

**REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT- ULS AT THE 10<sup>TH</sup>  
ANNUAL PRO BONO DAY ON DECEMBER 4, 2020 AT  
LAW DEVELOPMENT CENTRE GROUNDS**

- Our Guest of Honour today – The Rt. Hon. Chief Justice of Uganda, Your Lordship Justice Alphonse Owiny-Dollo
- The Chairperson Law Council
- Representatives from the Government of Uganda;
- Members of the Judiciary Present;
- Our partners from the Law Council;
- Representatives from DGF;
- Representatives from IDLO;
- Representatives from JLOS;
- Representatives from UN WOMEN;
- Representatives from IRC;
- Representatives from the Buganda Kingdom;
- Civil Society and Human Rights Organizations;
- Colleagues and members of the noble profession in practice and those practicing in other areas present;
- Our distinguished guests;
- Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good morning to you all.

On behalf of the Executive Council, Management and Secretariat of the Uganda Law Society, I would like to cordially welcome you to the 10<sup>th</sup> Annual Pro Bono day that is premised on the theme, **“The transformative potential of Pro bono work; creating a climate for change”** We are joined by Advocates from the ULS up country clinics areas; Gulu, Jinja, Mbale, Fort portal, Arua, Masindi, Mbarara and Kabale to celebrate this day by providing free legal aid services to the indigent and marginalized persons.

I would like to specially welcome our Guest of Honour today; The Rt. Hon. Chief Justice of Uganda, Your Lordship Justice Alphonse Owiny-Dollo; We are deeply humbled by your honouring of our invitation given the challenging COVID-19 circumstances that are prevailing in our Country at the moment.

Ladies and Gentlemen, today we meet here under very difficult circumstances of the COVID-19 epidemic which has cost our fellow citizens lives and left the others having ever-declining health conditions. As of Wednesday this week, 374 people had tested positive with this disease hence putting our numbers of infected people somewhere above 21,000 cases. The struggle is still tough and CoVID -19 is very real. In the same spirit therefore, I stand here today to commend all those that have graced this event both physically and virtually; your contribution is not taken lightly.

**Robert South** stated that, **“If there be any truer measure of a man than by what he does, it must be by what he gives.”**

I would like to take this opportunity to extend a vote of gratitude to the Democratic Governance Facility who have partnered with us in our initiative of ensuring access to justice for the indigent, vulnerable and marginalised as this event would not have been possible without their enormous financial support. We shall always remain truly indebted and Promise to continue delivering on this mandate.

As we deliberate today, I would like us to ponder on the words of **Chief Justice Tani G. Cantil-Sakaue (October 2014)** where he stated that, **“Pro bono public” which means “for the public good” - is not just in the sense of professional work undertaken voluntarily and without payment, but in the sense of a public service to those who are unable to afford the services of skilled professionals.**

The Pro bono Scheme was established in 2009 by the Uganda Law Society to complement legal aid through mobilizing its membership to provide pro bono services to people with limited means and thus a feasible complimentary strategy to the sustainability of access to justice in Uganda. The scheme is currently operational through our legal Aid clinics in the districts of Kampala, Jinja, Masindi, Gulu, Arua, Fortportal, Mbarara, Kabale, Soroti, Luwero, Moyo and Kotido but also

feeds into the surrounding districts. Our objective is to promote equality in access to justice, improve delivery and standards of legal services through Pro Bono and to interest Advocates into appreciating the provision of Pro Bono services.

The law under Section 15(A) of the Advocates Act as Amended and the Advocates (Pro Bono Services to indigent Persons) Regulations SI No. 39 of 2009] impose a duty on all advocates to an ethical social responsibility duty on all advocates to provide pro-bono services. Ladies and gentlemen, I know Pro Bono work is not highly rewarding financially but with the ever increasing numbers of people suffering injustice, it our responsibility as lawyers to fill in this gap through providing free legal services to the public especially those that have no means to afford lawyers.

Distinguished guests, allow me to commend advocates who have taken on Pro bono files, firstly the numbers have grown to great lengths with **1,680** Advocates provided free legal services to the public at 9 different locations countywide as of last year. I am confident that this number is still growing. Secondly, last year still, ..... pro bono cases were registered and allocated to Pro Bono Advocates. Of these, ..... **cases** were concluded successfully. This shows the tremendous willingness to help the vulnerable by the learned lot. I stand in this similar capacity to inform those willing to take on Pro Bono files, to kindly contact the Pro bono office at the ULS Secretariat.

Allow me to state that the Uganda Law Society, we take cognizance of the recent and ongoing injustices prevailing all around us. We shall therefore act on our mandate to bring to book all those perpetrators of these crimes that defeat the desired goal of justice. We aspire to see free legal services undertaken by advocates delivered in a way that commands respect from our clients, stakeholders and even our critics. In this same spirit I call upon the relevant stakeholders to push for the passing of the Legal Aid Bill into an Act as this will help

push for the cause of justice. As **Dr. Muhammed Abad Alrazak** said that, “**denying access to justice is injustice**” I stand firm in the belief that we’re the bridge between that vulnerable person out there and the relevant justice they need.

To the advocates present today, thank you for rising up to this noble occasion. You not only serve as a living example to the hope that justice deserves, but shine light upon gruesome darkness where injustice prevails; You deserve an unmeasurable vote of thanks. Please help us maintain a vibrant Pro Bono scheme by; -

- Being Faithful to your duty as advocates to the indigents;
- Being Available to the call of justice where required and;
- Being Teachable in gaining new ways of extending justice to all those that deserve it.

I thank our Legal aid Partners the IDLO, DGF, UN WOMEN, JLOS and IRC for their continued support to ULS to enhance access to justice for the vulnerable and marginalized in the different regions. We appreciate the Law Council who have delegated the mantle of delivering Pro Bono services to the country to the ULS.

Lastly, ladies and gentlemen, I therefore encourage all the lawyers to assist the disadvantaged members of the public access justice in order to promote justice in our country. ULS remains truly indebted to DGF, IDLO, JLOS, UN - WOMEN, IRC without whose partnership, provision of Pro Bono and Legal Aid Services would still be a myth.

**“To ensure a Premium and Committed Bar Service that is faithful, Available and Teachable and For The transformative potential of Pro bono work”**  
**For God and My Country**

**PHEONA WALL  
PRESIDENT**