

Good morning,

Pleased to host you here at the Residence. Many prominent guests today. (artighetsfraser.)

IDD 2022

Tradition is something dear to me, and perhaps for many of you in the audience today as well. I am pleased to note that a new tradition has been created lately as the Embassy of Sweden and the EU Delegation in Uganda have in recent years jointly organised an annual event highlighting the International Day of Democracy. At these occasions, the opportunities and challenges for Uganda as a democratic country are explored from different angles. Last year's theme was "How can strengthened democracy produce better outcomes for economic growth and inclusion in Uganda?".

This year's theme is "Religious Organizations and Democracy in Uganda". The theme was chosen as religious organizations play a central role in Uganda, yet they are often not given proportionate attention in discussions regarding democracy in Uganda. Today's event is an opportunity to create a more nuanced appreciation and understanding of the intersection between religious organizations and democracy in Uganda.

Drive for democracy

As the aim of today's event is to highlight the International Day of Democracy, I wish to take this opportunity to say a few words about an initiative launched by the Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs, called the Drive for Democracy. The promotion of democracy and human rights has always been a part of the DNA of the Swedish foreign policy but today it has an even more prominent role in our work. Three years ago, Sweden launched the Drive for Democracy – a global and cross-regional initiative aiming to promote and strengthen democracy and the rule of law worldwide. The Drive for Democracy extends across all aspects of Sweden's foreign policy, including security, development and trade policy.

My country is convinced that democracy is the best foundation for a sustainable society. Research shows that a democratic, inclusive and equal society provides opportunities for all to achieve their full potential and participate in the development of society in a way that other systems of government cannot do.

Democracy enables you to make your voice heard and gives you the right to influence and demand accountability. Democracy provides hope and the conditions to shape a common future in a safe and peaceful society. But the structures of democracy must be strong and must be protected.

End segment

Allow me to thank the following persons for responding positively to our invitation to take an active role in the event:

- Dr. Jimmy Spire Ssentongo, the Head of Department of Philosophy, Makerere University,
- Rt. Rev. Constantine Mbonabingi, Executive Secretary, Uganda Joint Christian Council (UJCC)
- Mr. Kitakule Joshua, Secretary General, Interreligious Council of Uganda (IRCU)
- Dr. Saidat Nakitto, Senior Lecturer in Law, Gulu University/Islamic University in Uganda (IUIU)
- Ms Zulaika Nanfuka from the Uganda Muslim Youth Development Forum

I look forward to listening to the keynote address by Dr Spire Ssentongo and the panel discussion.

And I will be particularly interested in hearing about how religious organizations can play a role in promoting accountability by Uganda's elected leaders. Accountability forms the basis for democracy.

(As many of you know, gender equality and women's empowerment is a fundamental cornerstone in Swedish policy-making, it guides our policy-making in Sweden as well as abroad. As today's discussion will touch upon the role of religion, I find comfort in knowing that we in this assembly all agree on that freedom of religion can never justify violations of women's rights or discrimination of women.)

Mr Dag Hammarskjöld was a Swede who held the position as the Secretary-General of the United Nations. He died tragically in a plane crash in 1961. His Christian faith guideing him throughout his life but also posed his largest philosophical challenges. Several of the quotes from his book "Markings" have become famous. One of the lesser-known ones is the following quote which I hope can inspire today's discussions:

"In our era, the road to holiness necessarily passes through the world of action."

Thank you.