

STATEMENT BY THE HONOURABLE MINISTER OF TOURISM, TRADE AND INDUSTRY ON THE WORLD STANDARDS DAY 2009

Fellow Ugandans,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Every year the International Organisation for Standardisation (ISO) and its members celebrate World Standards Day at a date selected by the respective institutions during the month of October. The theme for this year is "Tackling Climate Change through Standards". It seeks to highlight the important role standards can play in addressing problems related to climate change. The theme is not only timely but also provides opportunity for critical reflection on the causes, consequences and possible remedies to adverse weather conditions.

Fellow countrymen, Uganda has in the recent past suffered the adversities of changes in climate, notable among these are the devastating of floods due to torrential rains leading to destruction of property and increased water-borne diseases. Other disasters related to this are the land slides mostly in mountainous western, south-western and eastern Uganda leading to loss of life and destruction of infrastructure. On the other extreme, Uganda is experiencing unprecedented long periods of drought leaving millions of people on the verge of starvation and thousands of livestock dead because due to scarcity of water and pasture. In addition, the drastic fall in water levels in lakes and rivers has led to frequent interruptions in production of electricity in the recent past.

These extreme and adverse weather conditions and occurrences have been brought about by climate change which is affecting the whole world. Climate change is attributed to the increased greenhouse gas emissions that are raising the earth's temperature. These emissions come from industries, household appliances, human waste, vehicle emissions etc. Uganda may not be comparable to countries in Europe or the Americas in terms of the amount of greenhouse gas emissions produced, however, we do not need to wait until we are in their current situation before we start taking control.

Uganda, sometimes referred to as the Pearl of Africa, is been blessed with beautiful scenery, plenty of water (rivers & lakes), rich soils and a wonderful climate. But at the same time this pearl of Africa is under threat due to vulnerability to climate change and variations. Our economy and the wellbeing of our population is tightly bound to climate. Human induced climate change has the potential to halt or reverse the country's development path. In particular, climate change is likely to increase food insecurity; accelerate the spread of water-borne diseases; aggravate soil erosion and land degradation; damage to infrastructure and settlements and decline in the productivity of agricultural and natural resources. In all this, it is the poor and vulnerable particularly women and children who are hit hardest thereby aggravating poverty and heightening competition over strategic resources like land, water and forests.

Ladies and Gentlemen, climate change is a real not imaginary threat that we need to immediately address in a holistic manner. The immediate question is, what can we do to prevent such disasters from occurring or more importantly how can standards help in tackling the problem of climate change?

In the World Standards Day message from the presidents of the International Standardisation bodies, the Electro-technical Commission (IEC), the International Organisation for Standardisation (ISO) and the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), reaffirm their commitment to tackle climate change through a system of standardisation whose output includes standards for:

- Monitoring and measuring greenhouse gas emissions

- Designing and building energy efficient homes & workplaces
- Promoting good practices for environmental management and design and for energy management
- Disseminating innovative technologies that promise to help reduce the effects of climate change
- Fostering the introduction of new energy-efficient technologies and services.

The Government of Uganda in association with other stake holders has a program of distributing energy savers to electricity users in Uganda in order to save approximately 15% of the national grid energy. Compact fluorescent lamps and energy savers reduce on national needs for lighting. Electro-technology standards for these and other products have been developed to help promote energy efficiency. These standards make energy-efficient technologies more accessible, promote energy-efficient homes and workplaces, provide benchmarking for good practices and lay the foundation for more efficient energy management.

The use of solar energy in industry, workplaces and homes has widely been promoted by the government as a means of cutting energy costs and reducing the negative impact of other energy and fuel sources on the environment. Uganda National Bureau of Standards in association with the Private Sector Foundation and Ministry of Energy and Mineral Development (MEMD) has addressed the call to energy efficiency technologies through the development of standards in the solar energy sector. UNBS and the Ministry of Energy are initiating the development of energy efficient standards covering fridges, freezers, air conditioners, compact fluorescent lamps and electric motors.

In addition, UNBS will tomorrow officially launch the Pre-Verification of Conformity (PVoC) of used vehicles being imported into the country bearing in mind the fact that used vehicles if not in proper conditions produce emissions that pollute the environment leading to climate change. Standards have been set for the type of cars that will be acceptable with permissible levels of emissions. This inspection will be done at the country of origin before permission is granted for the vehicles to be imported into Uganda. This will go a long way in addressing problems that lead to adverse climatic conditions.

Furthermore, the UNBS offers training and advisory services on implementation of ISO 14000 standards that elaborate requirements for an environmental management system which can be adopted by manufacturers and processors whose activities impact greatly on the environment.

I therefore wish to commend Uganda National Bureau of Standards together with other government agencies, the private sector and all other stakeholders in taking on the challenge of combating climate change through the development and application of standards in the various sectors of national development. Standards may not be the only solution but they can definitely be used as a tool to gain control of the issues at hand and to create awareness so that the issues of climate change can be addressed starting at the grass root level.

Uganda together with the rest of the world is committed to protecting the environment and tackling the effects of climate change for the well being and prosperity of Ugandans and the world at large.

FOR GOD AND MY COUNTRY