

The Tooro Kingdom “I Would Want to See”

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Your Majesty, King of Tooro, Esteemed Cabinet Members, Distinguished Guests,

Your Majesty, it is with profound humility and immense honour that I stand before you today, addressing this esteemed gathering of the Chosen Leaders (Wise men and Women) whose decisions will shape the destiny of our beloved Tooro Kingdom. Allow me your Majesty to express my gratitude for this privilege to share my thoughts on the vision for a Kingdom that honors its past, addresses its present challenges, and boldly embraces the future.

Let us take a moment to dream together: **What will the Tooro Kingdom of fifty years from today look like?** Will it be a hub of prosperity, a beacon of innovation, and a cherished homeland of happy, well-resourced people with high quality of life and a world benchmark of human progression? The answer to these questions lays in the choices we make today. We are gathered here as a divine appointment of time not merely to reflect but to chart a **bold and visionary path forward** for our beloved Kingdom not to merely answer the call of duty but to the enshrine the core values of this generation into the future generations, for which we shall leave a legacy inscribed in land marks and into the hearts of men and women of this land. Let me quote one of the most inspiration leaders of our generation:

“Life consists of a number of opportunities and great opportunities don’t come knocking on people’s doors. Whoever wants such opportunities must grab them when they arise, for his people and for himself. We have to be powerful, strong-willed, determined and willing to grasp such opportunities, so that we don’t have to scavenge the leftovers of lions” --- His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum

Key roles of Tooro Kingdom

Your Majesty, in order to draw a logical strategic direction for Tooro Kingdom, it is important to reflect on the key roles of cultural institutions as enshrined in the laws of Uganda. Cultural institutions including Tooro kingdom are expected to play the following critical roles in our Republic;

1. **Cultural Preservation:** Our cultural institutions safeguard our traditional practices, preserve our local languages, and values among others. For example, the Buganda Kingdom promotes the Luganda language and maintains traditions such as the Kabaka's

Birthday Run and in Tooro host the Empango celebrations which uphold cultural pride among others.

2. **Economic Contribution:** Kingdoms contribute to economic development through tourism promotion, local enterprise promotion, and resource mobilization. The cultural sites and festivities associated with kingdoms, like the royal tombs in Buganda and Tooro attract tourists and generate revenue.
3. **Social Development:** Kingdoms often initiate programs to address issues such as health, education, and poverty. For instance, the Buganda Kingdom has partnered with organizations to fight fistula, while Tooro promotes girl-child education and clean water projects.
4. **Leadership and Guidance:** Cultural leaders and their cabinets provide moral leadership and act as custodians of customary laws. They foster unity within their communities and offer guidance in matters affecting the kingdom's cultural and social identity.
5. **Promoting Unity:** Kingdoms unite people within their cultural jurisdiction, transcending political divides. Ceremonial occasions, such as royal coronations or traditional marriages, bring communities together in celebration. It is worth noting that with the raising of intermarriages and the local of national values, this role has an elevated prominence in our modern Tooro Kingdom
6. **Conflict Resolution:** Traditional leaders mediate disputes within their communities, offering resolutions rooted in customary practices. This role complements Uganda's formal judicial systems, particularly in rural areas.
7. **Advocacy and Representation:** Kingdoms advocate for their subjects' interests at various levels representing them at both local and national levels on issues of development, land rights, or cultural identity among others.
8. **Environmental Stewardship:** Cultural institutions such as Tooro Kingdom are active in conserving natural resources and promoting sustainability, particularly within regions like the Rwenzori Mountains and Semuliki National Park.

Key Challenges Facing Tooro Kingdom

Your Majesty, before we can discuss key areas of action which the honorable members of the cabinet can reflect on, it is crucial to acknowledge the challenges that hinder the Kingdom's development. These are issues must be confronted with strategic thinking and collective action from all stakeholder in Tooro Kingdom. Your Majesty, allow me highlight some of the key challenges that demand our urgent attention:

1. **Low Agricultural Productivity and Product Innovations:** Despite agriculture being the backbone of Tooro's economy, agriculture production remains largely at subsistence level, with minimal mechanization and limited access to modern technologies and low application of soil management practices like manure and fertilizers. This has constrained the transformation of the household income to desire levels. Your Majesty, today Uganda is no-longer a food basket of the region, we 're now importing Onions, Carrots, Sweet Pepper, Rice etc. from Tanzania and Kenya because of our collective

failure to transform our agricultural sector. For Tooro Kingdom, our cherished cash crop Tea which has been a cornerstone of the economy continue to suffer from low investment in research and product innovations loss of market value.

2. **Youth Unemployment:** A growing youthful population faces limited opportunities for employment and entrepreneurship. Nearly over 70% of the population in Uganda is below 30 years and access to formal employment is lower, private sector cannot grow jobs faster enough to address needs of 1.7m babies born every year. Tooro has 3.38M people as of 2024 census majority of which are youth.
3. **Underdeveloped Tourism Industry:** Tooro's immense potential as a tourism destination remains untapped due to poor infrastructure, low product innovation, in adequate human resources, and limited marketing among others. Tooro is depending on gifted by nature tourism model which has long been overtaken by modernity. The kingdom **Lacks iconic structural development, theme parks, world class restaurant and café, No night economy etc. Most buildings in the city are regions that can be classified as NEED FOR SPACE.** The globally industry is USD 11.39 trillion in 2023 and is predicted to grow to around USD 18.44 trillion by 2032. UAE has the world's fastest growing tourism industry contributing USD 48 billion dollars in 2023 and 12% of the GDP with a population of just 10M people. Just remember Uganda's GDP is projected at USD 50 billion, with a population of 45.6m. US Is making USD 240 billion, but France is making 73 billion and # most visited country with 100million visitors. Tourism in Uganda contributes about USD 1.4 billion and about 5.7% to GDP
4. **Limited Access to Education and Skills Development:** Many children and young adults lack access to quality education and vocational training. Most good schools are outside Tooro Kingdom. Lack of relevant TVETs per sub-country to foster skills development and innovations. Iconic schools are a shadow of their past glory days. We have one Public university (MMU) and a few TVETS including Kicwamba.
5. **Inadequate public Infrastructure:** Poor roads (nearly 90% of roads in the Kingdom are in poor state), lack of electricity in rural areas (18%), and limited communication networks impede economic growth and access to services. It takes you 6hrs to travel from Kampala to Fort portal covering a distance of 295Km, compare that with Casablanca and Marrakech which takes 2.5hrs to cover 240km.
6. **Low Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), Resource Mobilization and Funding Gaps:** The kingdom has one of the lowest shares of FDI in the country compared to Buganda and Bunyoro. The Kingdom struggles to secure the financing needed to implement transformative initiatives, besides the lack of grass root structures for implementing the kingdom programmes.
7. **Healthcare Challenges:** Limited access to quality healthcare services leaves many people in Tooro vulnerable to treatable diseases. Cases which could easily be managed within Tooro are referred to Kampala rising the costs of access to quality healthcare services. These services are not only critical for citizens of Tooro but relevant for supporting the vibrant tourism industry.
8. **Environmental Degradation:** Deforestation, soil erosion, and depletion of natural resources threaten the Kingdom's sustainability. The drop-in crop yields resulting into

low house hold income, hence poor quality of life. A classic example is maize growing in Rwaibale, in Kyenjojo District.

9. **Effective National Representation:** While the NRM government has been gracious in many areas for social economic development of Tooro Kingdom including the transformation of Mountains of the Moon University (MMU) into a public institution, there is need to strengthen our strategic advocacy with central government to increase strategic investment in the Kingdom so as to spar social and economic transformation of the kingdom. Critical public infrastructure like roads especially the main gateway to the kingdom (Fort Portal Kampala Road) needs to be upgraded and maintained in world class motorable conditions to shorten the time between the capital city and the tourism city. For example, what is our collective bargaining position for engagement with central government? Do we have a collective position paper?

These challenges, though daunting, present an opportunity for the Kingdom to unite in purpose and implement innovative solutions.

Ten Areas of Action for Transformative Development of Tooro Kingdom

Your Majesty in order to address these challenges and build the Tooro Kingdom we envision, I propose the following strategic areas of action.

1) Revitalizing Cultural Heritage (Mobilize, engage and Empower The people of Tooro)

- **Action:** Create forums for regular interaction between the Kingdom's leadership and the people to discuss development priorities and challenges.
- **Implementation:** Organize town hall meetings at the sub-county level, where the Omukama (King) or representatives of the cabinet can engage directly with community members. Establish digital platforms to streamline and improve engagement between the kingdom and the subjects.
- **Example:** Rwanda's Umuganda (community meetings) brings citizens together every month to discuss and address local challenges. Tooro could adopt a similar model to foster a culture of collective action.
- The traditions, arts, and crafts of Tooro are treasures that must not only be preserved but celebrated. What if we built world-class museums and cultural centers that showcase our Kingdom's rich history? What if cultural tourism became a key revenue source?
- Ghana's Year of Return demonstrated how celebrating cultural heritage can attract visitors, foster pride, and boost local economies. Tooro can inspire similar movements that reconnect us with our roots.

2) Strengthening Agricultural Productivity and Nurturing a Thriving Agribusiness Hub

Imagine transforming subsistence farming into commercial agriculture that feeds not only the Kingdom but the entire nation and beyond. Look at Ethiopia's Agricultural Transformation

Agenda. By empowering smallholder farmers with knowledge and technology, Ethiopia increased crop yields and achieved food security. Tooro has the potential to replicate this success, ensuring prosperity for every farmer and food security for every family. Agriculture's true value lies not just in cultivation but in value addition. What if Tooro became a hub for processing coffee, bananas, and tea? Imagine exporting roasted coffee rather than raw beans, or producing world-class banana fiber products. This vision can create jobs, enhance household incomes, and boost the Kingdom's economy.

Kenya's investment in tea-processing facilities is a perfect example. By transitioning from raw tea exports to processed products, the country unlocked immense value for local farmers. Tooro can do the same by prioritizing agribusiness industries.

- **Action:** Equip farmers with modern tools, training, and access to climate-smart technologies to improve crop yields. Promote high-value crops such as coffee, cocoa, and Hass avocados, promote agriculture value addition and product innovation.
- **Implementation:** Partner with MAAIF, CSO, agritech and private sector to address challenges of access to quality farm inputs, affordable mechanization and irrigation systems, promote community centered seed systems and seed banks, invested in collection strategic marketing of products from Tooro and promote labour intensive and smart agriculture.
- **Example:** Tooro's ongoing efforts to promote cassava commercialization can be expanded to other crops, ensuring food security and higher incomes. Honey enterprises in Kyenjojo are transforming lives of the youth.

3) Promoting Skills Development and Entrepreneurship

- **Action:** Launch vocational training programs in fields like agribusiness, tourism, and ICT. Support youth-led start-ups and enterprises through funding and mentorship. Lobby for the establishment of a technology park in the Kingdom. Establish community schools, vocational institutes, and e-learning platforms to reach marginalized areas
- **Implementation:** Collaborate with institutions like, UCC, MMU and Kicwamba colleges to establish training centres sub-counties.
- **Example:** The Presidential Initiative on Skilling the Girl-Child can serve as a model for empowering Tooro's youth. Singapore invested in vocational training and upskilling its workforce, transforming itself into a global hub of talent and innovation. Tooro can emulate this model, fostering a generation of problem-solvers and innovators.

4) Investing in Tourism Infrastructure

- **Action:** Develop eco-tourism lodges, cultural centers, and scenic trails around the Rwenzori Mountains. Promote Tooro's rich cultural heritage through events and marketing campaigns. Promote modern architectural development across the kingdom
- **Implementation:** Work with the Uganda Tourism Board (UTB) to position Tooro as a key destination in Uganda's tourism strategy. Work with LGs to influence the quality

of construction plans, promote community centered sanitation and street lighting on the entire kingdom.

- **Example:** The success of the annual Empango celebrations in attracting visitors demonstrates the potential of cultural tourism in Tooro. Best practices from Lome, Togo

5) *Strengthening Governance Structures and Systems*

- **Action:** Modernize the Kingdom's governance systems to enhance efficiency, transparency, and inclusivity. Establish clear roles, responsibilities, and accountability mechanisms for the cabinet.
- **Implementation:** Automate and digitize administrative processes and adopt performance monitoring frameworks.
- **Example:** Drawing inspiration from Buganda's organized structures, Tooro can streamline its governance to better serve its people.

6) *Digital Transformation and Innovation*

- **Action:** Establish community schools, vocational institutes, and e-learning platforms to reach marginalized areas. By fostering innovation hubs and investing in internet access, we can position Tooro as a leader in the digital economy.
- **Implementation:** Mobilize support from, CSO, NGOs, Government and its agencies, and development partners to fund digital infrastructure and scholarships.
- **Example:** Estonia transformed itself into a digital society through e-governance and innovation. Tooro can take similar steps, making its systems more efficient and future-proof. We can reflect on the concept of King Oyo Digital Acceleration Programme as flagship initiative

7) *Improving Public Infrastructure*

- **Action:** Lobby for prioritisation of the construction of roads, electricity networks, and internet connectivity in rural areas to unlock economic potential by both central and local governments . We need to lobby central government to ensure Kampala-Fort portal high ways is upgraded and maintained at the highest level of standard to ensure sustained smooth flow of traffic to the tourism city and region.
- **Implementation:** Partner with the Ministry of Works and Transport to fund regional infrastructure projects.
- **Example:** The government's efforts in the Hoima-Fort Portal road project illustrate the transformative impact of improved transport on trade and tourism. This is strategies, given the nearly completion of Hoima International Airport.

8) *Promoting Environmental Sustainability*

- **Action:** Launch reforestation programs, promote soil conservation practices, and establish wildlife protection initiatives.

- **Implementation:** Collaborate with the National Forestry Authority (NFA) and conservation NGOs to fund and implement sustainability projects.
- **Example:** Protecting the Semuliki National Park and Rwenzori ecosystems ensures biodiversity while attracting eco-tourists.

9) *Empowering Women and Girls*

- **Action:** Support women-led enterprises, promote girl-child education, and establish gender equality policies.
- **Implementation:** Work with local women's groups and microfinance institutions to provide funding and resources for women entrepreneurs.
- **Example:** The Emyooga program has shown how empowering women can drive grassroots economic transformation.

10) *Enhancing Healthcare Access*

- **Action:** Build clinics in underserved areas, improve maternal health services, and provide community-based healthcare education. Lobby for the construction of national specialized referral hospital to tap in the market from DR Congo and South Sudan
- **Implementation:** Partner with the Ministry of Health to extend the reach of the Village Health Teams (VHTs) program. Engage government and source private investors
- **Example:** Tooro can leverage its partnerships with NGOs to address pressing healthcare challenges. Use related strategies that delivered MMU to Tooro.

11) *Mobilizing Resources for Development*

- **Action:** Develop a robust resource mobilization strategy, leveraging partnerships with local businesses, development partners, and the diaspora. It is worth noting that Ugandans in the diaspora send about USD 1.5 billion annually.
- **Implementation:** Establish a Kingdom Development Fund (KDF) to pool resources for priority projects. Establish a diaspora investment support programme to mobilize resources and encourage the Batooro in diaspora and the well wishes to invest in Tooro.
- **Example:** Buganda Kingdom's income-generation model, including leasing land and running businesses, can inspire Tooro's approach to resource mobilization.

Call to Action: Shaping the Tooro Kingdom We Dream Of

Your Majesty, Esteemed leaders, ladies and gentlemen these ten areas of action are not merely ideas—they are the building blocks of the Tooro Kingdom we want to see. The responsibility of guiding this Kingdom towards prosperity rests in your capable hands. Let us adopt bold strategies rooted in innovation, inclusion, and sustainability.

“I know the road to development and modernization is difficult; I know that it’s long and I also know that the next stages will be even tougher and longer. But I have faith in God, I believe in my people, in the wisdom of our leadership and the future of our nation. I’m confident we’ll

realize our goals. Our vision is clear, our road is paved and the clock is ticking”— --- **His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum**

Let us commit to a vision of a Tooro Kingdom that thrives as an **agricultural powerhouse**, a **tourism magnet**, an **innovation and service hub**, and an inclusive justice and prosperous society all rooted into the values of Tooro. Together, we can create a legacy that not only honors our ancestors but also inspires our descendants.

Closing: A Vision for the Future

Your Majesty, esteemed cabinet members, invited guests, ladies and gentlemen let this retreat mark the beginning of a transformative journey for Tooro. The choices we make today will echo through generations, shaping the Kingdom into a beacon of hope, progress, and unity. Let us rise together to build the Tooro Kingdom we all dream of—one that inspires the world. I leave you with the following favorite books for 2024 and 2025, by **His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum**

1. To Be the First
2. My Vision
3. My Story

Thank you, and may the future of Tooro shine ever brighter.