

**SPEECH BY HON SOPHIA SIMBA, MINISTER FOR COMMUNITY
DEVELOPMENT GENDER AND CHILDREN AT THE OPENING OF THE
PARTNERS MEETING FOR THE NATIONAL PLAN OF ACTION TO
PREVENT VAC IN TANZANIA**

SERENA HOTEL, DAR ES SALAAM, 13TH JUNE, 2013

Honorable Ministers,

Honorable Deputy Ministers,

**Honorable Chairperson of Parliamentary Committee for
Community Development,**

Permanent Secretaries and Deputy Permanent Secretaries,

Excellencies Ambassadors,

UN Representatives and Development Partners,

International and Local Civil Society Organizations,

Members of the Multi-Sectoral Task Force,

Members of the Media,

Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen

It is my great honour and pleasure to welcome you all to this meeting today.

Thank you for honouring our invitation and allocating your precious time to

come and share with us your thoughts on how to address a challenge affecting our children in Tanzania. This is not other than “Violence Against Children” which takes place in our society. KARIBUNI SANA.

Distinguished Ministers, Ambassadors and Development Partners,

Our future depends on well growing and nurtured children of today. In African societies, as in many cultures around the world, children are a gift and a means for parents to secure their own future. In traditional African societies, like other parts of the world, children are protected, supported and assisted to realize their full potential within their local settings. According to our 2012 National Census, children make up more than 51% of the Tanzania population. Thus investing in their future growth and wellbeing is a noble course.

Despite children being our precious asset on which the future of our generations anchor, they are vulnerable in terms of inadequate services (eg. health, education, and protection) we provide to them. But on a much more serious note, they are subjected to serious acts of violence which include sexual, physical and emotional violence which impacts negatively on their wellbeing and development.

Distinguished Excellencies,

We all understand that Violence against Children is serious human rights, social and public issue, not only in Tanzania but also in other parts of the world. Violence done to children at home, at school and elsewhere impairs their physical and mental growth. Regardless of whether it is done by a member of the family or an outsider it is a violation of the fundamental right of children to a safe childhood.

Distinguished Ministers, Ambassadors and DPs,

The World Report on “Violence against Children”, prepared by the Secretary General of the United Nations in 2006 showed that globally VAC is a serious concern. This report mapped the global prevalence of violence and showed that the drivers of this abuse are culturally and locally constructed. The UN Secretary General called on member States to investigate and document the magnitude of the problem in their own context. The UN estimates that as many as 7 out of 10 children experience violence in their lifetimes. These statistics are shocking and unacceptable.

Distinguished Delegates,

Tanzania responded to UN Secretary General’s call commissioning the VAC study in 2008. The results of the Tanzania VAC Study were out in 2010 and in

August, 2011, the report was officially launched. The Tanzania VAC study comprehensively examined different types of violence against boys and girls mainly sexual, physical and emotional violence.

Distinguished Delegates,

The overall results of the study were very shocking. The Study indicated that sexual, physical and emotional violence against children is highly prevalent in our country. It revealed that; 3 out of every 10 girls and 1 out of every 7 boys reported at least one experience of sexual violence prior to the age of 18. It also revealed that nearly 6% of girls have been physically forced to have sexual relationship before the age of 18 while almost three-quarters of children, both boys and girls, experienced physical violence prior to age 18 and approximately one-quarter of children, both boys and girls, experienced emotional violence prior to age 18. This situation is not acceptable and that's why we are here to see how we can redress this alarming situation.

Distinguished Delegates,

The Tanzania VAC Report provided the first national estimates of the magnitude and nature of sexual, physical and emotional violence experienced by girls and boys in Tanzania and triggered the high level of political engagement across the multiple sectors that you can see here assembled

today. The Government used the occasion of the launch of the National Survey Report in August 2011 to launch ministerial level statements of commitment across the sectors responsible for addressing the dramatic findings of the Study. Key sectors are - Community Development, Gender and Children, the Police, Justice, Education, Health and Social Welfare, HIV and Aids, Local Government Authorities, Civil Society and the Religious Community. The statements made on the occasion of the launch are in your packs in front of you in the booklet called "Priority Responses from commitments to Action". They formed the backbone of the One Year Plan for VAC which was launched in June 2012, during the implementation of the one year plan (2012), we also developed the 3 Year Plan which launched in April this year which is also found in your pack.

Distinguished Delegates,

The main purpose of our meeting today is to provide you with an overview of the priorities within Three year National Plan of Action to Prevent and Respond to Violence Against Children (2013-2016) and to showcase some of the major achievements we have recorded in addressing Violence against Children since the evidence was laid bare at the launch nearly 2 years ago.

Specifically this meeting hopes to mobilize and strengthen partnerships to implement the plan; building on the strong national commitment and inter-ministerial cooperation showed by partners so far. The meeting will also highlight challenges in addressing VAC in our country. It largely aims to strengthen and enhance synergies between the Government of Tanzania and Partners in implementing the National Action Plan of Action (2013-2016) to address VAC and address emerging challenges during the course of implementing. We have made major progress in moving forward from policy and advocacy on this issue. A strong national platform has been built for strengthening the response to children at risk within our communities both within and across the sectors that my colleagues will highlight their specific contribution sector in their presentations.

Distinguished Excellencies,

The Government has already created a favorable environment for addressing VAC in Tanzania. The Law of the Child Act of 2009 as well as various sectoral policies, guidelines, strategies and laws are in place. These will be outlined by different sectoral presentations during this meeting.

Distinguished Ministers, Ambassadors and DPs,

If I have one particular plea for this meeting; to ask each one of you in this room to join hands with us, in moving the improved legislative and policy framework for protecting children from violence from national level to the communities where it matters most, through strengthened prevention and response services. Important areas of support which need to be strengthened include capacity building for Police Gender and Children's Desks, rolling out of Code of Conduct and referral mechanisms for teachers in schools, scaling up and building capacity of districts child protection systems and supporting the rolling out of the National Child Helpline so that each child at risk can report and be helped out of the problem. We are humbly requesting our partners to join us to improve the survival, development and protection of Tanzanian children.

Distinguished Delegates,

Some of the outlined activities of the three year Plan are funded by the National Budget through annual Medium Term Expenditure Frameworks (MTEF) and non Government key partner's budgets. However, Government alone can not produce the changes needed to address VAC in the country.

The Plan of Action outlines an extensive range of existing and new measures which call for us to work together as partners.

Distinguished participants,

Before concluding, let me sincerely thank all partners who have always been on our side to address challenges facing our children and more specifically VAC. Special thanks to UNICEF for their unwaivering support which we in Government will always cherish.

Let me conclude my remarks by wishing you fruitful deliberations. It is my hope that you will enjoy the presentations of my colleagues; see clearly the contribution of their sectors in addressing VAC and gaps where you can join hands with us in taking this noble task forward.

Having said that, I now wish to declare the meeting of the partners to discuss the Three Year National Plan of Action to prevent and Respond to Violence Against Children in Tanzania officially opened.

Thank you for listening.

ASANTE SANA