



Reparations in Uganda: Launching the discussion

On Feb.13-14, 2012, the Uganda Human Rights Commission (UHRC) in collaboration with the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and UN Women hosted a conference entitled: ***Thematic Conference on the Right to Remedy and Reparations of the Conflict in Northern Uganda***. The conference aimed to discuss key considerations for reparations policy and programming in Uganda.

The conference centered around the launch of two institutional reports on the issue of reparations. The first report “The Dust has not yet Settled” features the views of victims on the right to remedy and reparation for conflict-related crimes, published by Uganda Human Rights Commission, a JLOS member, and the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. The second report “Reparations, Development and Gender” was launched by UN Women and discusses the links between reparations and development in post-conflict settings. Both reports place special attention on the experiences of women, the harms committed and the differentiated impact of violence on women and girls.

A wide representation of JLOS member institutions were present at the conference as well as honorable members of Parliament and the Judiciary, the Office of the Prime Minister, local government representatives, civil society organizations, victims’ associations, and members of the international community.

The Chair of the JLOS Transitional Justice Working Group (TJWG) opened the conference with a keynote address. The TJWG is embarking on the task of developing a national transitional justice policy that seeks to be holistic and victim-centered. It will provide a framework on accountability and reconciliation, in the spirit of the Juba Agreements, and will outline the different mechanisms that will be adopted to achieve the overall goals. This would include formal justice and alternative justice mechanisms to achieving transitional justice after conflict. Various forms of reparations are called for in the Juba Agreements, it is also a key feature of Uganda’s international law obligations, and it is firmly rooted in basic principles of justice.

The Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Internal Affairs delivered remarks on the presentation of the UN reports; and the Deputy Attorney General and the State Minister for Justice and Constitutional Affairs was also represented. The presentations highlighted the provisions in the Juba Agreement on the delivery of reparations and recognized that the issue of reparations must be integrated into the larger transitional justice policy process being undertaken at present.

A key feature of the Juba Agreement on Accountability and Reconciliation is the aspect of victim-centeredness. On this, a special panel was organized on victim participation in the development and design of reparations programs/policies, which highlighted victims' views and voices on reparations and emphasized their role as key stakeholders in the process.

A number of issues were deliberated on during the conference, including identification of adequate forms of reparations for conflict-related crimes. Emphasis was on symbolic forms and rehabilitation of victims, as well as assistance with livelihoods and economic empowerment of victims. Further, consideration was given to identification of an appropriate mechanism for delivery of reparations as well as how reparations should be implemented alongside other transitional justice mechanisms. The issue of community-driven reparations was also discussed, underlining the importance of a consultative and participatory policy development and implementation process.

The conference served to launch a public and interactive discussion on reparations for victims of mass violations. The TJWG will continue that discussion by taking up the issue as part of its task to develop the national policy on transitional justice.

Detailed findings of the conference will be available at a later date. The UN Women report can be accessed: www.unwomen.org

Published: February 17, 2012 | www.jlos.go.ug