A KEY NOTE ADDRESS TO THE SOCIAL WORKERS ON THE DAY OF SOCIAL WORK CELEBRATION CEREMONY AT KUMI UNIVERSITY

Keynote Speaker: Mr. Ochen Paul Enest.

The Chancellor,

The Vice chancellor,

The University Secretary,

The Deans of colleges or Schools represented here,

The Teaching staff,

The social work students, and Students who identify with the social workers

Ladies and Gentlemen.

As we gather here today the 17th.03.2023, Joining the rest of the world in celebrating the International Social Work Month, it is with utmost appreciation that I take the opportunity to speak to you and share with the world this wonderful social work celebration.

I wont forget to appreciate the National Social Work Association of Uganda for the continued pursuit and pushing forward of the social work aspirations and agenda. We being aware of the different societal challenges that confront the individuals, families, groups of people, the communities as well as several systems and governments; it is indeed right that the profession that is directly having answers to most societal concerns and question, should be able to take up its mandate to help the constantly struggling society and its environment.

I re-iterate that;

Social work is an academic discipline and practice-based profession concerned with meeting the basic needs of individuals, families, groups, communities, and society as a whole to enhance their individual and collective well-being

While aware that social work has its roots to the work of Helen Bosanquet and Octavia (Charity Organization Society-COS), The English Poor Law of the 17th Century and the Settlement House Movements- that came up after witnessing the misery of the common people but also the social injustices at the time, they aimed at addressing the plight of the poor

The work of Modern social workers like Mary Ellen Richmond (wrote books on social diagnosis),

William Beveridge (Wrote about social welfare), Dorothea Lynde Dix (began crusades on mental health).

The ultimate goals of social work include the improvement of people's lives, alleviation of biopsychosocial concerns, empowerment of individuals and communities, and the achievement of social justice

Principles of social justice, human rights, collective responsibility and respect for diversities are central to social work

Our profession aims to help people develop their skills and their ability to use their resources and those of the community to resolve problems.

With The theme this year being **"Respecting Diversity through Joint Social Action"- The Role of Social Workers,**

This theme coming from the Peoples Charter for the New Eco-Social World-

This charter was coined from the Global summit held last year (29th June-2nd July, 2022)- The summit discussed on strategies for **'Co-Building a New Eco-Social World: Leaving No One Behind'**

The charter provides for the following values that advocates for inclusiveness:

- Love and care for people and the planet, responsibilities and holistic rights.
- Respect, dignity harmony and social justice
- Diversity, belonging, reciprocity and equity
- And the aspect of UBUNTU - togetherness/solidarity, accountability, and community
- It also highlights solidarity-equality inclusion and collaboration.

We will agree that this theme correctly is trying to help us all to realize that our actions, policies, approaches and focus seems to have been directly or indirectly diverted from the very purpose of God. Where He had planned that we all live in harmony, peace and in love while tending His creation in such a manner that the world would be called a heaven on earth.

Most of our endeavors today is to generate wealth and recognition without due consideration of the effect of such act to our environment, the planet earth as well as the ordinary person let alone the communities we live.

The Role of Social Workers in Promoting Respect of diversity through Joint Social Action.

Some of these questions should be answered if we are to have a new diversity but also respecting our diversities for harmonies living.

1. What can we do together with our local communities, local leaders or existing systems and government bodies?
2. What are those gaps that we can close in enhancing love and care for people and our planet?
3. How can we be tools for positive change in our communities?
4. What is your role in Disaster risk reduction and environmental protection in our communities?
5. How can you be of relevance in enhancing co-existence within ourselves and the other planet?

These questions should be ringing in our heads as we prepare, practice and advance social work as a profession.

Societies have been changed by proactive and forward thinkers, people who are willing to learn, unlearn and relearn but above all try and test what you have learnt

Our determination should be premised on our abilities to think and develop models and ideas together with others that are going through the burden and being able to joint work for social action which will enhance advocacy and responses from the responsible stakeholders.

We can't however be able to achieve that if we remain classroom social workers; we need a paradigm shift in our teaching of social work, we need pragmatism and action led social work practice.

Let's bring those theories, approaches and principles to fruition through;

- Collaboration with local communities and other stakeholders
- Visiting fellow social workers in affected areas or communities
- Solidarity is Key
- Evidence based research- moving away from needs based approaches to Resource based approaches- where we challenge communities to think through their communities and together identify resources that they can tap into for community development.
- Get into media and technological advancement where we can popularize achievements or concerns in our communities to enhance

awareness and attention for action. for example, on the plight of children, the elderly, the women and other social groups.

- Popularize our work through publishing
- Support communities develop knowledge on the existing structures and services that can be tapped for their wellbeing
- Together role out activities that can be adapted by our communities for example;
  - Tree planting
  - Sensitization of communities on forecasted disasters like hunger,
  - Engage communities on their social responsibilities and rights
  - Establish projects as institutions that are social work led and let it be monitored by social workers in different communities
- Desire knowledge more, remain competent in your profession.
- Always collaborate with like minded persons and institutions for knowledge sharing and activity development

As I conclude; it is vital as social workers that we come together and provide a collective voice that will respect our diversities through collective social action.

I wish you all a happy Social Workers Day Celebration.

Thank you.