

SECOND TECHNICAL NATIONAL PARTNERSHIP FORUM

August 29, 2017 – Protea Hotel, Kampala

Remarks by the Chair of the Local Development Partners' Group

Check against delivery

Head of Public Service and Secretary to Cabinet,

Permanent Secretaries,

Government Officials,

Colleagues and Development Partners,

Ladies and Gentlemen:

On behalf of the Local Development Partners' Group, I would like to thank you, Mr. Chair, for convening this second technical National Partnership Forum. I also wish to thank the Permanent Secretary/Office of the Prime Minister for her strong leadership and effective coordination of the partnership dialogue between the Government and the LDPG.

When we last met, at the first technical National Partnership Forum [in January 2016], we had a good discussion on the Government's new National Coordination Policy and its objective to improve service delivery through coordinated public service. Today, we will continue this discussion with a view to reach consensus on how to strengthen our joint sector dialogue and collaboration.

We will also follow-up on the discussion we had with the Right Honorable Prime Minister at the third High-Level National Partnership Forum in September last year. That meeting discussed options for improving implementation performance [including through strengthened public investment management]. And followed an assessment by the OPM showing that performance of 72 percent of externally funded projects in Uganda was unsatisfactory.

Mr. Chair:

As follow-up to the first technical NPF, the Office of the Prime Minister, with support from the LDPG, has undertaken an assessment of the performance of joint Sector Working Groups. We will discuss the findings and recommendations in more detail today, but overall the report

found that the performance is mixed. And as you rightly mentioned, Mr. Chair, this was also the conclusion of the mid-term review of the first National Development Plan [in 2013], which raised similar concerns about variation in the quality of discussion in Sector Working Groups.

The second NDP therefore recommends that Sector Working Groups are reinvigorated, and made binding with a lead agency and a functional secretariat, as a way of improving implementation. And as development partners, we are certainly very supportive of this recommendation.

Mr. Chair:

The joint Sector Working Groups represent a key mechanism for development partners to ensure that our assistance to Uganda is aligned with national priorities. A vibrant and result-oriented sector dialogue provides an opportunity for us to engage in the design, implementation and monitoring of sector development plans and programs. It provides us with important insights into sector prioritization and financing of annual and medium term budgets, which in turn can inform our country programs and funding decisions.

On the other hand, joint sector planning, budgeting and dialogue gives the Government scope to influence the way in which development assistance—on budget *as well as* off budget—contribute to the implementation of the priorities set out in sector plans and the National Development Plans. It is what we call a “win-win”.

I am hopeful that we will reach agreement today on the way forward, based on the findings and recommendations in the report. And it is important that the actions we agree upon are firmly anchored in follow-up *processes*. That way we will know how decisions will be implemented, by who, and by when.

One suggestion for your consideration could be that sector coordination becomes part of the annual joint sector reviews. This would allow Government to systematically track progress and learn from lessons across sectors.

Of course, for sector coordination to be effective and purposeful, there are some fundamentals that need to be in place. For instance:

- Sector Working Groups need to have updated terms of reference specifying objectives, membership, meeting frequency, reporting lines and so on;
- Furthermore, the process for conducting annual joint sector reviews need to be aligned with the preparation of the Government Annual Performance Report—the GAPR—to ensure that sector performance informs strategic national prioritization and budgeting; and lastly

- Sector Working Groups need to receive guidance and support from central level agencies to ensure harmonized coordination across the public sector and that key issues inform the agenda of decision-makers at policy level.

Mr. Chair:

These are some of the steps that could help to strengthen the performance of sector coordination, as Government seeks to improve public service delivery. But there are other, complementary, ways.

Enhanced Public Investment Management (or PIM)—the second theme of today’s discussion—holds great potential to help Uganda address constraints on growth and service delivery.

In a nutshell, PIM refers to the ways that governments manage public spending on economic and social infrastructure, or to be specific, how governments select, construct and maintain public assets. If managed well, this will increase the return on the investment and deliver more value for money. If not, then chances of achieving ambitious development targets are very slim.

In that regard, Sector Working Groups also has a very important role to play, particularly during the project preparation phase—including prioritizing projects for approval and funding—but also in terms of monitoring implementation performance, evaluating and learning from lessons, and ensuring the public assets are operated and maintained well.

We welcome the leadership by the Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development in driving this agenda forward. The Ministry has already adopted an Action Plan to improve PIM, and a new unit has been set up to implement this plan. But improving PIM can only happen if the Ministries, Departments and Agencies play their part. And if we as development partners play *our* part. And this will necessitate active and fully functioning Sector Working Groups.

Mr. Chair:

On behalf of the LDPG, let me conclude by reaffirming our commitment to increase the effectiveness of our cooperation with the Government at national and sector level in support of Uganda’s development agenda. We are looking forward to fruitful discussions.

Thank you!