

SPEECH

HER ROYAL HIGHNESS, THE NNABAGEREKA
QUEEN SYLVIA

**HOSTS A LUNCHEON IN HONOUR OF
SPOUSES OF PARLIAMENTARIANS AT THE
126th INTERNATIONAL PARLIAMENTARY UNION**

BUGANDA KINGDOM
LUBIRI PALACE, MENGU

APRIL 3RD 2012

- The Katikkiro of Buganda
- The 2nd Deputy Katikkiro
- The Honourable Guests
- The Royals
- Omutaka Nakirembeka
- The Ministers from Buganda Kingdom
- Hon Members of Parliament
- Her Lordship the Mayor of Rubaga Division
- The Board members of Nnabagereka Development Foundation
- Ladies and Gentlemen

It gives me great pleasure to welcome so many distinguished guests to our beautiful country. I bear greetings and good wishes from Ssabasajja Kabaka and the people of Buganda Kingdom.

We are proud that the 126th IPU Conference is being hosted by Uganda, and I hope that our guests have had the opportunity to tour our beautiful country – because we have a lot for tourists to see and enjoy.

In Buganda we have numerous cultural sites, arts, crafts and artefacts to tell of our rich history which goes back over 1000 years.

It is a truth widely acknowledged that Parliamentarians are the People's representatives. The Legislature is the one arm of government in which ordinary people are represented by the periodic exercise of their suffrage.

This year the IPU Forum is deliberating on many important issues of global concern: Peace and international security, sustainable development, democracy, human rights; and one of the important issues featuring prominently in the IPU discussions is the role of parliaments in addressing key challenges to securing women's health.

Ladies and Gentlemen, Buganda Kingdom aims to contribute to socio economic development through programmes that directly address the health of women.

My Foundation the Nnabagereka Development Foundation (NDF) has over the past 10 years engaged in advocacy programmes linked to attainment of the Millennium Development Goals, in particular Goals 3, 4, 5 and 6 that focus on attaining gender equality, empowering women, reducing child mortality, improving maternal mortality and combating HIV/AIDS malaria and other diseases.

Since many players must be involved if we are to see any significant changes in the progress and development of our nations, cultural institutions like Buganda Kingdom have been playing a major role. Some people may argue that cultural institutions don't matter any more and one of the common questions being asked these days "Is culture still relevant to solving today's problems or in contributing to development?"

Cultural diversity is our heritage and we should all learn to cherish and savour the joys that it brings to our daily lives – from the rich variety of languages right through the varieties of dress and foods to the broad spectrum of native wisdom, technologies and arts. Cultural diversity has contributed immensely to the exponential growth of human knowledge all over the World in the last few centuries and without it many of the advances made in terms of politics, economics, science and technology would not be possible.

If our cultures make us what we are as peoples, then cultural diversity brings us together as the human race, with each culture, different but inherently equal to all others, making its own unique contribution to the totality of humanity. It is therefore our duty and responsibility as individuals and collectively as nations to safeguard this heritage by preserving and passing on the good aspects of our diverse cultures as well as developing new aspects to pass on to our descendants. After all culture is a living thing that should grow and change in adaptation to changes in the World around it.

If we are to advance, grow and achieve vibrant and prosperous communities, we must pay attention to culture. We must fashion our native culture into a compass with which to navigate the turbulent seas of the modern World. Let us turn culture into an instrument of fostering harmony, peace, progress and prosperity rather than division. Where culture has been misused or abused in the past, let us learn the lessons and make the necessary adaptations but let us not throw out the only baby we have with the bath water. Let us be proud of our diverse cultures and celebrate that diversity by enriching each other and emphasizing our common humanity (Ubuntu).

IPU is a global community, which brings people of diverse nationalities, disciplines and backgrounds together into a community. IPU does this by appealing to the altruistic and inspirational values common to nearly all cultures across the World. In doing so it proves that culture is a key factor in the building of communities, even in the modern World.

As humankind developed, diverse peoples living in diverse parts of the World developed diverse cultures based on their unique histories and living environments. But although our cultures are diverse we are all brought together by our common humanity or Ubuntu.

This is very similar to the IPU set up, its membership is comprised of 159 countries in the world, no two countries are the same, and no individuals of the same countries are alike, however, the shared values and ethos of IPU bind them together.

In conclusion ladies and gentlemen,
Democracies mature and thrive best where parliaments are robust and support the rule of law.

Democracies thrive best where parliaments are responsive to the ordinary people's needs.

Because parliaments are the voice of the people, I urge you not to allow your voice to be silenced. Use it as you have done, to sustain action and advance peaceful and equitable development for our nations. Use your legislative and oversight power to hold governments accountable to their commitments to achieve the MDG's .

I wish you well during your stay in Uganda and extend my best wishes and that of the Buganda Kingdom for the prosperity, Peace and continued success of the countries that you represent.

Thank you very much for listening.