

UGANDA MARKS INTERNATIONAL YOUTH DAY WITH CALL TO EMBRACE DIGITAL INNOVATION AND THE PARISH DEVELOPMENT MODEL



Uganda joined the rest of the world in commemorating International Youth Day (IYD 2025) with a colorful celebration at the Masindi Golf Course, bringing together young people, government officials, development partners, and community leaders. The event, held under the theme *"Youth Advancing Socio-Economic Transformation through Technology and Partnerships,"* underscored the central role of young people in driving innovation, fostering collaborations, and shaping Uganda's development agenda.

Presiding over the belated National Youth Day celebrations, President Yoweri Kaguta Museveni urged youth to embrace the Parish Development Model (PDM) as a strategic pathway out of poverty. He emphasized that the program, designed to commercialize agriculture, remains key to transforming Uganda's economy.

"The plan is to focus on agriculture and teach people to move from subsistence farming to commercial farming," Museveni said. *"The real economy should be boosted by agriculture, and digital platforms should be used to market and deliver what you are producing."*

The President expressed disappointment that many youth had not taken advantage of the initiative, despite billions of shillings being injected into parishes nationwide. He also

condemned the theft of PDM funds by corrupt officials, urging the youth to demand accountability.

"You have the power to demand for it. That's why we fought and gave you the power to elect leaders who can work for you," he remarked.

During the celebrations, the youth highlighted key challenges hindering their participation in Uganda's socio-economic transformation. Jacob Eyeru, Chairperson of the National Youth Council, called for reduced internet costs, particularly for students and young entrepreneurs, arguing that high costs restrict participation in the digital economy.

"Digital transformation depends on internet reach, but the cost is too high for the youth," Eyeru said.

He further appealed to the President to increase the annual allocation to the National Youth Council from UGX 4 billion to UGX 10 billion to enable effective monitoring of youth programs at all administrative levels. Additionally, he urged the government to allow youth to register their businesses with the Uganda Registration Services Bureau (URSB) at no cost, citing high registration fees and taxes as major obstacles for young entrepreneurs.

The Minister of Gender, Labour, and Social Development, Hon. Betty Amongi, highlighted the increasing number of youth engaging in online trade and digital services. She noted that, according to the 2024 digital study, 43% of youth aged 10 and above use smartphones, while 47% use them for trade-related purposes.

Amongi emphasized the importance of expanding internet access in rural areas and growing towns, arguing that digital inclusion is essential for harnessing youth potential in innovation, entrepreneurship, and economic growth.



The celebrations were graced by top service leaders, whose presence highlighted Uganda's security institutions' dedication to empowering the youth. These included Maj. General David Isimbwa (representing the Chief of Defence Forces), Inspector General of Police Abbas Byakagaba, and Assistant Commissioner General of Prisons Hillary Bisanga, in charge of Human Resource Management (representing the Commissioner General of Prisons).

Other senior prisons leaders in attendance were: ACGP Robert Munanura (in charge of Production and Engineering), SCP Frank Mayanja Baine (in charge of Corporate Affairs and he was an Assistant Director of Programs for the day), SCP Jude Kalisa (In charge of Project Development), SCP Apollo Akankunda (in charge of National, Regional, and International Cooperation), ACP Mary Centenary (Ag. Commandant PATS), and ACP Ronald Godi (Regional Prisons Commander, Mid-Western, Masindi), alongside Officers in Charge of prisons in the region.



To mark the occasion, the Uganda Police Force and the Uganda Prisons Service staged a joint parade, a demonstration of discipline, unity, and national pride. Their combined brass bands added pomp, rhythm, and colour to the event, capturing the spirit of celebration.

The 2025 International Youth Day celebrations reaffirmed the government's commitment to empowering young people by creating platforms for skills development, job creation, and entrepreneurship. With a focus on digital innovation, agribusiness, and industrialization, Uganda aims to harness the creativity, energy, and resilience of its youthful population to drive socio-economic transformation.

Through partnerships with the private sector, civil society, and international organizations, Uganda continues to position its youth as a central force in shaping the country's future.







