**OPENING REMARKS BY THE HON MINISTER OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS/REGIONAL COOPERATION, HON. JOHN MULIMBA ON THE OCCASION OF THE 8TH SESSION OF THE DRC-UGANDA JOINT PERMANENT COMMISSION (JPC), KINSHASA 12TH OCTOBER 2023.**

**Your Excellency, Hon. MBUSA NYAMWISI, Minister of Regional Integration,**

**Your Excellences the Ambassadors,**

**Senior Officials from our respective Countries**

**Delegations from Uganda and the Democratic Republic of Congo,**

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

I wish to express our sincere appreciation to you, Excellency, for the warm reception and hospitality extended to our delegation since our arrival in Kinshasa.

Allow me convey fraternal greetings and wishes from HE President Yoweri Museveni, to his dear Brother HE President Felix Antoine Tshilombo Tshisekedi for the excellent work done and stewardship during his tenure as chair of the AU and the Regional Oversight Mechanism of the ICGLR for 2022-2023.

Although we have not met for a while under the auspices of the JPC, we have continued to engage each other under bilateral and multilateral platforms. My delegation firmly believes that this Eighth Session of the DRC-Uganda JPC will consolidate the cordial and fraternal relations between our countries.

**Your Excellency,**

I wish to also extend our sincere appreciation to you and the Government of the Democratic Republic of Congo for convening this 8th Session of the DRC-Uganda JPC.  We are here to participate at a gathering of two countries whose relations are strong, based on historic bonds and a shared vision of peace and prosperity. We acknowledge the longstanding fraternal ties, good neighborliness, a common ancestry, cultural and linguistic heritage that is rooted in the common Pan African virtues of Ubuntu.

**Your Excellency**,

The Joint Permanent Commission offers us a platform for continued engagements, and it is within this process that we are in better position to devise solutions to address common challenges faced by our people across the common border and within our countries. We absolutely need to consolidate efforts in strengthening our bilateral relations and I wish to commend the Government of DRC for the cooperation extended to Uganda in the peace and security sector, including Operation Shujja.

It is within the same vein that we commend the Government and People of the Democratic Republic of Congo for their cooperation and facilitation of the participation and deployment of the Ugandan contingent in march 2023 to join the East African community (EAC) Regional Force for stabilization efforts and ensuring the restoration of meaningful peace and security in the region.

**Your Excellency,**

The 8th DRC-Uganda JPC is taking place at a time when we are rebuilding and refocusing our economies following the Covid19 pandemic and natural disasters that have plagued our region in the recent past.  Through our bilateral cooperation, we are well placed to rebuild our national economies and contribute to the economic recovery of our region and the continent. It is essential that mutually beneficial economic ties and investment flows grow between our two countries as these are the foundations for intra-regional trade and development.

It is also important to accord sufficient support to regional integration processes as this would in turn foster dialogue, and mutual understanding among African Countries by promoting economic inter-dependence and shared benefits. This could also contribute to peace building efforts and help prevent conflicts. Furthermore, intra-regional trade promotes the sharing of knowledge, expertise and technology among Countries, cooperation in the areas of agriculture, healthcare, education, and manufacturing can accelerate innovation, improve productivity, and enhances competitiveness.

**Your Excellency,**

Our interactions and consultations during this JPC provides an opportunity to take stock of what has been done, emerging issues and forge new areas of cooperation. I am pleased note that there are 10 Memoranda of Understanding that exist between our two countries in various fields of cooperation.  It is my hope that the reports we will receive in our deliberations will provide updates on the status of the pending Agreements and MOUs, with a view of concluding them for signature.

It is also very important that we strengthen the review and monitoring mechanism of the implementation of the JPC decisions and outcomes so that we don’t lose track and momentum of implementing agreed decisions. It is my sincere belief that by working together, we can cause positive change in the prosperity and security of our peoples.

**Your Excellency,**

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

I wish you all, fruitful deliberations.