

The second Ugandan UK Convention took place on the 14th September 2012 at the Troxy Arena in London. About 1320 delegates attended the morning session and 2100 delegates attended the after party. The 2012 Ugandan UK Convention ran alongside the Diaspora Trade and Investment Expo 2012 under the theme “Aspiring for Sustainable Development”.

The Convention was blessed to have many distinguished guest speakers from Uganda and the UK, who shared with the audience some invaluable knowledge and insights about investment opportunities. Their inspired speeches ignited and renewed a passion and aspiration in many people to be part of Uganda’s progress and revival.

Rt Hon. Rebecca Alitwala Kadaga, Speaker of the Ugandan Parliament opened the convention with greeting the delegates and relaying greetings from the President, Parliament and the people of Uganda. She also thanked the Ugandans in the Diaspora for their contribution to the economy. She went on to say that the 50th celebration of Uganda’s independence provided the opportunity for delegates to reflect on who they were as Ugandans and what they could do for their country. Rt Hon. Kadaga acknowledged the fact that there are many Ugandans living and working abroad that have developed financial, technological and human capacity, which was an opportunity for them to harness joint resources and make a difference in Uganda. The main focus of her presentation in terms of investment opportunities were the tourism industry, in which she highlighted community tourism and the work that the First Lady Janet Museveni has done in Karamoja, the housing sector, commercial agriculture and processing, industrialisation, higher education, oil and gas mining energy, the financial sector and water transport.

Hon. Janet Kataaha Museveni, the First Lady and Minister for Karamoja affairs highlighted the plight of the people in Karamoja and the work that her ministry and the government of Uganda have done to improve the livelihood of those living in this part of the country. She shared the successes and challenges that she has faced in her work in Karamoja since receiving the appointment in 2009.

At that time, the region had suffered a three year drought, resulting in food and water shortages, in addition to poverty, conflict and insecurity in the region. The ministry set out to deal with these challenges by reinforcing the disarmament exercise with the co-operation of the Ugandan Army (UPDF) with support from Karamajong elders in the process. The ministry of Karamoja, under the Office of the Prime Minister, launched a comprehensive food security plan for the region in a bid to reduce the number of people living on food aid, which proved successful, as numbers reduced from 70% to 10%. The ministry set out to provide water for both human and animal consumption under the PRDP programme which covers the whole northern region and Karamoja. Other steps that the ministry has taken to improve conditions in Karamoja include; the community empowerment programme, prevention of cattle rustling and theft through using electronic branding, construction of schools and staff houses, affirmative action for Karamoja under UPE and USE, road construction, provision of health services, construction of permanent housing settlements and rural electrification.

The first lady urged Ugandans in the Diaspora to invest in Karamoja stating that, “Uganda’s development cannot be complete without the development of Karamoja.” She cited eco-tourism in areas such as the Kidepo national park, commercial agriculture, mining, exploitation of solar and geothermal renewable energy, and the use of the vast land for forest plantation for climate credits and climate change mitigation as investment opportunities available for entrepreneurs to exploit for the good of Karamoja and Uganda at large. She called upon everybody present to join in the journey to bringing this region up to the same level as the rest of Uganda in dignity and prosperity and pledged the commitment of the government of Uganda to support any endeavours towards enhancing the prosperity of Karamoja.

Hon. Maria Kiwanuka, The minister for Finance, Planning and Economic Development started her presentation by thanking Ugandans in the Diaspora for supporting Kiprotich, who won a gold medal at the Olympics. Hon. Kiwanuka acknowledged the role of the Ugandans in the Diaspora in the development of Uganda in terms of remittances sent and business contacts attracted to the country. She went on to highlight the importance of the focus of the convention, career and investment opportunities in Uganda, to the government's efforts to renew sustainable and inclusive economic growth and development.

Hon. Kiwanuka unveiled the government's strategy to support value-added in agro-processing, skilling of the workforce in relevant areas of the job market, and lowering of the cost of doing business by increasing the stock of infrastructure, energy, roads and transport networks. Hon. Kiwanuka stated that the government is concentrating on the following areas: infrastructure development, power generation, transmission and distribution, research and development in terms of workforce, agriculture and productivity, business regulatory frameworks and public private partnerships. She invited delegates to invest in the aforementioned areas. She also highlighted two key areas under her ministry, the first being a commodity based approach to agriculture in which the government is giving priority interest to 10 commodities namely maize, beans, cassava, rice, bananas, fresh water fish, dairy cattle and beef cattle; and the second area is regulatory and licensing reform that is being undertaken to create an enabling business environment and reduce the cost of doing business.

Hon. Maria Kiwanuka, also clarified that the Diaspora bond project is still in the discussion and research stage, both inside and outside Uganda. The government policy right now is that any government issued bond would be for income generating infrastructure such as a hydro powered dam or a toll road or an electricity transmission line. She added that no bond would come into effect until a survey would have been conducted about the various Diaspora groups, their incomes, their investment characteristics and their risk perceptions. The minister finally said that so far, the Ugandan government has not yet issued a Diaspora bond, so this is just the consultation process.

Mr. Phillip Wabulya, Executive Director Operations - Bank of Uganda explained how people in the Diaspora will be able to buy or sell the Diaspora bond after its introduction, and how they will be able to access it from outside Uganda. He also said that Uganda Stock exchange (USE) realized that in Uganda, a lot of the financial markets are based in the commercial banks. Bank of Uganda, Uganda Securities Exchange and Capital Markets Authority are currently discussing and exploring the best way to make it work. He said "we have what we call a central depository system that we hope will give access to a lot of investors to invest electronically into the government of Uganda securities and equity market, which will be operative in the next few months."

Mr Wabulya also addressed the worries of fraud, non-compliance of regulations and how to mitigate any risk from mismanagement of funds, which were put forward by some delegates. He revealed that every investor he had visited recently said that the Bank of Uganda pursued a very strong monetary policy that has insulated commercial banks from the problems that could have happened. He explained that banks in Uganda are sufficiently capitalized and have enough liquidity to meet the obligations. He added that BOU has a very strong supervision team headed by Mrs Justine Bagyenda that does not tolerate any flexibility in terms of any breaches in the requirement.

Hon. Tress Bucyanayandi, Minister of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries started his speech by emphasised that agriculture is the most important sector in Ugandan economy, with more than 77% of the population engaged in this sector.

The Minister pointed out that most of the cotton is exported raw instead of being processed in final textile which would add value to the exported product. And some of this crop could be processed into animal feeds or oil. He added that Uganda produces the best coffee which can be roasted in Uganda and turn it in a finished product. Cocoa is coming up significantly in Uganda and again investors are invited to take advantage of the value addition opportunities by converting cocoa into by-products like chocolate.

The Minister said that there are vast opportunities in fruit processing as the international market is demanding fresh and dried fruits. He advised investors to look at growing other types of flowers where again the market offers big opportunities.

Other opportunities he mentioned were producing cereals and grain foods, milk production, milk coolers and abattoirs for processing meat for export to the Middle East market, producing fish using fish cages and ponds to meet a high global demand.

He further said that Uganda can't increase productive by using the old manual methods. Machinery and innovative commercial technology and know-how are needed in the country to increase productivity. He advised on investors to come and start a tractor hire service as many people can't afford to buy their own tractor but can afford to hire at a reasonable cost.

He informed delegates that Uganda needs investment in agro-processing urgently because the industry will not grow without adding value to raw products. The country needs to sustain the production for its fast growing population and be able to supply the local and regional food demand. It also needs to increase the shelf life of finished products. He also advised people to take advantage of minimum and tax exemption on agro-processing and machineries as reported by Jolly K. Kaguhangire from the Uganda Revenue Authority.

Hon. Christine Amongin, the Minister of State for Teso Affairs reminded the audience about the 1st Ugandan UK Convention that took place in August 2011, and gladly reported that since then, she managed to get some charities from London to work on various projects in Teso. She mentioned in particular River Flow Ministries who help people on agriculture development. Another charity, Ark Schools constructed 12 secondary schools in the region and all these thanks to the effort of the convention.

She appealed to Ugandans in the Diaspora to help combat the challenges of flooding in Teso region and to engage in projects in value addition, needed in the region to take advantage of the abundance of cassava and potatoes. She reported some good developments in the region, including the University. His Excellency the President directed the establishment of Teso University sooner than was expected, and the Minister called on skilled Ugandans to go and teach in the two faculties in human resources and IT to commence with the opening of the University in July 2013.

Teso Tropical Growers are calling upon Ugandans in London to take advantage of the investment opportunity, particularly in the agricultural sector. In pursuit of the rural policy, the government has put in place the Rural Electrification Agency (REA) to ensure electric energy is availed in the rural areas. The task is ongoing and many rural areas have been placed on the grid for eventual electricity infrastructure provision and connection.

She encouraged delegates to seek and obtain information from Government on any issue of importance in any sector of the economy and on Government policies so as to make informed decisions on where to contribute to the development of Uganda.

Finally, she pointed out that "we are aware of our plight, but we must recognize that opportunities exist to turn Teso around".

Mr. Alenyo Marshall, Senior Immigration Officer, enumerated the 4 types of citizens of Uganda under the current constitution (1995) which are Citizenship by birth, Foundlings and adopting children, Citizenship by registration and Citizenship by naturalisation.

Mr. Alenyo explained that when Ugandans in the UK took UK citizenship, they ceased being Ugandan citizens. Holding a Ugandan and British passport does not make one a Ugandan unless he/she registers under article 15, activated by section 19 of the Uganda citizenship and immigration act.

Mr Alenyo explained the privileges of being a dual citizen which are:

1. the right to vote
2. the right to own land under the mailo land ownership. (holding mailo land as a British subject is illegal under section 40 of the Land Act)
3. Acquiring a national ID, which will be issued very soon

Mr Alenyo advised Ugandans in the Diaspora to lobby the Rt. Hon. Rebecca Alitwala Kadaga, Speaker of the Ugandan Parliament, who was amongst the VIP delegates at the Convention, to waive the dual citizenship fee which seems to deter everyone to register.

Mr Alenyo said that those who registered for dual citizenship will have the privilege to pick their National Id cards from the High Commission. The national ID cards will be used to access services such as voting and to buy land as citizens, as well as to contest for elective offices.

The convention proceeded with the *Multi Sector* panel and the *Opportunity Uganda* panel, which featured many of the distinguished guests. These panellists gave additional information about investment opportunities in the health sector, commercial agriculture, answered questions asked by the delegates on land security, government support for poultry investment and members of the Diaspora returning home.

Multi Sector panel, moderated by Ms Estella Makumbi

Dr. Samuel Mugasi, CEO of National Agricultural Advisory Services (NAADS), told delegates about opportunities in the agricultural sector and the services that NAADS has to offer to prospective investors. He highlighted the commercialisation funds available to investors in areas such as value addition, as well as for public private partnerships in the same area.

Mr Deus Muhwezi, Assistant Commissioner in charge of agribusiness, spoke to delegates about investment opportunities in agriculture such as banking, insurance, warehousing and the food & confectionary industry. In addition, he highlighted incentives available to investors such as tax exemptions on value addition investments in agro processing or products locally produced in Uganda.

Dr. Sarah Nkonge Muwonge, senior private secretary, director of land matters, spoke to the delegates about land issues, explaining the different problems currently faced in this area and assured them of the government's efforts to deal with them. She urged delegates faced with land problems to contact the relevant offices such as the Uganda Land Commission and the land fraud unit to mention but a few.

Dr. Atwine Diana Kanzira, Director of the medicines and health delivery monitoring unit, covered the investment opportunities in the health sector, highlighting the need for skilled labour/ human resource development in this sector.

Mr Donald Banks, founder and Managing Director of GCSED, highlighted the investment opportunities in agriculture stating that commercial agriculture will be Uganda's saviour.

The Multi-sector was concluded by a short question and answer session tackling issues such as the reception of member of the Diaspora returning to Uganda, poultry farming and availability of information on the developments in the health sector of Uganda.

Opportunity Uganda panel, moderated by Mr J Kibazo

Baroness Lynda Chalker of Wallasey acknowledged the fact that there are investment opportunities in Uganda for the taking. However, she criticised the amount of time often wasted in discussion instead of making decisions and implementing them. She stressed that agriculture is critical not just for Africa but the rest of the world and urged Ugandans to take advantage of the good will and positive attitude that people have towards Uganda. She said that while Uganda has the best economic opportunities, the country will not succeed if it is silent or disorganised.

Dr Andrew G. Seguya, Ag. Executive Director & CEO of Uganda Wildlife Authority told the delegates about the investment opportunities in the tourism sector, highlighting the incredible biodiversity and vast scenic beauty in Uganda. He also noted that with public private partnerships, investors with limited funds can pool funds for investment.

Mr. Sebagala M. Kigozi, Executive Director – Uganda Manufacturing Association (UMA) informed delegates of the numerous investment opportunities in the manufacturing sector, noting that Uganda imports up to 90% of its consumables so there is a big gap for investment in manufacturing.

Ambassador Agnes Kalibbala, Director for Housing - Ministry of Lands and Housing, outlined the investment opportunities in the housing sector, stating that there is a housing deficit of about 3 million housing units. She informed delegates of the projects that the government is working on such as building housing for civil servants, plans to redevelop slums and decongest Kampala through the development of satellite towns. She invited investors to come and work with the government to make these plans a reality.

Mrs. Jolly K. Kaguhangire, Commissioner - Uganda Revenue Authority, informed the delegates of the reforms that the authority has undergone such as the use of technology and the modernisation of services. She also highlighted the tax exemptions on offer in specific areas such as importation on agro processing machinery and incomes received from investment in education to mention but a few. She assured delegates that the services provided by URA were good and integrated.

The speaker of parliament, Right Hon. Kadaga, also spoke on the panel, highlighting opportunities in tourism, especially those based on the traditional life of Ugandan people.

The panel was concluded by a question and answer session in which the chairman of the London Chamber of Commerce advised the government to provide a certified list of investment opportunities in brochures or a website. The rest of the questions related to conduciveness of the political climate in Uganda and the incentives available to investors in the tourism sector.

The conclusion of both panels brought the convention to a close. Other dignitaries in attendance included Christine Amongin Aporu, Minister for Teso region, Minister for Fisheries Ruth Nankabirwa, Ugandan MPs, Uganda's High Commissioner to London Joan Rwabyomere, Bishop Luwalira of Namirembe and the director of Northern Uganda Social Action Fund, Dr. Robert Limlim.