

## **ACCEPTANCE SPEECH**

### **DR. ANDREW AKASHABA - UVA PRESIDENT 2024-2026**

The Honourable Minister of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries

The Commissioner Animal Health, MAAIF

The Heads of Government parastatals and statutory bodies

The Outgoing President UVA and your team

The Incoming UVA Leadership team

The Members of the Academia

The leaders of our sister professional associations

The partners and sponsors of UVA

The Veterinarians

The Veterinary paraprofessionals

Distinguished guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

I salute you all and welcome you all

It is a very humbling experience to welcome you Hon minister to your home, to welcome you to the veterinary world, to welcome you to our hearts as veterinarians. Welcome to the UVA Headquarters, the heart of the veterinary profession in Uganda for the last 50 years.

We have chosen to hold this function here because it was our desire that you find us in our natural setting, after-all even Jesus the son of God whose birthday we are about to celebrate was born in a manger , a place of humble beginnings but with a lot of hidden wealth and potential.

Welcome home once again honorable!

Today, we witness another milestone in the growth of the veterinary profession in our motherland and the animal industry in general through not only the change of guards but also through the fundamental change.

The fundamental change is that we are witnessing the inauguration of the first ever Board of Trustees of UVA, composed of not only the previous leaders of the association but also strong pillars on which the animal industry of Uganda stands and will continue to stand through their legacies over the years. They have nurtured the veterinary profession as our veterinary teachers at the only veterinary school, Makerere. They have employed thousands of vets and veterinary paraprofessionals. They have helped the farmers through the importation of high quality veterinary products and other farm inputs. The best we could do as a new executive was to recognize them with this highest Honour of service.

Hon minister, we the veterinary professionals would like to use this opportunity to thank you and your team for the many observable changes and strides in a positive direction during your short tenure at MAAIF such as the concerted efforts that you have put in place to eliminate FMD from our national herd. When you were appointed to MAAIF, we witnessed how quickly you set out to tackle the FMD menace through your countrywide mobilization in 2021.

The members of the veterinary fraternity are committed to supporting your leadership at our mother industry to archive many more success stories and also to implement and popularize the government programs aimed at getting our people into the money economy such as the Parish Development Model. A case in point, this platform during our three day event in Mbarara from 27<sup>th</sup> -29<sup>th</sup> November 2024, UVA mobilized 1500 farmers at Mbarara ZARDI, did extension and advisory, connected farmers and suppliers/ value chain actors among the so many activities. Next year, we shall repeat the same in Northern Uganda. Therefore UVA is a great force which if harnessed, can make government work much easier.

Hon minister, the animal industry currently contributes about 4% of the GDP. Behind this performance, there is a professional /foot soldier known as “A veterinarian” or “a veterinary paraprofessional” in government service or in private practice. These professionals have managed to achieve this using meagre resources.

If the strengths of these foot soldiers can be harnessed, we promise you honorable that our animal industry can grow to a level where you desire it.

Hon minister, as a sector, we are currently faced with some of the following bottle necks that have in most cases hindered the progress of the industry.

#### 1. HUMAN RESOURCES ISSUES:

a) Due to the decentralization policy, some political leaders in local governments have chosen to sacrifice veterinary positions through a process known as ‘Trading off’, some form of barter trade. For example a veterinary officer position being removed from the structure traded off for Community Development Officer position and sometimes for short terms political gains especially in districts where the cattle population is low (Some

leaders tend to think that the services of a vet are only needed in the cattle corridors). This makes the presence of our foot soldiers very thin on the ground.

b) Having no substantive officers in DVO position is also a bottleneck in some districts no wonder such districts get overwhelmed by animal disease outbreaks because no one seems to be in charge to provide leadership in the fight against the outbreak. Some districts like Kitagwenda, Buhweju, Butebo, Gulu among others have not had substantive DVOs despite the efforts of UVA working with UVB, Ministry of Public Service to prevail over these districts to recruit veterinary staff.

**Recommendation:**

Honourable Minister, we request you to add your voice and weight to prevail over the district local governments over the issues of not recruiting substantive DVOs and the issues of trading off the veterinary positions.

c) For our colleagues in private veterinary practice, we have a nightmare known as 'QUACKS'. These are the practitioners that are not registered by UVB/council. The farmers are making losses at the hands of these unscrupulous people.

**Recommendation:**

Honourable Minister, we request you to strengthen and empower the board/council to traverse this country on the hunt for these wrong doers who are killing people's animals and tarnishing the beautiful name of the veterinary profession. Ideally, the veterinary board/council would have regional offices.

Additionally, If UVA can be empowered by your ministry through PPP and supported with the required resources, we can do self-regulation and clean this country of these wrong doers.

**2. THE VETERINARY LEGAL FRAMEWORK AND ITS ISSUES.**

Honourable Minister, we thank you for the steps you have so far taken to review some of the veterinary pieces of legislation. In a special way, we thank you for the Veterinary Practitioners Act and The Animal Feeds Act that were recently passed. However, their operationalization has delayed and the wrong doers are utilizing this legal lacuna to do wrong things.

**Recommendation:**

We request you to expedite the process of operationalizing these pieces of legislation through your statutory instruments/regulations.

In addition, we call for the revision of most veterinary laws and to help us expedite the process of those under review such the Animal Diseases Act and the drug regulation policy.

Some acts have almost become obsolete and their enforcement is not easy such as the Rabies Act, Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, Hides and Skins Traders Act, Cattle traders Act. The penalties for some of the offences are not deterrent enough. The law enforcers and some judicial officers have sometimes

turned them into laughing stock when we present them for appropriate action eg. Selling obnoxious food to the public.

3. CHALLENGES AFFECTING THE UGANDA VETERINARY ASSOCIATION OPERATIONS:

- a) Dilapidated UVA premises/ home. As an association, we have occupied this piece of land and buildings for the last 50 years. The roof of this structure is made of asbestos which was banned for use many years ago.

We request for your support to face lift these premises. We intend to redesign them to create more space for operations.

- b) Lack of Means of transport for UVA operations.

We are ready to support UVB/ council and MAAIF and other partners to develop a better animal industry. However, as an association, we are limited by mobility issues. Honourable minister, we know you have a big heart, if out of your generosity, we can have a van or any other type of vehicle, we can traverse this country and do wonders.

Allow me to thank you once again for sparing time to be with us today and request you to visit us more often, bring us closer in your programs, support us in overcoming our bottlenecks and we shall give you the results.

'FOR GOD AND MY COUNTRY'

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**DR. ANDREW AKASHABA**  
**UVA PRESIDENT 2024-2026**