

**REMARKS BY THE DIRECTOR GENERAL UGANDA CIVIL AVIATION  
AUTHORITY, MR FRED K. BAMWESIGYE AT THE COMMEMORATION OF  
THE WORD DAY AGAINST TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS HELD AT ENTEBBE  
INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT ON JULY 30, 2022**

**The Guest of Honor**

**Hon. Members of Parliament**

**The Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Internal Affairs**

**His Worship the Mayor of Entebbe**

**Heads of institutions and stakeholders from all Government Ministries  
and Agencies**

**Civil Society Organizations led by the Coalition Against Trafficking in  
Persons - Uganda**

**Development Partners**

**Aviation industry stakeholders**

**Members of the press,**

**Ladies and gentlemen**

I add my voice to those of previous speakers in warmly welcoming you all to Entebbe International Airport. It is an honor for us to host you as we commemorate the World Day Against Trafficking in Persons. This is a clear testimony of our commitment to efforts geared towards the fight against human trafficking.

Entebbe International Airport, which is the major international entry and exit point for the country has been and continues to be key in the fight against this vice that has affected many young people across the globe. Owing to the many interventions that we have put in place while working hand in hand with the various key stakeholders operating at the airport, including Immigration, State Security agencies, handling agents and officials from the Ministry of Gender, Labor and Social Development, many potential human trafficking victims have been saved.

We know that the fight against human trafficking requires concerted efforts at different levels, including government, civil society and development partners. The coming together of all these bodies that have convened at Entebbe International Airport today is a move in the right direction.

Quite often, efforts by airport stakeholders to clamp down on the vice have culminated into arrest of perpetrators who are handled in conjunction with

Aviation Police through the due process leading to prosecution and convict in Court, but have unfortunately ended up facing very light penalties attracting fines as low as three hundred thousand shillings (300,000/=) for not only human trafficking, but drug trafficking as well. The two vices are a menace to air transport and have a very negative impact on society. It is, therefore, extremely disheartening to realize that after investing a lot of time and energy in apprehending the culprits, they end up with such light sentences, and back again on the streets to engage in the same bad habits of seeking more recruits since they know that even when they are caught, they can easily walk away after paying the penalties provided for in the law.

**Hon. Minister and members,**

This is one of the major challenges that has curtailed effectiveness of the well-intentioned efforts by UCAA and the security agencies at the airport. It is, therefore, our humble appeal to the concerned authorities to seriously consider an amendment in the law pertaining to penalties for such heinous crimes of this nature. This is a matter that requires to be treated with the urgency it deserves, if we are to make serious head way in the noble fight against the two vices of human and drug trafficking.

The other key factor in the fight against human trafficking is building awareness right from the rural areas (where most of the trafficked victims are picked from) to the law enforcement teams and those that assist the survivors in coping with the distress. The new complicated mechanisms that traffickers use to traffic their victims internally and globally require us to revisit approaches. That is why I find the theme for this year, which focusses on “the role of technology as a tool that can enable and impede human trafficking” extremely appropriate.

Another observation we have made at the airport is that most of the victims have also become sophisticated as they are extensively trained by their traffickers. Some of the victims now use tourist visas yet they are travelling for perceived employment opportunities. It, therefore, calls for a little bit of further interrogation to eventually detect some of the victims. The authorities at the airport have nevertheless done their best to get to the bottom of this as they are now familiar with most of the tactics used.

In the run up to this day’s events, the civil society organized various refresher sensitization training sessions for about 200 airport stakeholders. We are grateful for this and all the planned partnerships.

As an airport, we look forward to sustained growth in international passenger traffic in and out of the country because that ultimately

translates into revenue that we plough back into the facilities. But, we only pride in passenger traffic that is devoid of such vices as human trafficking.

In 2019, prior to the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic, Entebbe International Airport handled 1.98 million passengers, an average of 5,400 passengers per day. In May 2022, the airport handled a daily average of 4,000 passengers per day and in June 2022, Entebbe International Airport recorded an average of 4,500 passengers per day. While this is still short of the 2019 average, there is light at the end of the tunnel as the industry continues to recover slowly from the adverse effects of COVID-19, which saw passenger traffic figures drop to an all-time low of 565,541 for the whole year in 2020. Important to note is that of the indicated 4,500 daily average recorded in June, about 2,360 were departing passengers, and of these only about 400 were recorded to be officially travelling for employment abroad.

The revival and commencement of flights by the national airline, Uganda Airlines, is expected to further grow passenger traffic (in subsequent years), and promote the country's tourism potential. In addition, traffic is also expected to be boosted by the coming on board of new operators like Airlink, Air Arabia, and Saudia Airlines, which commenced flights to Saudi Arabia in February 2022.

**Hon. Minister**, the project for upgrade and expansion of Entebbe International Airport is moving on smoothly. One of the key deliverables, which is a new 100,000 tones capacity cargo center is already complete and operations were shifted to the new facility to pave way for works for a new terminal building in the area previously used for cargo operations. Another pertinent infrastructure upgrade for the guests here to note is the area where we are, which is part of the Departure area of the new terminal extension. The departure area was completed and part of it opened for operations, but this particular part is not yet opened up for public use. It will enhance passenger facilitation, as departing passengers will simply be dropped off at the departure road tarmac over there to enter the terminal in this space, then the driver continues to the parking. Works on the Arrivals terminal extension underneath this structure have also commenced and are expected to be completed in April 2023. The ultimate is to increase terminal capacity from the current 2 million passengers per year to at least 3.5 million passengers per year.

As I wind up, permit me to reiterate the need for concerted efforts from all key stakeholders to play their part in prevention of human trafficking, restoration and rehabilitation of the victims before they are integrated back in society.

I also take this opportunity to thank the civil society organizations who first conceived the idea of holding this event at the airport, the development partners who have logistically supported these efforts, aviation industry stakeholders and all of you who have made it today to add your voices in telling the world that Uganda, and Entebbe International Airport in particular is totally against the vice of human trafficking.

It is now my pleasure and honor to invite the Guest of Honor to address the gathering.

I thank you for listening

**FOR GOD AND MY COUNTRY**