

## **Remarks by the Permanent Secretary / Solicitor General at the opening of Round Table and coordination meeting on Mediation Process.**

**Due to take place on 20/2/2017 at Lemigo Hotel:**

- Your Excellencies, Ambassadors
- Representatives of our Development Partners in Mediation
- Representatives of Government institutions
- Representatives of EU delegation and Swedish Embassy
- Distinguished guests,
- Ladies and Gentlemen;

It is a great pleasure and honor to be here with you today. I want to take this opportunity to thank you, for honoring our invitation by attending this round table coordination meeting despite your busy agenda. This shows the importance you have accorded to our journey to provide an easy, accessible and affordable access to justice for all.

The organisation of a round table like this one is in line with our aim of bringing all actors supporting and promoting the Access to Justice program in general and the Abunzi in mediation process in particular, for the purpose of ensuring collaboration, coordination and harmonization of the work carried out by all of us. This is also an opportunity to know each other, to interact and sharing expertise and experiences.

This round table has two main objectives: First and foremost, it is a forum that brings together various stakeholders of MINIJUST working closely in Access to Justice to examine jointly how to improve the coordination process among stakeholders, to measure the progress in streamlining collaboration in order to improve mediation process: The Second objective is a dialogue between MINIJUST and its partners: Local government, non-governmental organizations, Local NGOs and Development Partners to share information and experience on the role

of stakeholders working in Access to Justice. I believe it is going to be a fruitful stakeholder's joint dialogue.

At the policy level, streamlining the access to justice to all requires a number of actions including putting in place policies, laws and the necessary structure, and a close collaboration with all the stakeholders in Access to Justice. It is in this regard that two policies related to Justice have been put in place in 2014: the legal aid policy and the Justice for children policy.

It is in this regards that the Law n° 37/2016 of 08/09/2016 determining organization, jurisdiction, competence and functioning of Abunzi committee is in place. Especially on Abunzi initially our mediation system included criminal cases but, has been removed from their competence. The value of subject matter has been reduced from five million to three million. Also in strengthening mediation process and coordination, since 2014, the Ministry of Justice has had different meetings with DPs working closely in Access to Justice to discuss on our collaboration and the coordination. Those meetings include the present round table and coordination meetings conducted twice every year.

It is an imperative to highlight the work of DPs for the support and promotion of mediation process to improve Access to Justice in capacity building (training and coaching), supply of materials, supporting and participating in legal aid weeks in order to ensure quality, accessible and affordable justice and in developing necessary tools for Abunzi like training manuals and Abunzi guide.

The Ministry of Justice is proud to announce that the success of Abunzi achievements has been reached with your support and we can celebrate together the success. As an illustration let me give some statistics of Abunzi achievements: In 2016/17, the first two quarter only, over 27976 cases Abunzi fully mediated 25502 cases (equivalent to 91,2%,)

while 542 continued to formal courts (equivalent to 1,9%) and 1932 (equivalent to 6,9%) are still pending totalling on average of 100,0%.

In addition to Abunzi as Alternative Dispute Resolution, other mediation mechanisms are available and include: Inteko y'Abaturage, Umugoroba w'ababyeyi, KIAC.

This success is also evidenced by different studies and survey conducted by different organisations. If we take one example, the RGB 2016 citizen report card shows that the level of satisfaction of the population vis a vis the performance of Abunzi is at 80%, the level of trust is on 86.9% and 12.7% respondents consider that we still have a skills gap. It means that more trainings and coaching are necessary. Had it not been your efforts and good collaboration we wouldn't have realized all the above mentioned achievements alone.

It is our duty to express our sincere appreciation for your support, being it direct or indirect.

**Dear participants,**

As we are gathering here today in this roundtable coordination meeting, let us reflect back and see where we came from, where we are now and where we want to go, in order to continue this journey. Therefore, I would like to remind of the following;

First and foremost, in order to move together we need to avoid any attitude which could undermine our effort either at the institutional or at the policy level, like providing wrong or inaccurate information just because it will convince more donors;

Secondly, we signed MoU for better collaboration and coordination, it should be used as a guiding principle to move forward to keep the partnership; putting all these efforts together we will reach far beyond where we are today as so to strengthen Mediation process,

Thirdly, it is always important to coordinate and inform on planned activities with Abunzi, in order to share the minimum means available and able to reach a maximum results by avoiding duplications. Also, we should always remember that Abunzi are mediating as volunteers. Therefore we should always be sure that when we call them for meetings and trainings this would not have a negative impact on their other normal activities, and this is why coordination and communication is always important.

**Ladies and Gentlemen**, as I am concluding, I want to give a special thanks to RISD for having accepted to organize this wonderful round table and coordination meeting. I wish also to thank you once again for attending this meeting on mediation process. I believe that the discussions we are going to engage in will contribute much to this process; we pledge that we shall remain engaged for the benefit of the citizens and the Country in as access to justice is concerned. It is in this regard that, I declare this meeting officially open.

**Thank you for your kind attention.**