**Fourth National Partnership Forum**

February 8, 2018 | Pearl of Africa Hotel (Main Conference Room)

**Statement by Ms. Jennie Barugh, Head of DFID**

**Chair of the Local Development Partners’ Group**

*Check against delivery*

Right Honorable Prime Minister,

Honorable Ministers,

Excellencies, Heads of Missions and Agencies,

Representatives from Civil Society,

Heads of Government Agencies,

Permanent Secretaries,

Distinguished Participants,

All Protocol Observed:

On behalf of the Local Development Partners’ Group, I thank you, Right Honorable Prime Minister, for convening this fourth National Partnership Forum. We are pleased to see so many ministers and senior government officials here, and we welcome the attendance of our partners from civil society who are also joining us for today’s important discussion.

For those of you who are not familiar with the Local Development Partners’ Group, it is a group of bilateral and multilateral development and humanitarian partners that seeks to promote harmonized and effective development cooperation in Uganda aligned with sector and national priorities.

We therefore value these joint engagements with the Government, as they provide an opportunity to discuss key reforms, opportunities and challenges, including issues affecting economic growth and service delivery.

Right Honorable Prime Minister:

We launched our framework for the partnership dialogue at the first NPF in December 2014. At that meeting, we also identified a set of high-impact intervention areas that were emerging from the preparation of the second National Development Plan (NDPII), which we agreed would be critical in driving the national development agenda.

Three years on, the Government is now starting the process of reviewing the NDPII at its mid-term. This mid-term review is a welcome opportunity to analyze trends and discuss mid-course adjustments to revive, accelerate and sustain inclusive economic growth.

In terms of the broader developments, Uganda’s economic growth has continued to be around 4.5 percent of GDP since 2011, compared to the 8 percent average observed the ten-year period before.

In many countries, 4.5 percent GDP growth would be enviable, but the high fertility rate in Uganda, means that the average annual per capita income growth rate stands at only 1.2 percent. Vulnerability remains high: so many households fall back into poverty when they experience a shock such as a drought or period of ill-health. Estimates from the recent Uganda National Household Survey suggest that the proportion of the population living below the national poverty line has increased the past 5 years – with Northern Uganda being a notable, and very positive, exception.

Regional and income disparity remains a concern. We recently learned from a study by USAID that roughly 4 out of 5 Ugandans live in districts with GDP per capita estimates below the national average.

Increasing inclusive economic growth requires tackling the causes of low productivity, private sector credit constraints, under-execution of the development budget, and the way public investments are managed in general. High Government spending on infrastructure can help to remove bottlenecks to growth. At our Technical National Partnership Forum, in autumn 2017, we focused on the important issue of Public Investment Management and the importance of ensuring that projects are:

1. Well prioritized (to ensure high return on investment);
2. Competitively tendered and well-managed (to uphold quality standards and prevent fraud and corruption); and
3. Well maintained (to ensure that Ugandans will continue benefiting from assets created from public resources).

We commend the Ministry of Finance for moving this agenda forward but note that the latest report from the Office of the Auditor General provides numerous examples of public resources and investments not being managed in an appropriate and accountable manner. We look forward to our on-going collaboration in this important area.

We note that social spending has continued to decline as a share of GDP (from 8.5 percent in 2005 to 4.4 percent in 2018). Meanwhile, one million new Ugandans are born every year needing schools and health services. We are concerned at the impact on education indicators, such as numeracy and literacy, and that earlier progress on health outcomes is either at risk, or highly dependent on donor support, as in the fight against HIV/AIDS.

The Government has taken important and commendable steps to incorporate the Sustainable Development Goals in its national development agenda. In order to make real and sustainable progress on these goals, it will be critical to invest—and invest more—on social sectors to ensure that no Ugandan is left behind!

Right Honorable Prime Minister:

When the second National Development Plan was prepared, no one anticipated that Uganda would have received close to one million refugees half-way into the NDPII period. The country’s progressive policies for protecting and managing refugees are recognized globally; the generosity of host communities is highly commendable; and the Government continues to express its clear commitment to support socio-economic inclusion of refugees, while addressing the needs of the communities hosting them.

Development partners have stepped up to the plate, providing significant financing for the refugee response in 2017. We are also working collaboratively to make the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework a reality in Uganda – we now have structures in place and 2018 needs to be the year of implementation and delivery. We also continue to urge the Government of Uganda to do all it can to play its part in tackling the root causes of the conflicts in South Sudan and DRC.

Transparency and accountability within the refugee response is absolutely critical. We must ensure that the vulnerable refugees and host communities who we are all aiming to help, truly benefit from our investments. We are all deeply concerned by the recent allegations of corruption, fraud and child trafficking. But we also see an opportunity for Government and UN agencies to turn words of zero tolerance into action: holding individuals to account and tightening up oversight, systems and controls so that these offences are less likely to occur in future.

We know that the Government has discussed the refugee response this morning to identify strategies for moving from an emergency response to long-term development approach, step up on delivery and tackle coordination challenges. We look forward to participating in the discussion this afternoon and to agreeing specific priorities for 2018.

Right Honorable Prime Minister:

Our partnership is about delivering results that meet the needs and expectations of Ugandans.

At the last Partnership Forum in September 2016, we agreed on the Agenda for Action that outlines a set of actions, which we see as enablers for delivery, and which we are collectively committed to fast-track in order to enhance implementation performance.

Many of us are working closely with the relevant Ministries, Departments and Agencies to implement the Agenda for Action, and I am pleased to note that good progress has been made already in a number of areas.

But I know that none of us want to take the foot off the pedal. There is much to do. For instance, since our last meeting we have identified and endorsed recommendations aimed at strengthening sector coordination. We are now looking forward to the joint Sector Working Groups, through strong Government leadership, again becoming the inclusive platform for sector planning, coordination and implementation, they are meant to be. This could be one area to track and report on next time we meet.

A key feature of the Sector Working Groups is that they involve representatives from the private sector and civil society, which helps broaden the discussion and bring new feedback mechanisms on the delivery of reforms and services. We all value a vibrant civil society as indispensable for a healthy democracy, just as active citizen participation in service delivery is central to ensuring efficiency.

We are concerned that treatment of CSOs does not undermine mutual confidence and respect between state and non-state actors, and such organizations’ ability to deliver crucial services, which the national budget is unable to support.

We believe it is important for the NGO Act to be implemented properly, to provide civil society organizations a regulatory framework to ensure they are fulfilling their obligations as they deliver essential services to Ugandans.

Right Honorable Prime Minister:

On behalf of the LDPG, let me end by thanking you and your colleagues in Government for showing leadership and demonstrating commitment to advance the joint Partnership Dialogue so that our intentions translate into tangible results and development outcomes.

We look forward to frank and constructive discussions.

Thank you.