

**Address to the Special Sitting of the Court of Appeal on 14.05.2026 by
Fredrick Egonda-Ntende, Justice of Appeal**

I thank the Almighty, our Lord and God, who is the alpha and omega for all his blessings on us all and who has brought this day to come. For all the achievements and successes that this journey has witnessed I give glory to the Almighty. And where I have fallen short along the way I crave forgiveness.

I thank my parents, **Yonasani and Margaret Kiwudhu**, *in absentia*, who sacrificed so much that I can have the opportunities that I have had in this life. I thank the Organisers of this event, my brothers and sisters on this court, your worships, and all other members of staff of the Judiciary who have in some way been part of this journey. I thank the members of the bar and this court who have spoken today for their kind words.

I thank my family and friends who have been part of this journey and have supported me along the way in so many ways. Time does not allow me to single out each one of you. I will though single out two. Firstly, Dr John Zabasajja, my childhood friend, and my deputy, as head prefect of Busoga College Mwiri, who has travelled all the way from California, US to attend this event. He has travelled the most distance among all of us to attend this event. Thank you for being here.

Secondly, I thank my wife, **Margaret**, for the wonderful support and heavy lifting that she has done on this journey. When I received an offer of being appointed a judge of the High Court, in mid-1991, I discussed the matter with her. My inclination was to decline the offer, on account of the very poor pay at the time, which meant that I had to suffer a cut in income from a successful and growing practice of law. She encouraged me to accept, despite the immediate consequences, agreeing that she will counter the adverse effects. Lo and behold on accepting the offer she answered an advert from UNICEF and a tolerable job offer was made to her. She accepted and henceforth became the provider in the family! Margaret introduced me to computer use in the early nineties. Of course, not just me but all members of our family, were too, introduced to computer use when she bought a used 386 or 486 computer and established it at home. As a result of this introduction, I too, became a resource in the Judiciary and an advocate for the adoption of information and communication technology.

I would like to thank 2 special friends in the world wide free access to the law fraternity, **Kerry Anderson** and **Mariya Badeva**, initially of Saflii, and later on Africalii, whose invaluable and unwavering support, technical, logistical and financial, gave birth to the **Uganda Legal Information Institute (Ulii)**, and later on to the **Seychelles Legal Information Institute (Seylii)**, that filled a

void and transformed access to primary legal materials, the tool kit, for the rule of law and administration of justice. Africalii continues to this day to support Ulii, that has kept Ulii as the premier provider of free access to the law of and in Uganda.

I thank my senior brothers and sisters that I found on the bench, and those who joined me along the way, for their support to me as I started and continued this journey, now drawing to the end. One particularly introduced me to an understanding of how the **Team Judiciary**, if I can use a sports analogy, operated. A couple of times I recall, when a colleague or two were elevated, he would chat with me and say, **‘I talked to the Chief and he told me he did not want to weaken the High Court. So he had left me in position.’** As a result, I understood at the beginning of my tenure that as a member of Team Judiciary, you played the position assigned to you. It was up to the Team Manager, and at times there were more than one, by nature of the constitutional architecture of the Judiciary, to assign you a position. From early on I knew that my role was to play the assigned position and that was all that mattered. I have been content.

In soccer, a team member could be rested for one or several matches or simply part of the match. At times he could be loaned to another club or sold outright depending on the interests of the team and, I suppose, the team member. I am glad that during my journey the team managers loaned me out to other teams, elsewhere, allowing me to broaden my experience, professional development and satisfaction. I thank the team managers of the Team Judiciary who in light of their reading of my strengths and weaknesses on the Team led me to claim the trophy for the longest serving High Court Judge in recent memory. Unfortunately for the Court of Appeal one of my brothers has beaten me to this coveted prize. However, I come a close second as of today.

I would like to thank the giants of our time on whose shoulders, I and others, have been able to stand to serve the people of this country and beyond. I will bring out only 2, given the time constraints. Talking of Justice Kityo, Chief Justice Wambuzi stated,

‘While at Buganda Road Court, he featured prominently as the Chief Magistrate, who refused to abide by Idi Amin’s verbal orders to imprison mini skirt—wearing women without the option of fine which was permitted by law. He said rather undiplomatically, “That will remain idle talk until a law is made to that effect.” **For those who knew Amin, this refusal was a heroic stand which could have cost him his life.** He survived Amin’s wrath. I commend Mr Godrey Lule, the then Minister of Justice and Attorney General who stood by the late Judge in the

latter's defence of the independence of the Judiciary and the rule of law.¹ (*Emphasis is mine.*)

This was in 1973. The charge was “**being idle and disorderly**”. Chief Magistrate Kityo found it to be ‘**idle talk**’ and did not hesitate to say so. **If it was within my power, I would rename Buganda Road Court house the Kityo Court House**’ in honour of this hero and titan of our time. It is Justice Kityo, as a senior colleague, who, early on in my career, schooled me about how the Team Judiciary operated that I referred to earlier on in these remarks.

The other titan featured in this story and has not put to print his own role is **Chief Justice Wambuzi**, probably due to his modesty and humility. When alerted by Mr Lule of Amin's anger at Chief Magistrate Kityo, he asked Mr Lule to set up a meeting with General Amin. He had not become Field Marshall by then I suppose. Mr Lule obliged. At that meeting Chief Justice Wambuzi schooled Amin about the concept of separation of powers in Government in a language that Amin could comprehend. He explained to him that Amin was both the Executive and the Legislature. He thus held two thirds of the powers of Government. The Judiciary, which was the other part, was headed by Chief Justice. It was up to the Chief Justice to discipline Kityo, if he erred, and not Amin. He also advised Amin that if he wanted women imprisoned for wearing miniskirts, he had to make a law to that effect. This was subsequently done.

In my view, in the foregoing story, it is not only Justice Kityo who emerges as a giant and hero. So does Chief Justice Wambuzi who took on the dangerous role of explaining to Amin that he was wrong regarding Chief Magistrate Kityo and should leave him alone. The wonder is that Amin did. **If it were in my power I would name the Supreme Court Tower, the S. W. W. Wambuzi Tower in honour of his heroic defence of the rule of law and independence of the Judiciary for over 3 decades.** For my part I pay tribute to these 2 giants for providing shoulders upon which, I and others, have stood on to serve the people of Uganda and elsewhere. Indeed the present generation of all judicial officers, whatever the level, or position, need look no further for worthy and inspiring examples to emulate.

Multiple weeks ago, I read and viewed in both print and broadcast media the story of a couple of young children mourning and burying their mother who had passed on as a result of a lost battle with cancer. The children were grieving and burying their mother alone without their surviving parent, a father held on some minor, obscure and yet unproven charge in a subordinate court. The charge did not involve loss of or threat to life, limb, property or reputation. The father was

¹ Administration of Justice and Delivery of Justice in Uganda by Chief Justice Wambuzi, Page 498.

held in pretrial custody, denied bail, long past the constitutionally permitted period for denial of liberty. What society treats its children like this, without mentioning the persons caught up in such a criminal justice system? **Team Judiciary where are your Kityos and Wambuzis at this hour?**

To the Team Judiciary and indeed all of us present this morning, I leave the following words of St. Paul,

‘Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labour in the Lord is not in vain.’²

‘Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.’³

Thank you all for coming today. I thank you for listening to me. God bless you all.

² 1 Corinthians 15:58

³ Phillipians 4:8