

SPEECH OF RT.HON AMAMA MBABAZI  
PRIME MINISTER OF THE REPUBLIC OF UGANDA & GUEST OF HONOR

ON THE LAUNCH  
OF  
RESILIENTAFRICA NETWORK (RAN)

IN THE

KAMPALA SHERATON HOTEL, RWENZORI BALL ROOM  
ON

TUESDAY 4<sup>TH</sup> JUNE 2013  
TIME 1:00-6:00 PM

**Your Excellencies Ambassadors and High Commissioners here present**

**USAID Mission here present**

**Ministers and Members of Parliament**

**Chancellor, Professor Mondo Kagonyera,**

**Vice Chancellor, Professor Ddumba Ssentamu,**

**Distinguished Alumni of Makerere here present**

**Staff and students of Makerere University**

**ResilientAfrica Network Team**

**All Distinguished Guests**

**Ladies and Gentlemen**

May I first of all take this opportunity to warmly welcome all of you to the launch of this yet another very unique project in Africa.

Let me also take this opportunity to thank Makerere University for the continuous efforts to build not only a well mentored population but also for the excellent research skills portrayed in this high institution of learning. It is therefore no wonder that Makerere University won the USAID Higher Education Solutions Network award. Congratulations, Makerere University.

As you are all aware, I am impressed by the number and speed of innovations at Makerere University, especially since our Government began giving support through the Presidential Support to Science and Technology Innovations (STI). I am also happy to note that Government has provided close to UGX 15billion towards research & development, innovations and incubations in various Colleges and Units of Makerere University.

### **Need for Action now**

Disasters are on the increase through a) climate change b) civil conflict c) health epidemic. Therefore to prevent, manage, and rehabilitate communities from these disasters we need a multi-sectoral approach, thus ministries of health, agriculture, etc need to be engaged. My office is thus very critical in this coordination.

Local solutions through local innovation are the best approach to solve this problem. This provides a number of advantages i.e. sustainability, involvement of the community, strengthened development among others.

I am therefore excited to observe that our Universities are going to be involved in solving the local problems. This is what the Uganda Government would like to see from our Universities. Use of local talent to solve the Wanaichi problems. The Government thus strongly supports this project.

I particularly want to congratulate Makerere University for the different innovations in the various colleges. These have been milestone achievements for the entire country.

The deeper lesson we learn here is: it is not just about strengthening resilience in Africa; but about ownership, self confidence and pride in our African intellectual property and capability. It is about pride in our own African creation and identities. It is about our technological rights.

In his book, "*The End of Poverty: Economic Possibilities of Our Time*"<sup>1</sup>, Professor Jeffrey Sachs of Columbia University, New York City, says that even the Japanese, who have led the world in industrialization and exports in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, were once described as "lazy people" . How so?

They, too, were once poor and weak.

- But what did the Japanese do right that enabled them to reverse the cultural insults they suffered, and to become an industrial power house in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century?
- How did Japan excel in production and reproduction of Western technology without sacrificing Japanese culture to a large extent?

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<sup>1</sup> Professor Jeffrey Sachs, *The End of Poverty: Economic Possibilities of Our Time*, (New York: Penguin Books Ltd 2005)

The clue is in what Japan did in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century—the Meiji Era.

Professor Junzo Kawada, the Japanese cultural anthropologist who did comparative research on cultural values, systems and language in Japan and Africa vis-à-vis development, has argued that a deliberate development of Japanese native language over a period of time strongly influenced and enabled the adoption, assimilation and adaptation of Western concepts of technology and industrialization, into the Japanese (Oriental) milieu.

In turn, this gave rise to Japanese sense of ownership and reproduction of Western technology without sacrificing Japanese culture. Kawada argued that:

The linguistic unity...through one native language established before the re-establishment of external relations and the modernization was an important condition for the continuity of cultural identity, in spite of the considerable changes in material life under the introduction of Western civilization. After the first contact with Western scholars and engineers, who were invited to Japan and paid enormous salaries, and after the first generation of elite Japanese who were sent abroad by the government, education in Japan, from elementary to university, was conducted entirely by the Japanese national language: Japanese intellectuals of the Meiji Era translated into Japanese many European words such as philosophy, electricity, railway, locomotive, car, pencil, fountain pen, etc. At the beginning of the Meiji Era, more than 10,000 new Japanese words were created as a way to translate Western concepts and terms.<sup>2</sup>

Here, the Japanese concept of “**technology translation**” and not just “technology transfer” is at its best. What is the difference between “translation” and “transfer”?

“Translation”, like that of the Bible into African languages, is a “two-way traffic” while “transfer” is a “one way traffic”. For example, once the missionaries translated the Bible into African languages; they were no longer its masters of the Scriptures in African languages. It was the African Christians who became the new masters of the Scriptures in African hands. This has significant implications for cultural renewal and identity empowerment, according to the thesis of Gambian-born Professor Lamin Sanneh of Yale University, expounded in his book, *Translating the Message: The Missionary Impact on Culture*<sup>3</sup>

Now, if science is a form of ‘language’ and Technology its ‘speech-act’ and both are culturally conditioned; it means that science and technology carry along with them the ‘metaphysics’ of the culture in which they originate and are therefore conditioned. Just like translation of the Bible into African languages passes mastery of the Scriptures to African Christians; so should ‘technology translation’ into African ‘language’ of (science and technology) pass over mastery of science and technology into our African milieu.

It means that African ability and capability of (science & technology) translation and innovation becomes our mastery of science & technology in the African milieu. Logically, therefore, this should be the premise to our intellectual pride and ownership of our innovations.

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<sup>2</sup> Junzo Kawada, “Development and Culture: Is Japan a Model?” in Olusegun Obasanjo et. al. (eds), *Challenges of Leadership in African Development*, (London: Crane Russak 1990) p. 174.

<sup>3</sup> Lamin Sanneh, *Translating the Message: The Missionary Impact on Culture* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books 1989)

If Makerere and other Universities are going to be the center of Uganda's technological innovations, research and development (R&D), and knowledge production; then they will have to ask and answer the question: Will they be involved in technology "transfer" or "translation"?

If our Universities will answer the above question in favor of technology "translation" then it will demand re-thinking their roles in national development; and in the discourse of African dignity, pride and intellectual properties.

For our National Development Plan (NDP) describes Universities as

"The heart of education as well as the core of national innovation and development systems. It is also the place where teachers are trained and curricula developed. Without research in higher education to develop curricula for the entire education system, all curricula will be of little relevance to national development. Universities are the core of any national development system because they produce not only the knowledge needed to drive economies but also the skilled human resources required to do the job."<sup>4</sup>

If our Universities such as Makerere are "the core of national development system because they produce not only the knowledge needed to drive economies but also the skilled human resources required to do the job": Will Makerere the skilled human resource producer and Innovator have African intellectual pride and ownership? Or will it continue to peddle borrowed knowledge and innovations?

It will require a paradigmatic and intellectual liberation and transformation if Makerere and our Universities are to become innovators with African intellectual pride and ownership.

Such an intellectual liberation will demystify our Universities from their hitherto "ivory tower" status quo, and transform them into "catalysts" and "engines" of socio-economic transformation.

Transformed thus, Makerere will then be able to deconstruct what Ugandan Professor, Catherine Alum Odora Hoppers, of the University of South Africa (UNISA), called the "cognitive prison wall sealing off the academic and policy communities" in her newly co-authored book, *Rethinking Thinking: Modernity's "Other" and the Transformation of the University*, in which she argues that:

Africa and the rest of the world will pay a heavy price for failing to diagnose the problem of Africa's development accurately. The failure to develop an organic intellectual infrastructure to adapt, translate and retool borrowed knowledge cannot be attributed only to the government posture in post-colonial Africa or to a lack of resources. Rather, it is a consequence of the failure to perceive the full depth, scope and what Visvanathan has referred to as this "tight architectonic" woven together by the confluence of the ideologies of science, law, economics, development and modernity and which has, over time, created a cognitive prison wall sealing off the academic and policy communities.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>National Development Plan (NDP) (2010/11-2014/15) Government of Uganda, Kampala, Uganda, April 2010, p. 214

<sup>5</sup> Catherine A Odora Hoppers & Howard Richards, *Rethinking Thinking: Modernity's "Other" and the Transformation of the University*, (Pretoria: UNISA 2011)p.89

I submit that the “cognitive prison wall sealing off the academic and policy communities” has kept the African University, such as Makerere, alienated from the government, public and private sectors and from its own African community for too long.

We need to break free from this “cognitive prison wall” so that Makerere and our Universities can develop expanded and inclusive scope for teaching, research and development (R&D) including Science & technology innovations as well as community outreach and impact.

If we agree that science is a form of language and technology its speech-act which are both culturally conditioned; then it follows that there is an African science and technology that originates and is conditioned by Africa’s history, culture, and indigenous knowledge systems. It means that African science and technology are both valid and legitimate as, for example, Professor Alum Odora Hoppers argues:

“acknowledging that African models of farming and systems of healing might embody different notions of community and science, and that within such a framework African agriculture and systems of healing might be alternative paradigms....Turning around Africa from a ‘void’, a ‘black box’, to an alternative list of possibilities and epistemologies—would take us some way on the path to a genuine African Renaissance”<sup>6</sup>

Many of you will recall that the launch of the *Kiira-EV* (Uganda’s first electric car) was called a Renaissance!

We therefore need more of such innovations from our Universities. Then Makerere will become a relevant University to not only Uganda but also East Africa and entire Africa’s development needs in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, as Professor Alum Odora Hoppers argues:

“It is here that revisiting the concepts of culture and of indigenous knowledge provides poignant content to the idea of a developmental university. Tertiary institutions in Africa are challenged to make their positions known on the integration of knowledge systems, social and intellectual capital of local communities, the critical evaluation of indigenous knowledge, the reciprocal valorization of knowledge systems, and cognitive justice as Africa seeks to find its voice, heals itself and reassess its true contribution to global cultural and knowledge heritage.”<sup>7</sup>

I therefore submit that for Africa to be healed from the cultural alienation we have suffered due to the adverse impact of contact with Western intellectualism and material power; we, too, must rather engage in science and technology translation with our own innovations than mere technology transfer; we must ensure that exogenous development is in synch with endogenous development.

We must also ensure that our African cultural metaphysics bears on our development discourse so that we rather have culture *in* development than culture *and* development; or worse, development *without* culture!

I hope you will now appreciate why I keep promoting our African languages and cultural values. I hope all of you intellectuals and academicians of Makerere and our Universities will

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<sup>6</sup> Catherine A Odora Hoppers, *Ibid.*, p. 90

<sup>7</sup> Catherine A. Odora Hoppers, *Ibid.*, p. 91.

now join in this struggle so that we progress towards developing science, technology and innovations that are inclusive and African.

It is only when we build our new Africa on the roots of the old; or we grow new roots without abandoning the old: then can Africa have an integrated, holistic and sustainable development.

If we do that, then the “Kiira EV” –thanks to our own Makerere’s College of Engineering--will not be a one- time novelty. Nor will it be the first and last. Rather it will be one among many more such innovations and inventions to come from Makerere and our other Universities.

I want to thank Makerere University, in particular the College of Health Sciences (School of Public Health) for the initiative through ResilientAfrica Network to move innovations from the students to benefit the communities.

This is significant for Makerere that has been the “mother school” (*alma mater*) that has given birth to vanguard leaders of the struggle for Africa’s Independence such as Mwalimu Julius K. Nyerere; Jaramogi Oginga Odinga; Apolo Milton Obote; Sir Frederick Edward Mutesa II; Godfrey Lukongwa Binasisa; Yusufu Lule; H.E Dr Mwai Kibaki; former President Benjamin Mkapa and many other leaders.

### **Launching ResilientAfrica Network in Uganda**

On this Tuesday 4<sup>th</sup> Day of June 2013 in this Kampala Sheraton Hotel, Rwenzori Ballroom: Makerere is launching the RAN project one of her most unique and innovative projects. This project is geared towards strengthening resilience in Africa. Resilience to human shocks and stresses.

Congratulations, once again.

This day therefore makes it possible for us to envision the future of Uganda, East Africa and Africa as we build for the future. Strengthening development in Africa.

It is the vision that the best for Uganda, East Africa and Africa is still ahead!

This is the vision of an Afro-optimist, not an Afro-pessimist, if WE BUILD FOR THE FUTURE!

FOR GOD AND MY COUNTRY