for many of its current 193 Member States, including my own, Uganda. There is, however, still some work to be done to attain self-determination for all remaining territories under external control. Countries like Algeria were at the forefront of this effort, and your contribution will forever be remembered.

- Second, while the creation of the United Nations has not yet saved us from the scourge of war, significant progress has been made in many parts of the world. The United Nations has supported peace efforts in Timor-Leste, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Liberia, Sierra Leone and Haiti. Until recently, Burundi has been a flagship success story of tri-lateral cooperation between the country, the regional and the United Nations. A similar path is taking shape in Somalia. There is no doubt that challenges remain, but the collective resolve to end conflicts across the world remains steadfast.
- Third and last, the United Nations continues to contribute to addressing many social issues, especially in the health sector. It has contributed to the eradication of some of the most infectious diseases, such as polio and smallpox. The Global Fund to fight HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria as well as the GAVI vaccines initiatives have brought in new partners. They have made generic antiretroviral drugs and vaccines accessible and affordable to many people. Most recently, the UN has worked with Africa, and the affected countries of Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone, to address the Ebola outbreak in West Africa. Through implementation of the Millennium Development Goals, significant achievements have been made. Over one billion people have been lifted from extreme poverty, and access to education, water and sanitation has improved.

Beyond the 70 years, there is a new momentum building towards socio-economic development and transformation. As you may know, the theme I selected for the current session of the General Assembly is, “Delivering on and Implementing a Transformative Post-2015 Development Agenda”. I also selected the following seven priorities, which fit well with our talk this afternoon:

- The post-2015 development agenda
- Combatting climate change
- Advancing Gender equality and empowerment of women
- Strengthening cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations
- Peaceful resolution of conflicts and peace building
- Reform of the Security Council and
- Supporting the role of the UN Alliance of Civilizations.

This year, 2015, provides us with unique opportunity to change and transform peoples’ lives. It is incumbent upon us, as the international community, to ensure that we put in place measures to realize these opportunities. Currently, there are three landmark on-going processes that will define the 70th Anniversary of the United Nations. These are: the post-2015 development agenda Financing for Development and Climate Change.

The eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) we adopted in 2000 will come to an end this year..

This year at the United Nations, the international community is engrossed in negotiations to formulate a new international development framework – the post-2015 development agenda – to be adopted by world leaders in September. The new agenda will cover the social, economic and environmental dimensions of sustainable development..

Building on the foundation laid by the MDGs, the core objective of the new agenda is to eradicate poverty and achieve sustainable development. The proposed 17 sustainable development goals are ambitious and can transform our societies, if effectively implemented. But the scale of resources that will be required is substantial and far greater than what we needed for the MDGs. We therefore have to ensure mobilisation of adequate financial resources as well as technology development and transfer as well as capacity building. It will also be important to ensure a fair and transparent trading regime, addressing issues of global economic governance and reforming the international financial system to be more responsive to the needs of developing countries .

The upcoming Third Conference on Financing for Development (FFD), to take place in Addis Ababa from 13-16 July, is very important in this regard. As outlined above, the success of the transformative post-2015 development agenda will depend on the means of implementation. We have to ensure success in Addis Ababa especially for developing countries and countries with special needs, such as ours in Africa.

Without a clear financing arrangement, realisation of the new agenda will be difficult. One of the key deliverables from the Addis Ababa Conference should be measures for mobilizing long term finance at affordable rates for investment in critical infrastructure such as energy and transport and for important sectors such as agriculture and manufacturing. Official Development Assistance (ODA) remains important, but will not transform people's lives on its own. We must improve domestic revenue collection and management, combat tax evasion and illicit financial flows.

The third and final major process is climate change. Science has repeatedly warned us that the planet is warming up, and warming up fast, with clear indicators. Droughts are becoming longer and frequent. Sea levels are rising. Ice and snow caps are dwindling. Floods, landslides are increasing. We therefore need urgent action to save our planet, and to ensure progress in our sustainable development endeavours.

Progress has been made over the years to put a spotlight on this matter, under the auspices of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. Work is underway, from Lima last December to Geneva and Bonn, to negotiate and adopt an international legally binding agreement at the 21st Conference of Parties (COP21) in Paris. Important issues here include the need for adequate and predictable financing for climate change adaptation and mitigation, especially for developing countries while emphasizing common but differentiated responsibility.

Beyond these three processes, there are other issues and challenges that can derail, or potentially delay achievement of socio-economic transformation. These require the international community's continued and renewed engagement. In the area of peace and security, we should continue efforts towards peaceful resolution of conflicts, and combatting terrorism as well as violent extremism.

The recent wave of terrorist attacks across the world attests to the need for our continued engagement to find a solution to extremism. Our major challenge remains the need to understand and address the underlying socio-economic and political issues that fuel extremism and drive people, including the youth, to commit terrorist acts. Groups like Al-Qaeda, Al-Shabaab, ISIS, Daeshi continue to commit

heinous terrorist attacks. Boko Haram has also become a major security concern for Nigeria and neighboring countries. Close to your borders, there is the case of Libya and the Sahel belt which has become a breeding ground for terrorism.

At the institutional level, addressing the numerous global challenges requires more than the United Nations. Accordingly, I am giving special attention to strengthening cooperation between the United Nations and regional and sub-regional organisations. This cooperation continues to make a positive contribution to development, and maintenance of peace and security. The recent Ebola outbreak in West Africa, for example, has demonstrated that this cooperation works. Elsewhere, trilateral cooperation between the United Nations, the African Union and the European Union, is making positive change in Somalia. No doubt, more can be done.

The delayed reform of the United Nations, in particular the Security Council, has raised concern among many Member States. With 193 United Nations Member States today, and a much changed global landscape, Member States want a Security Council that is more representative and reflects current realities. I continue to underscore the need to move the intergovernmental negotiations process to text-based negotiations during this session.

We are all aware that women constitute more than 50% of the world's population. Any socio-economic development framework that excludes women will either fail, or will not deliver effectively on its promise. That is why the international community is emphasizing the critical role of women in the new agenda. Women play a central role in eradicating poverty, developing families and societies and preserving the environment. We need to educate them. We need to facilitate their access to affordable credit. We also need to support and promote their economic and political rights.

As we conclude our talk this afternoon, we ought to remember that the United Nations is an organization of Member States, working for Member States. As the geo-political landscape around the world changes and evolves, so should the United Nations. It continues to strive to improve people's quality of life across the world, even in the face of new challenges.

The Post-2015 Development Agenda currently being negotiated by all Member States and stakeholders is a flagship symbol of what can be done through our collective efforts. Through this new development framework, the international community will reaffirm its renewed impetus to end poverty and transform people's lives around the world. Such is the importance of the United Nations, and an illustration of why it will remain indispensable. Let us all play our part to ensure it remains successful and relevant, for an organization such as the United Nations is needed to address those special circumstances and problems that no single individual country, however powerful, can deal with on its own.

I thank you for your attention.