



**Opening Remarks Hon Adolf Mwesige, Minister of
Local Government/ CLGF Vice Chairperson**

at the

OPENING CEREMONY,

Commonwealth Resort, Munyonyo 14 MAY 2013

H.E Yoweri Kaguta Museveni President of the Republic of Uganda

H.E Mahinda Rajapaska President of the Republic of Sri Lanka and In-coming
CHOGM Chairperson

H.E Dr. Richard Sezibira Secretary General East African Community

H.E. Tiemo Onorio Vice President of Kiribati

Mayor Lawrence Yule Chairperson CLGF

Mr. Carl Wright Secretary General CLGF

Hon. Ministers

Distinguished leaders

Ladies and Gentlemen

I am delighted that Uganda is hosting this high-level Commonwealth Local Government Conference which is taking place on our continent of Africa for the second time and the first time in the East African Region.

I want to give a special welcome to your Excellencies and all my colleagues who have joined us from all corners of the world i.e. from as far as the Caribbean, Canada, Europe, Asia, Pacific, from Africa and my fellow Ugandans.

I am indeed pleased to welcome you to Uganda, a country where we place great importance on the role of developmental local government and on having a truly participatory and democratic local government system. We look at the local governments as engines of wealth creation and socio-economic transformation.

In 2005 our 54 Commonwealth Heads of Government endorsed the *Aberdeen Principles on Local Democracy and Good Governance* which set out core principles relating to local elections, accountability, transparency, participation, inclusiveness and other key aspects of local government.

Two years later- in 2007, just prior to the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting here in Kampala, CLGF oversaw a study of how Uganda was complying

with the *Aberdeen Principles* and I am delighted to recall that we passed with flying colours. This is a testimony of Government of Uganda's efforts to empower the people in line with our Constitution which states that "power belongs to the people".

I am pleased to see that similar studies have now been undertaken in other Commonwealth countries including our own neighbours Tanzania and Rwanda and that the latest study on Rwanda will be presented to HE President Paul Kagame when he comes to address this conference later this week.

The strength of the Commonwealth and of our CLGF local government family is indeed our shared values and principles. These are something which CLGF is committed to help its members, regardless of their level of development, to achieve- through policy-sharing, knowledge learning, capacity-building and other forms of practical support: our aim is to assist our members achieve our common standards through mutual cooperation and respect, not to coerce them into something they do not want: To build development from the grass roots and to put in place truly developmental local government.

This is why in 2010 Uganda hosted the UN Global Forum on Local Development which placed local government at the centre of the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals.

This is why Uganda is hosting the current CLGF Conference on Developmental Local Government which we hope will equally put local government at the heart of the new post-2015 Development Agenda.

This is why Uganda will continue to work with CLGF, UNDP, UNCDF and our many development partners in seeking to ensure that appropriate sub-national and local targets are set and implemented when it comes to establishing the new sustainable development goals.

We have a great opportunity this week:

An opportunity to learn from each other;

An opportunity to forge new ideas and policies;

Above all, an opportunity to make sure that our great Commonwealth values and principles on local democracy, good governance and development are taken forward for the benefit of the people and communities which we all serve.

I thank our President H.E Yoweri Kaguta Museveni for giving us the leadership which ushered in decentralization in Uganda in 1993. This has made Uganda the cradle of devolution and grassroots democracy in Africa and the developing world.

We thank President Mahinda for finding time out of your busy schedule to come and grace this conference with your presence.

It is now my singular honour and privilege to invite your Excellency President Mahinda to address the conference.