

Talking points for the official opening of the symposium at the Jinja Nile Resort on Thursday, 10 July, by HE Edward Ssekandi, Vice President of the Republic of Uganda

Your Excellencies, Honourable Ministers, Ladies and Gentlemen,

1. I am delighted to be opening this important symposium today, held to commemorate the centenary of the birth of Dr Norman Borlaug.
2. Let me say that I am also extremely proud that Uganda has been chosen to host this auspicious occasion. It is a recognition of the importance that Uganda gives to agriculture – and, indeed, a mark of the affection that Dr Borlaug had for this country.
3. The Sasakawa Africa Association, of which he was President, first started operations in Uganda in 1996. Dr Borlaug could see for himself the immense potential in this country for agricultural production. He could see, too, the possibilities for creating a green revolution in Uganda. He recognised the energy and resourcefulness of Uganda's small-scale farmers – not least Uganda's women farmers.
4. At this point, I should like to recognise the founders of the Sasakawa Africa Association back in 1986 – Dr Borlaug, President Jimmy Carter and Ryoichi Sasakawa. President Carter has filmed a special message for this symposium and the President and Chief Executive of the Carter Centre, Dr John Hardman, is with us today.
5. I should also like to pay a special tribute to Mr Yohei Sasakawa, Ryoichi Sasakawa's son. Welcome to Uganda, Mr Sasakawa. We are well aware of the role you played when the Sasakawa Africa Association was first formed. We know, too, that The Nippon Foundation, of which you are the Chairman, has funded your operations in Africa since their inception. This is a remarkable record for a donor agency. Africa and Uganda owe you a great debt of gratitude.
6. I must recognise, too, the former President of Benin – President Soglo – who has visited Uganda for these celebrations. He is a director of the Sasakawa Africa Association and has great empathy with Africa's farming communities. He did much, when President of Benin, to stimulate agricultural growth in his country.
7. Finally, I welcome to this meeting a most distinguished Ugandan, Her Excellency Tumusiime Rhoda Peace, the African Union's Commissioner of Rural Economy and Agriculture. It is highly appropriate, as we mark the centenary of the birth of Dr Borlaug, that our AU Commissioner is presiding over 2014 as 'the year of agriculture and food security in Africa'. Dr Borlaug would have been very proud of this.
8. Of course much has changed in African agriculture since Sasakawa first started its work. In Uganda, we see the Sasakawa Africa Association as a valued partner, working in 20 of our districts. Within two years, the Sasakawa Africa Association will be reaching out to 100,000 of our small-scale farmers of whom 35 percent will be women.
9. It is the policy of this government to promote agriculture – as an opportunity, not least for our young people, in providing employment and training. I am therefore pleased to see the emphasis given during these celebrations to innovative ideas to attract the interest of our youth with essay writing, debating, music, dance and drama competitions. I therefore

22 August 2014

commend the Local Organising Committee, chaired by Hon Victoria Sekitoleko – herself a former Minister of Agriculture – for working to achieve such excellent and imaginative results.

Let me therefore commend these Borlaug anniversary celebrations. We owe much to his vision – and, in turn, we honour him for his historic work in Uganda and in Africa.

- Ends -