

UGANDA EUROPE BUSINESS FORUM

9-10 MARCH 2020

**OPENING REMARKS BY H.E. ATTILIO PACIFICI,
AMBASSADOR OF THE EUROPEAN UNION TO UGANDA**

Right Honourable Prime Minister,
Honourable Ministers of the Government of Uganda,
Business representatives from Uganda and from Europe,
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am honoured to be here today to welcome you to the first ever Uganda-Europe Business Forum. This event marks a milestone in the economic relations between Uganda and the European Union. This illustrates that the European Union aims to “do business” and partner with Uganda differently as compared to the past.

But first of all, I would like to express my deep appreciation and address my warmest thanks to the Minister of Health who has accepted to put in place special arrangements, in accordance with her own guidance to combat the coronavirus, in order to make this event happen. Thank you very much Honourable Minister.

Unfortunately indeed, the unfolding spread worldwide of the coronavirus made it impossible for the European Commissioner or any of her representatives to be here with us today. Uganda is safe while Europe is going through a crisis so we chose take harsh measures including to dramatically reduce our travelling abroad in an effort to help contain the spread of the virus.

Because this forum is about investment but also innovation, digitalisation and green deals, we have been able to receive a recorded statement for the Director General for Development and Cooperation of the European Commission. His name is Koen Doens, you will hear him now, insisting on the EU Africa partnership and the new priorities of the European Commission.

Before we launch the video, let me just mention that the reference to Spotlight in his speech is about the joint visit we had yesterday with H.E. the President to Mbale to celebrate Women International Day and a specific support from the EU, together with the UN, to fight violence against women and girls. The work on gender and youth will be one of the centrepieces in the mandate of the European Commission, and yesterday I had the honour to formally launch the Spotlight Initiative with President Museveni, which signals Uganda's commitment to enhance women's empowerment and end violence against women.

Please kindly play the video.

These were the words of Mr. Koen Doens, the Director General for Development and Cooperation of the European Commission.

Now, concretely, what are we doing together here in Uganda?

Allow me to focus on the topics we all want to address in these two days during which we will be together. Over the last year, the EU Delegation to Uganda partnered with Private Sector Foundation Uganda to work together with the private sector, from both Uganda and Europe, in order to assess the main constraints hampering new, sustainable investments in this country and propose measures and remedies that can improve the investment and business climate. The domestic and European companies have so far identified three main areas of work.

The first one regards **skills and attitude**. Insufficient supply of skilled labour with appropriate competencies, work ethics and attitude constitutes a major challenge for private companies in Uganda. A parallel session of the investment climate session will specifically address this topic and explain the measures proposed to fill this gap.

The second area of work concerns **access to finance**. The high cost of capital in Uganda, along with lengthy and complex procedures when applying for a loan in commercial banks, makes the access to finance challenging for the private

sector. Two parallel sessions and a third one on green financing are planned this afternoon to assess what can be done better.

The third area of work looks at **economic governance and corruption**. Despite several anti-corruption initiatives launched by Government, according to various reports, corruption remains common in Uganda. It is a major obstacle for better investment climate and sustainable private sector growth. You will hear how the private sector can contribute to combat it in another parallel session.

We will then have the opportunity, this afternoon and tomorrow, to assess how to tap into the potential of green deals in Uganda – our Director General in the video referred indeed to the Uganda Green Growth Strategy – and to make a better use of the enablers, the boosters of a sustainable economic growth, for example through increased use of digitalisation tools, Public-Private Partnerships, business incubators or industrial parks.

Additional topics and areas of work can also be identified with your contributions during this Forum and over the next

years, as the process we are building is gaining interest, attention and momentum. This process has been named Sustainable Business for Uganda, SB4U. So far it resulted into the first ever Uganda-EU Roadmap for Improved Investment Climate, available on the website of the Business Forum, which identified the areas of work I just mentioned and the actions aimed at setting the direction to address these constraints together, with the contributions of us all: Europeans, Ugandans, economic operators and, of course, public administrators.

Tomorrow, under the auspices of H.E. the President, the Sustainable Business for Uganda Platform will be officially launched and relevant cooperation programmes signed between the Government of Uganda and the European Union, in order to concretely link the political leadership and financial instruments available.

This is to say that this Forum is not a one shot event but rather that the SB4U initiative will provide a joint platform to discuss and advocate issues of importance for private sector development and investments, and will champion the

implementation of the Roadmap responses and other activities. The SB4U Platform will comprise both Ugandan and EU private and public stakeholders, and be supported by a Secretariat. But I don't want to anticipate too much, I invite you to remain until the end of the Forum if you wish to learn more and maybe even contribute.

Right Honourable Prime Minister, distinguished guest, allow me to conclude by thanking Private Sector Foundation Uganda and the Government of Uganda for having accepted to engage in the preparation of this high-level forum. I look forward to fruitful deliberations during these two days but also all the follow-up that will happen after. Thank you.