

REPUBULIKA Y'U RWANDA



MINISITERI Y'UBUTABERA P.O. BOX 160 KIGALI

- Your Excellencies, Ambassadors and Heads of Diplomatic missions in Rwanda;
- Your Excellency, ONE UN Resident Coordinator;
- Representatives of Government institutions;
- Development Partners of the Justice Sector;
- Ladies and Gentlemen;

Good morning.

Allow me to take this opportunity to thank you, for honoring our invitation and attending this coordination meeting despite your busy agenda. This shows the value you give to partnering with us in our journey towards access to justice for all.

This meeting is in line with our aim of bringing together all actors supporting Abunzi and MAJ for the purpose of ensuring collaboration, coordination and harmonization specifically for all activities relating to the smooth functioning of Abunzi. As we close the financial year 2015/16, let us take stock of the achievements that we made together: All mediation committee members were given an induction course, trained on some relevant laws, coaching, monitoring and evaluation sessions were conducted and committees were provided with requisite materials and uniforms (scuffs). The usual incentives and enablers, specifically health insurance to every Committee member and 4 of his /her family members, communication facility to each person (mobile telephones which allow them to communicate free of charge between them and MAJ staff) were provided. In addition, the

tender process for transport facilitation is on course. The Ministry staff in charge of providing legal advice and coaching to Abunzi at district level have been trained in mediation skills, judgment execution and legal practice.

These efforts in support to Abunzi and MAJ produced remarkable results. In 2015/2016 Abunzi received 38,100 cases fully mediated 29,902 (equivalent to 78,5%) while 574 equivalent to 1.5 % continued to formal courts. The disputes addressed to Abunzi indicate that 75.6% were civil matters, while 24.4% were criminal matters. The 2015 satisfaction survey conducted by the Rwanda Governance Board shows that the level of satisfaction of the population with the performance of Abunzi stood at 79.0%.

Access to justice comprises, also, of legal aid. Results of the Legal Aid week conducted in May 2016 in collaboration with civil society organizations providing legal aid services, show that 4,031 judgments were executed, 152 minors and vulnerable persons were assisted and represented before courts; legal advice on a variety of legal issues provided at the Sector level. Public awareness on some most used laws was raised. The achievements in legal aid for a whole year are certainly much more impressive.

It is thanks to collective effort and collaboration that we have realized the above mentioned achievements. Permit me to express sincere appreciation for the good job that is being done directly or indirectly to ensure access to Justice for all.

Dear participants,

Permit me to say that Rwanda now has a different kind of citizen due to our efforts and those of other institutions. Our citizens now know and pursue their rights, denounce corruption, resist injustice, make informed electoral choices, demand accountability of their leaders, are informed participants in their own governance.

Out of the 15 recommendations made at the last coordination meeting in September 2015, 12 were fully implemented while 3 have not been yet implemented. They are planned for the next financial year that starts this Friday.

Pursuant to the objective to harmonize the form and substance of what is delivered to Abunzi and MAJ, we remember that, at the last coordination meeting six modules on Abunzi capacity building were approved and are already in use. In order to continue that harmonization, other tools have been developed and may I request that we validate them so they get in use. These new tools include:

1. M&E tools to be used in monitoring and evaluation of « *Abunzi* » activities
2. Abunzi handbook to be used during mediation;
3. Abunzi Committee Management Manual and,
4. Abunzi capacity building strategy.

The Ministry also wishes to harmonize transport facilitation that is given to Abunzi during training sessions and meetings, and we propose it to be set at a uniform daily rate depending on whether an event takes place within or outside a particular Sector. For Ministry Staff (MAJ) invited for such events, the inviting party will abide by regulations governing mission fees for civil servants.

I am aware that you know that the Abunzi law is under revision in Parliament. The main reasons of that revision are to change the organic law into an ordinary law in order to comply with the Constitution, to remove criminal matters from Abunzi jurisdiction, consolidate 2010 and 2015 Abunzi laws and to clarify some provisions which are not precise. All of us should feel free to make contributions to the process so we come out of a better law. I was told that some of us noticed the high level of engagement of the President of the Republic over this Law.

Let me say that the President is elected by the citizens, he has their mandate and has a duty to engage with them, as he does very often, listen to them on issues that affect them and speak up for them. I find this very much within his mandate.

Ladies and Gentlemen, as I conclude, I wish to thank all of you, Development Partners, Civil Society, Media and our Staff for attending this coordination meeting. Our

contribution will certainly take the functioning of Abunzi to another level. Let us remain engaged for the benefit of the citizens.

Thank you for your kind attention.